Blue Ribbon Committee for Enhancing the Undergraduate Student Experience

Student Life and Co-Curricular Experiences
Implementation Plan
February 27, 2015

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Student Life and Co-Curricular Experiences
Committee

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<u>Executive Summary</u>

The proposed Student Life and Co-Curricular Experiences Implementation Plan responds to the following five recommended strategies in the Report of the Blue Ribbon Committee for Enhancing the Undergraduate Student Experience[1]:

1. Increase availability and awareness of mental health support services so that students are more likely to use them in a timely fashion.
2. Establish programs for students who are at higher risk of not connecting with other students or engaging in on-campus and student services.
3. Establish a system to identify students who are not engaged so they can receive appropriate intervention.
4. Increase and coordinate opportunities for service learning, internships, on-campus research-based employment and other activities that link co-curricular experiences with student educational and career paths.
5. Provide a centralized system for students to manage their university life.

Faculty nominated by the Committee on Committees to represent the Academic Senate led the discussion and made the original proposals for action. Full committee membership discussions also included staff representatives selected through nomination by college and Student Affairs leadership. The committee composite was designed to deliver a range of perspectives key to strengthening programs and services for undergraduates, in preparation for growth of the student population as outlined in the 2020 Initiative[2].

Julia Menard-Warwick, who was asked to chair the committee, requested that Adela de la Torre act as chair, to enable Professor Menard-Warwick to focus on her responsibilities as chair of a simultaneous faculty search. Professor de la Torre opened the meeting with the following background information to help guide the discussions that would take place:

1. Transactional and substantive recommendations of the committee would each be identified in the report and delineated by responsible unit.

2. Feedback from the Academic Senate will be directed to various units responsible for implementation.

3. In Student Affairs, co-curricular activities are critical to supporting and informing the quality of the academic experience. Some areas reside in Student

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[1] Blue Ribbon Committee for Enhancing the Undergraduate Student Experience.
http://studentaffairs.ucdavis.edu/initiatives/BRC-REPORT-070213-final.pdf
[2] The 2020 Initiative: A Path to Academic Excellence and Economic Opportunity.
http://chancellor.ucdavis.edu/initiatives/2020_Initiative/index.html

Affairs and others in the academic arena (e.g., departments, dean's offices, Office of Undergraduate Education, etc.).

4. Student communication loop is often not very direct, and with a large student population, a single method of communication is not necessarily effective or sufficient to achieve communication goals and broad visibility.

The Student Life and Co-Curricular Experiences Implementation Committee met three times between October and December 2014. The entire first meeting was devoted to discussion relating to weaknesses Professor Menard-Warwick brought to light in the communications loop between student service providers (e.g., behavioral and physical health concerns and accommodations for students with disabilities) and faculty who teach and advise undergraduates. The depth of concerns prompted the committee to invite service unit directors to attend the next two meetings to help guide the discussions so recommendations for action would be realistic. These guests included:

- Dr. Sarah Hahn and Dr. Michelle Famula, Student Health and Counseling Services
- Jeanne Wilson, Director, Student Disability Center
- Brett McFarlane, Director of Advising, Office of Undergraduate Education

The committee wishes to acknowledge their contributions to the discussion for the purpose of clarifying existing policies and programs and responding to questions regarding feasibility of proposed actions.

Priority Strategy 1: Increase availability and awareness of mental health support services so that students are more likely to use them in a timely fashion.

Background
Faculty and staff on the committee agreed that there appears to be inadequate formal training of faculty and staff who interact directly with students as advisors, TAs, etc. on how to engage appropriately with students with mental/behavioral conditions. Drs. Famula and Hahn presented some resources to help guide individuals wanting additional information in this area, including how to make appropriate referrals of students to CAPS, which provides limited behavioral health counseling but will help students needing more intensive services to link with a provider in the community. The ongoing challenge is finding enough providers in the community who are accepting new clients and take the UCSHIP insurance that students have to pay for these services.

Recommended Strategies
1. Create the opportunity and materials to assist faculty and professional advising staff in communicating effectively with students with mental/behavioral health conditions.
   a. Responsible Party: Student Affairs – Student Health and Counseling Services; Director of Advising for the purpose of training academic advising staff. Office of Undergraduate Education for training TAs and potentially working with those responsible for new faculty orientation to ensure dissemination of materials.
   b. Rationale: While faculty have limited time, many do want to have resources at-hand to guide their interaction with students having difficulties that impact their academic performance. These discussions took place prior to submission and review of the FY Experience Implementation Plan by the Academic Senate. That plan contains discussion regarding requests for additional resources to guide faculty in making appropriate referrals. The committee will defer to decisions made regarding the request for additional material resources.

2. Identify an appropriate departmental lead to be the "expert" in Question Persuade, Refer (QPR)[3]. This lead, who would receive formal training in QPR, would be identified and appointed at the departmental level. *The committee requests Academic Senate endorsement of this recommendation so departments are responsible for following up with the appointment and training of the departmental lead. This lead can be a member of the departmental faculty or administration.*

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[3] People trained in QPR learn how to recognize the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to question, persuade, and refer someone to help. For more information on QPR, see http://www.qprinstitute.com/about.html.

a. <u>Responsible Party:</u> Academic Senate to approve. Departments to implement.
b. <u>Rationale:</u> By having a QPR lead in each department, faculty and staff have an individual who can follow up quickly when a student of concern is identified through advising appointments.

   Members of the committee identified three types of concerns that characterize most student needs for this kind of intervention:
   1. Student knows there is a problem but doesn't know how to address their need.
   2. Student does not realize they have a problem.
   3. Students and their advisor/mentor know there is a problem, but their concern is treated by the health care delivery system as a normal developmental issue when it is not. *CAPS Director Sarah Hahn stated that this last point is new feedback for her unit – they have not heard this in the past and will follow up.*

3. Establish an Undergraduate student welfare sub-committee under the auspices of the Academic Senate Undergraduate Council.
   a. <u>Responsible Party</u>: Academic Senate
   b. <u>Rationale</u>: There appears to be no campus-wide structure to field concerns regarding undergraduate student welfare in a way that would impact policy. For example, while there is a Senate-appointed committee to oversee graduate student welfare, there is no parallel structure for undergraduate concerns. The Student Health and Counseling Services leadership would be able to meet faculty concerns and student needs more effectively if they had a group of faculty with whom they could work regularly. A formal committee structure would enable SHCS and other student services leadership to receive updated information regarding concerns of faculty and professional staff who work directly with undergraduates. This forum would enable stakeholders to explore feasible and effective response options via policy and services changes, e.g., availability of MyUCDavis for faculty.

4. Provide additional financial resources to add case managers to assist students in researching and accessing the right provider; to investigate and mitigate barriers to needed care,and to help them navigate the system.   Work with Student Health and Counseling Services and the Office of Student Support and Judicial Affairs to provide the resources they have identified as necessary to manage their caseload more efficiently and effectively.
   a. <u>Responsible Party</u>: Student Affairs
   b. <u>Rationale</u>: Students get "caught in the system" when they try to seek ongoing behavioral health services. On CAPS' side, there is a delicate

balance in determining when to refer a student outside the system – referring them too quickly gives students the impression that CAPS staff do not want to work with them. Sometimes it is very difficult for CAPS to connect students with an external mental health services provider because their practice is full, or they do not accept UCSHIP insurance. Case managers are more able to effectively work with and advocate for students because of their deeper level of knowledge about the student's condition. As members of the services unit staff, they have access to information and resources, and greater skill in navigating that system. Case managers could work directly with students to assist them effectively while upholding HIPAA.

5. Provide additional training to TAs and Academic Advisors to learn how to identify/red flag students in need of mental health services and provide appropriate referrals. Work in collaboration with Student Health and Counseling Services to ensure the training is appropriate and accurate.
    a. <u>Responsible Party</u>: Office of Undergraduate Education
    b. <u>Rationale</u>: Professional staff in direct contact with students need enhanced skills in responding to students temporarily in distress but not at high risk. SHCS tends to focus its service delivery on bi-polar, psychotic, and severely depressed, but these conditions do not impact the majority of students. The majority of student needs are conditions of the normal developmental process, and most students will need additional support at some point during their time as undergraduates.

        An informational resource called the Red Folder is available in hard copy, and the folder appears on the student health and counseling web site - redfolder.ucdavis.edu. The Red Folder provides guidelines for responding to students of concern; gives information about privacy laws and confidentiality; and lists referral resources, categorized by health need.

Priority Strategy 2: Establish programs for students who are at higher risk of not connecting with other students or engaging in on-campus and student services.

Priority Strategy 3: Establish a system to identify students who are not engaged so they can receive appropriate intervention.

<u>Background</u>
Strategies 2 and 3 are discussed under one report item. The committee identified the need for first-year students to engage in a program that includes a support menu that guides them through the four-year pathway with services delivered in a pro-active, rather than re-

active/triage manner. Ideal would be a first- year seminar built into the fabric of the undergraduate experience. In this light, the committee discussed the recommendation made by the FY Implementation Committee regarding examination of the UT Austin program. Since this discussion, the Senate has responded that additional programs should be investigated for best practices, so there is full understanding and awareness of the landscape of possible program delivery strategies.

Additional Recommended Strategy:
1. Develop a student assessment vehicle that can be accessed through OASIS and which gauges success through benchmarks such as indicators showing greater independence, engagement on campus, etc. This tracking mechanism would enable advising staff to enter and read notes regarding concerns about lack of engagement and potential progress made.
    a. Responsible Party: Undergraduate Education with Student Affairs linking efforts through Director of Advising and Registrar (OASIS)
    b. Rationale: While advisors are able to enter notes relating to academic advising, there needs to be an additional feature in OASIS where advising or counseling staff can follow up on suggestions made to refer students for greater engagement in campus life. Time limitation prevented full discussion of this idea.

Priority Strategy 4: Increase and coordinate opportunities for service learning, internships, on-campus research-based employment, and other activities that link co-curricular experiences with student educational and career paths.

Because the Academic and Career Experiences Implementation Committee had addressed Priority Strategy 4, in the interest of the time limitations during this last meeting, the committee chose to address only Priority Strategy 5. Priority Strategy 4 is addressed through the recommendation to consider expansion of the Career Discovery Group program piloted in CA&ES (A&CE Implementation Plan, Priority Strategy 3, pp.6-7).

Priority Strategy 5: Provide a centralized system for students to manage their university life.

Background
There are equipment and systems available to assist all students in managing their university life, but students are not often aware of these tools or how to appropriately use them.

Recommended Strategies

1. Student Affairs Marketing and Communications—supported through Student Housing's enhanced first year experience programming—can increase the visibility of the portal and disseminate information on how to use it.
   a. <u>Responsible Party</u>: Student Affairs Marketing and Communication and Student Housing
   b. <u>Rationale</u>: Myucdavis is now up and running – this was not the case at the time BRC made this recommendation. Students need guidance in learning how to use the on-line tool to manage and make the most of their university life and available resources.

2. CAPS can develop a vehicle to have anonymous conversations on-line, as well as produce an on-line self-screening tool with the capacity for CAPS to monitor, score, and intervene if a specific low or high threshold is reached.
   a. <u>Responsible Party</u>: CAPS/SHCS leadership
   b. <u>Rationale</u>: Students can remain anonymous but can receive information from staff in response to a red flag triggered by the score. Funding could come from student services fees that are already planned and include a considerable allocation for mental health services. Technology provides supportive links to acquire information, balanced with high-touch assistance that a significant proportion of students need at some point during their undergraduate years. Advisors and advising staff under housing services can make recommendations or referrals for in-person meetings as necessary and appropriate.

Conclusion

<u>Qualitative and Quantitative Evaluation Strategies</u>

The Student Life and Co-Curricular Experiences Implementation Plan provides a work plan to be undertaken by the leadership of specific units and divisions. Metrics for measuring degree of success in meeting objectives will include both quantitative and qualitative data collection relating to student learning outcomes. Quantitative data such as counts and frequencies will determine the degree to which program enhancements have been successful by virtue of how these programs are accessed and used. Qualitative data collection via surveys and/or focus groups can elucidate the reasons why a specific strategy is or is not effective and reveal opportunities for program refinement. When tied to student learning outcomes, qualitative analysis will help us to understand where a specific plan needs refinement to help students meet their educational objectives. Qualitative assessment will guide the evaluation team's formative process so we can continually monitor and refine implementation strategies.

Evaluation Process

In its June, 2014 report, the BRC recommended engaging an external (to Student Affairs) evaluator to manage the formative and summative evaluation processes in collaborative with the offices of Academic Assessment, Undergraduate Education and Institutional Analysis. In Fall 2014, the Center for SA Assessment (CSAA) was established under the founding Director, Dr. Timo Rico. The CSAA will facilitate comparative and casual analysis techniques of the 24 SA departments in the division by utilizing a mixed-method research approach.

The responsible parties identified under each plan will work with the evaluator to establish a defined data set, develop a university-wide baseline metric system, and facilitate triangulation techniques that support evidence of institutional effectiveness toward student success. It is recommended that the evaluator report to an assessment oversight committee that includes representation from the various assessment units, including the new CSAA, to ensure short and long-term alignment with potential assessment models introduced in student-centered services.