

STUDENT ACCESS, SUCCESS & EQUITY (SASE) RECOMMENDATIONS

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Recommendation: Student Communication Equity Framework

Overview

The creation of detailed process and guiding principles (such as an equity lens) to support current and future student communication plans that ensure:

- Key existing support resources are visible and accessible to the students experiencing the greatest structural barriers to accessing resources
- Broad, student-facing communications are responsive to the experiences of BIPOC students and particularly the BIPOC community in Portland. Content and tone is examined for microaggressions and linkages to racial trauma.

Motivating Rationale, Conditions And Concerns

- Hearing students express the need for resources at PSU that already exist (i.e. they are unaware there is already a resource to help meet their need).
- PSU is apparently increasingly reliant on email for student communication, and some vulnerable student populations have less access to email than their peers. Every communication plan should understand and try to account for this inequality.
- The large volume of email and lack of coordination and prioritization of content - students become desensitized to it and can miss important information on resources.
- Students have sometimes experienced PSU communication plans as racially insensitive. Example: Intended as a pride point, the PR campaign, “Flood of Change” around PSU’s origins in connection with the Vanport flood, seemed unaware of the destruction of Black wealth and allegations of racism connected with that history and the trauma of that lived experience felt by current students.

Primary Activities, Efforts Or Strategies Anticipated

- Stakeholder engagement: collaborate with existing workgroups for student communication plans
- Research and process management: Integrate the unique student communication context of PSU, the priorities of student communication workgroups, equity best practices research, and the needs of PSU students to create a process document to inform current and future student communication plans

Primary Goals or Objectives

- Collaborate with existing workgroups focusing on student communication plans. Act as a connecting point between these groups and help incorporate the priorities of the Student Access, Equity, and Success task force in their work.
- Develop and create an implementation plan for an equity lens or other document to accomplish the purpose outlined in item #1

Resources Likely Needed To Undertake This Work

This project intends to integrate ideas and priorities into work that is already underway at PSU and will capitalize on any student communication technologies that PSU implements. Some technology solutions are already under consideration for PSU licensing by other workgroups; this project will aid that decision by providing equity considerations. Existing communication opportunities, such as the Information Hub in SMSU, will be prioritized for strategic use.

Our initial estimate is to allocate 400 total hours of existing PSU staff time with at least 20% provided by senior administrators. This proposal is to direct hours from existing PSU staff; no new hiring is proposed.

Suggested Home Base For This Initiative

We see multiple options for who “owns” this process; each has opportunities and tradeoffs:

- University Communications: traditionally has led external-facing comms but might take on an internal comms initiative, depending on the recommendations of the Student Communications “think tank” group. Advantage: closely connect with communication tools and processes.
- GDI: Well-equipped to center equity considerations in communication plans, though not directly connected with communication tools and workflows.
- Alumni Association: A potential avenue for the Alumni Association to increase its relevance to current students and stay connected with them as they transition to alumni.

Recommendation: First-generation Student Training

Overview

Our subcommittee proposes the creation of a first-generation college student training for student affairs staff, led by first-gen students. Staff members that complete this training join a network of liaisons to fast track student support services.

Motivating Rationale, Conditions And Concerns

Students - especially first-generation students - are getting lost in our large institution. If they do not have a touchpoint program (ie: TRiO), students may not have the resources to persist. If students do reach out to staff for support - staff may not have the network and training to effectively support them.

This will:

- Formalize the informal network that staff struggle to establish at PSU.
- Address students getting lost in the system by creating staff that are competent in navigating systems and unique first-generation student needs.
- Equip staff with the tools and network necessary to be responsive to the experiences of first-generation students navigating a large and complex institution.
- Streamline complicated processes on-campus and offer warm hand-offs for students who feel lost in the system.

Primary Activities, Efforts Or Strategies Anticipated

- Identification of funds
- Creation of job duties for staff supervisor of student leaders
- Job descriptions for graduate assistant and first-generation student leader positions
- Creation of a foundation for staff network infrastructure
- Creation of a strategic plan to build and grow network and opportunities

Primary Goals or Objectives

- Improve retention for first-generation students at PSU
- Increase support for student affairs staff to more efficiently serve students
- Increase visible support for first-generation students (a visible marker for those who complete the training)

Resources Likely Needed To Undertake This Work

- Full tuition remission (similar to UNST mentors) for the first-gen student leaders who will lead the training for staff. We recommend 10 student leaders to start.
- Full tuition remission for 2 graduate assistants.
- Overload funds for a current SA staff to supervise the student leaders.

Suggested Home Base For This Initiative

We envision this to be a collaborative effort between Global Diversity and Inclusion and the Dean of Student Life.

- GDI - Staff network component
- DOSL - First-gen student leaders who oversee the training

Additional Information

Through first-hand experience, we've seen our students get lost in our complex systems. We have included some examples below:

- Student X has a financial aid issue and meets with their advisor. They need their parents' tax documents. Their parents do not speak English and only speak Spanish. Fin Aid used to have a bilingual financial aid officer with who an advisor could directly connect with their student. Warm hand-off makes a difference.
- Student Y is filing a petition. They are unsure how to fill it out and who to meet with before it is submitted. They are unsure how to write their statement. Who helps the student who may have no experience with this process do it correctly to give them the best chance at a successful petition?

- Student Z left PSU because of grades, tried to transfer back into PSU. They had no idea who to speak with to re-enroll after they raised their grades at a CC. Do they go to their academic advisor? The Registrar? They don't know where to start.
- Student A is a first-gen student of color who's family doesn't believe in mental illness due to cultural norms. They are interested in seeking support but are afraid that no one will understand their situation. If their advisor had access to a liaison network, they would know that there are providers of color at SHAC and the DRC who are available to support.