Student Life Committee

Final Report

Members:

[Papiya Bhattacharjee](mailto:pxb39@psu.edu?subject=Student%20Life%20Committee%20Chairman) , Chair (SCI)  
  Emily Cassano (HSS)  
  Charlotte de Vries (ENG)  
  D. J. Galiffa (SCI)  
  Shin Kwon, (BUS)  
  Lucy Lenhardt (ENG)  
  Angela Rood (HSS)   
  Janice Tottleben (BUS)  
  Ken Miller, ex officio  
  Joshua Sitter, president of SGA

**Charge 1**: *(Standing Charge) In coordination with the Office of Student Affairs, review and report on implemented or recommended policies, programs, and services which regulate and support student life on campus.*

**Green Dot Forum** : There is a working committeethatimplemented the launch. Will continue to have a member in this committee from the Student Life Committee.

**Facility Fee Committee** : Working on getting funding for the recreation center on campus. Will continue to have a member in this committee from the Student Life Committee.

**Charge 2**: *To work with the Office of Student Affairs to establish and maintain a culture on campus that welcomes and supports international students to enhance their success at Behrend.*

The sub-committee organized a panel discussion. Here is the report:

*Engaging International Students*

*Panel discussion*

*Tuesday March 22, 2016*

*2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. at Reed Conference Room 113*

In Attendance: Total 14 including panelists

Panelists: Andy A. Herrera (Director, Educational Equity & Diversity), Amos Ong (Mathematics), Ihab Ragai (Engineering), Ashley Wagner (English), Jessica (Xin) Zhao (Finance)

**Questions:**

1. What specific challenges do you think faculty have in teaching international students?

2. What do you think are the top 3 challenges facing international students in the classroom?

3. How can faculty overcome these challenges?

4. For those that have attended college/graduate education outside of the United States: what differences do you find between the two university systems (e.g., expectations regarding class participation, attendance, etc.)?

5. How might those differences be addressed by faculty in the classroom?

6. What are some of your favorite (best, useful, popular, etc.) teaching techniques for classes with a mix of US and International students?

**Issues and possible solutions:**

* Group working project with international students
  + Both international and domestic students are reluctant to form a group with each other
  + International students: self-segregation (safety blanket, language barriers)
  + Domestic students: making fun of international students for their accent and different culture
  + Challenge students: set the expectation in syllabus in early semester.
  + Encourage international students to learn US culture and English by working with domestic students
  + Let domestic students meet international students from all over the world
  + Make a group consisting of some international students (changing a group leader to a different team worked well)
  + Randomly form a group (Canvas or Angel can help randomly form a group for students)
  + International students can be better in things related to their country
* Difference between junior and senior international students
  + As time goes on, senior international students are more accustomed to US learning environment and to gathering with domestic students (It is a learnings process)
* Difficulties in understanding in class
  + At times, international students don’t understand questions in class or in exam
  + It may come from a combination of language problem and cultural difference: Sarcastic words in classroom are not understood by international students
  + Make more common words for international students, but may be challenging because those words are too easy to domestic students
* Participation in class discussion
  + International students participate only when they are pushed into: they are just reluctant to speak up
  + International students might want to be perfect before they ask questions, so usually they are quiet in class
  + Make curriculum or content more familiar to both international and domestic students in class
* Refugee status
  + Immigrant students are different from international students
  + They cannot have an opportunity to get English training for many reasons
  + They isolate themselves because of their immigrant status
* Writing in the exam, and writing assignment
  + international students are not clear about plagiarism
  + Some international students don’t know how to cite references 🡪 cultural differences?
  + Can get tutor service for writing
  + Should have orientation series for this matter
* Source for help
  + International students are struggling for sources to get help
* Faculty mentors to support international students are necessary
* Early intervention with struggling international students would be more effective to help such students with useful resources
* Future session

It could be issues about facing Chinese students because there are more Chinese students coming to Behrend.

Suggestions were made by the subcommittee member (1) to continue more panel discussions of this form in the future years, (2) target First-Year Seminar classes to advise more international students.

**The committee recommends to continue this charge for next year**.

**Charge 3**: *Continue to operationalize and monitor change of location and student retention. Implement metrics to monitor ongoing progress with respect to retention for different groups (ex., local versus international) of students****.***

During the Spring 2016 semester 818 students who were previously enrolled at Penn State Behrend and changed campuses to University Park were emailed a survey invitation to ascertain the reasons why they chose to change campuses. A similar survey had been conducted by the Behrend Institutional Research Committee in summer 2013 for students enrolling in Fall 2013. The survey garnered 174 responses for a 21.3% response rate.

Students were asked to rank order eleven reasons from most important to least important as to why they chose to change campuses to University Park. 56.30% of respondents ranked “My major was not offered at Behrend” as the top reason why they chose to change locations followed by “The reputation UP has among employers” at 19.71%. The least important reasons why students changed locations included “More financial aid at University Park” 22.88%, “I had a negative experience at Behrend” 16.67%, and “My major was not offered at Behrend” 12.59%.

Responses were also analyzed according to rating average among the 11 options. The response with the highest mean rating was “The reputation University Park has among employers” 3.88, “My major was not offered at Behrend” 4.11, and “I want to be able to take a greater variety of classes in my major or more supporting classes” 4.58.

Lowest average ratings included “More financial aid at University Park” 7.94 and “I had a negative experience at Behrend” 7.50.

Open-ended responses were also sought from respondents requesting them to list any other important reasons that factored into their decision to change campuses or to offer additional information about the 11 fixed responses. 95 students left open-ended responses.

Respondents were also asked to indicate the importance of other factors, some of which are considered strengths of Behrend, when making their change of location decision. Students indicated the level of the factor on a scale of “Not at all important”, “Somewhat Important”, or “Very Important”. Students were also given the option to indicate they “Did not consider this” as a factor to consider.

Students identified as “Very Important” academic program accreditation (63.85%) and job opportunities for graduates (61.83%). Factors “Not at All Important” included smaller class sizes at Behrend (36.64%), not having graduate students teach classes (34.85%), and faculty give more attention to students and know their names (31.82%). Students reported that they did not consider the availability of on-campus housing at UP (50.76%), instruction by graduate students (36.36%), and the availability/cost of off-campus housing (34.85%).

Finally, students were asked to reflect on their decision making process to change locations and were asked “What do you wish you would have considered before leaving Behrend?” utilizing the same scale as the previous question. “Very Important” items they wished they would have considered included job opportunities for graduates (32.52%) and academic program accreditation (30.33%). All factors considered “Not at All Important” varied little in range with most between 17 and 28%. Nearly half of the respondents (48.78%) did not consider the availability of on-campus housing at UP.

Complete results, including the open-ended responses to each set of questions, will be appended to this report. It’s is recommended that the results be further studied by next year’s Student Life Committee with a more thorough statistical analysis. Results will be forwarded to Marketing and Communications who coordinated messages to the school’s regarding change of campus.

**Student Retention Report**

**(Based on Survey Results)**

Q1. Please rank the following reasons in order of importance for why you chose to change campuses to the University Park (UP) campus for the coming year. The following were ranked as “Most Important.”

1. My major was not offered at Behrend – 56%
2. The reputation UP has among employers – 20%
3. I didn’t get admitted to UP as a freshman and still wanted to go – 9%

Q2. Please list any other important reasons that factored into your decision to change campuses, or tell us more about any of the reasons above. Response patterns included:

* More opportunity for undergraduate research.
* Wanted Behrend to feel like a bigger part of the “Penn State” network.
* Wanted more of a “college campus” feel.

Q3. Please rate the following items on how important they were to you while you were making your decision to change campuses to University Park. The following were ranked as “Very Important.”

1. Academic program accreditation – 64%
2. Job opportunities for graduates – 62%
3. Starting salary for graduates – 35%

The following were ranked “Did not consider this.”

1. Availability of on-campus housing – 51%
2. Not having graduate students teaching classes – 36%
3. Availability/cost of off-campus housing – 35%

Q4. What do you wish you would have considered before leaving Behrend? The following were ranked as “Very Important.”

1. Job opportunities for graduates – 33%
2. Academic program accreditation – 30%
3. Smaller class sizes – 28%

The following were ranked as “Did not consider this.”

1. Availability of on-campus housing – 49%
2. Availability/cost of off-campus housing – 40%
3. Not having graduate students teaching classes – 37%

Q5. What advice would you give other students considering changing campuses? Response patterns included:

* Be ready to handle a much bigger school with bigger classes.
* Choose the campus that not only fits your major, but your lifestyle.

Q6. What changes could Behrend make to help future students stay at Behrend? Response patterns included:

* Having a wider array of majors.
* An increase in “nightlife” around the campus (food, stores, etc.).
* Better facilities (food, athletics, etc.)
* Increase in number and quality of recruiters at job fairs.

The committee feels that the data from the survey need to be analyzed, gain information to emphasize how we can retain students in the future, this information will help us refine our emphasis on student retention in each school. Also, suggestions were made to consider advising the advisors of other Penn State campuses to inform their students about Behrend campus. Further, Ken Miller will share this data with Mary Ellen and Bill Gonda.

**The committee recommends to continue this charge for next year**.

**Charge 4**: *Evaluate summer 2015 food delivery and determine if that is any need for further action.*

1. Sonya Smith runs the College for Kids program.  She said about 15 kids   
per week bought pre-paid lunch service and there were additional random   
lunch purchasers.  The system went very well and they were happy with it.   
The availability of ice cream was a huge hit.  They plan to repeat that   
next year.

2. Mike Lindner also felt the summer food service went well.  Clark Café and   
Bruno's Paws were both open for the summer and they will repeat this again   
next year.

3. They will also continue with the Wednesday cookouts as they were well   
attended.

4. Regarding late night classes, they are not yet ready to stay open for   
that.  If there is program growth next year then the food choices might be   
able to grow as well.  
  
Basically summer 15 went well and they will be repeating it for Summer 16.

The subcommittee reported that the food vendors have expanded, they correspond with more youth groups to understand the demand during summer, and everything is continuing consistently.

**The committee recommends NOT to continue this charge for next year**.

**Charge 5**: *Continue to promote voter registration among students, and measure the effectiveness of offering voter registration as part of New Student Orientation and Constitution Day. The committee should work with SGA to promote local registration and to be active in local issues.*

: Emails sent to students and faculty about voter registration. Here are the emails:

Dear Students,

We would like to remind you that if you would like to vote in the presidential primaries on April 26, the online voter registration deadline is March 28th, 2016.

Online voter registration:

<https://www.pavoterservices.state.pa.us/Pages/VoterRegistrationApplication.aspx>

Pennsylvania holds closed primary elections, meaning that in order to vote in a presidential primary, you must be registered with a specific party (Democrat or Republican). Signing up for a political party does not mean that you have to vote for their candidate in November. If this is your first election voting, you may not quite know which party fits your interests and beliefs best. We encourage you to research the candidates and find which parties and candidates best fit our ideals. If you are interested in learning more, feel free to contact the political clubs at Behrend:

College Republicans

Contact: [jmg6281@psu.edu](mailto:jmg6281@psu.edu)

College Democrats

Contact: [PSBDemocrats@gmail.com](mailto:PSBDemocrats@gmail.com)

*Dear Faculty and Staff,*

*The presidential primaries are coming up on April 26th, and we would like to remind you eligible students that they can register to vote online. The online voter registration deadline is March 28th, 2016.*

*Online voter registration:*[*https://www.pavoterservices.state.pa.us/Pages/VoterRegistrationApplication.aspx*](https://www.pavoterservices.state.pa.us/Pages/VoterRegistrationApplication.aspx)

*This is the first presidential election for many of our students, and they may be unaware of the deadline. Please also remind students that Pennsylvania holds closed primary elections, meaning that in order to vote in a presidential primary, voters must be registered with a specific party (Democrat or Republican). We’d also like to remind those of you who are eligible to sign up to vote as well.*

*Thank you for your time.*

Moreover, SGA is getting shuttles to help students get to the polling stations for the primary if they don’t have cars. Suggestions were made to arrange for absentee ballots for students who are not registered to vote locally.

**The committee recommends to continue this charge for next year.**

**Suggested New Charges for 2016-2017**:

Suggestions were made by committee members to include the following as some of the charges for next year.

1. Possible retail near Behrend campus, new business by I90 that will be accessible to students.
2. Review Campus Plan, specifically, Student Life Committee should consider looking into ‘Student Space’ on campus. How/where to add more space for student related activities, Hudson Loft, Test-taking center for students at the Disability office, Andy Herrara’s office space for International students, etc.

Respectfully Submitted by: Papiya Bhattacharjee