



Student Support Services Working Group Final Report February 14, 2014

Co-Chairs

Mari Fuentes-Martin, Associate Vice President and Dean of Students
The University of Texas-Pan American (UTPA)
Art Olague, Director of Life Sports
The University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB)

Committee members:

Joanna Alvarez, Student – UTPA
Stephen Cisneros, Assistant Director of Residence Life - UTB
Mari Morin, Assistant Dean of Students - UTPA
David Marquez, Director of Students Rights & Responsibilities - UTB
Phillip Martinez, Student – UTB
Juan Andres Rodriguez, Program Director for Career Services – UTB
Lourdes Servantes, Director of Career Services - UTPA
Dr. James Wenzel, Faculty - UTPA

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Executive Summary and Introduction

The Student Support Working Group is charged with developing recommendations concerning the implementation of comprehensive services, facilities and programs that will contribute to the overall success of the students enrolled at the new university, UTRGV. The scope of our work identified seventeen functional areas which we have clustered into five thematic areas. Over 80 students, staff and faculty met to conduct research, reviewed best practices in their field of interest, developed innovative suggestions and made recommendations which we believe will be an optimal environment for UTRGV students.

Student support at the new university will be facilitated by faculty and staff working together to ensure that students receive a holistic approach to their education. The cornerstone of UTRGV students collegiate experience will follow a student development approach that permeates all aspects of the campus culture. Kurt Lewin introduced such an equation in 1936: $B = f(P \times E)$. These symbols represent the various components that contribute to the college experience. "The formula states that behavior (B) is a function (f) of the interaction (x) of the person (P) and environment (E)." (1) For the sake of this analogy, the P represents our UTRGV student.

The work of these departments/units at UTRGV will contribute to student success either through their engagement of students in campus activities, providing direct services benefiting the students, and through enforcing policies of programs and facilities which ensure an ideal living and learning environment for all students. Through the successful implementation of these recommendations, the work of areas under Student Support Services will significantly contribute to the retention and graduation rates of students.

Subject Areas and General Recommendations of the Working Group

Student Discipline and Compliance

- Develop a common code of conduct and unique Honor Code for all locations.
- Oversee various rights and responsibility issues such as grievances, judicial affairs, and behavioral intervention matters utilizing singular methods.
- Select and fund one software system to manage all rights and responsibilities processes.

Student Engagement and Involvement

- Establish a student governance system that represents all of the vital student constituencies including undergraduate, graduate and professional students. The entities will represent their populations in the larger shared governance structure of UTRGV.
- Include student input as a vital component in the selection of its mascot and school colors.

Student Auxiliary Services

- Establish fully functioning student unions at all locations offering a wide array of services to the campus community.
- Build and staff child care facilities at all locations.
- Create common housing policies and practices that will provide a consistent on-campus living environment.

- Produce a comprehensive student media program with one primary website to serve as the clearing-house that features stories from all affiliated student media.

Student Health and Wellness

- Implement integrated services concerning wellness, recreation and other health services based on current best practices model at all locations.
- Develop ADA friendly facilities which provide the community ideal accommodations in and out of the classroom (i.e. Disability Office, Library, performance halls, auditoriums, etc.).
- Create and support an organizational structure that includes full-sized recreational programs and departments at all locations to provide an adequate level of services.

Student Career and Veterans Services

- Provide centrally located and accessible Veteran Success Centers with a baseline of services at all locations.
- Ensure designation as a “Military Friendly Campus” by maintaining membership in and adherence to the Service members Opportunity Colleges (SOC) Consortium standards and continue to support the “Got Your 6” pledge.
- Develop and support one organizational structure to include career service areas which offer an equal level of services and programming for students and alumni across all locations.

Overarching Recommendations from each Subject Area

- Each subject area requests technical software specific to their operations and services provided. These software applications will assist in the streamlining of services across all locations.
- UTRGV should fund and support professional development, association memberships, and regional training for employees at all locations. This will ensure that staff will continue to offer a high level of services in accordance to national standards of each association membership.

Student Discipline and Compliance

As a member of the University of Texas System, UTRGV has various guidelines for student conduct and student safety which are designed to ensure an optimal learning environment. Three key components that will need development is a student code of conduct, a Behavior Intervention Team (BIT) plan and a strategic plan for risk management compliance.

The focus then was: How do we maintain and develop and an effective BIT plan to address student concerns, address conduct and civility issues, ensure health and safety concerns through consistent risk management enforcement, and protect the rights of all campus community members through an effective compliance programs? In addressing our concerns we placed emphasis on developing processes that encompass the wider scope of the new university. These new processes will not only ensure that we continually improve the delivery of services in an equitable manner, but also provide for continued improvement based on providing a professional staff that is up to date on best practices in each of the areas addressed.

Summarizing the various dialogues of this subcommittee were suggestions such as:

- Consolidation of student conduct system, BIT processes, Grievance procedures, Compliance and Risk Management programs
- Development of a Regional Training Center for training/ and professional development for regional colleges/universities/school districts on topics on topics such as:
 - Compliance with Federal/State Statutes (Clery Act Reporting, Title IX-Sexual Harassment, SAVE Act, ADA)
 - Student Conduct/Civility (Bystander training)
 - Academic Integrity
 - Implementing Healthy Lifestyles/Risk Management software common to all UT Campuses (Alcohol Edu, Haven)
- More marketing/outreach to faculty, staff, students and families on how to refer students of concern to the Dean of Students Office.
- Implement recommendation on UT System task forces related to mental health, hazing, and alcohol and other drugs.
- Maintain memberships in professional association for professional staff (National Behavioral Intervention Team Association, Center for Academic Integrity, Association for Student Conduct Administration, National Center for Higher Education Risk Management).
- Create a University Standing Committee for student conduct and compliance charged with reviewing and recommending conduct and grievance policies, Academic Integrity/Honor Code, and development of a professional development/compliance program.

The challenges presented in providing equitable and timely services at the various UTRGV locations will require a more coordinated approach that leverages use of trained professionals equipped with the latest software and technologies and knowledgeable in the best practices. The areas of concern charged to this committee are critical in addressing students' concerns with regards to their rights and responsibilities. The following recommendations are based on this goal – That as we move forward with UTRGV, our campus community will experience a

new university that is cognizant of their needs and is respectful of their right to fully engage in a university experience that supports their academic and personal goals.

Recommendations:

- Develop a common code of conduct and unique Honor Code for all locations.
- Research and develop a common BIT plan and develop protocols.
- Determine a uniform method for student grievances.
- Develop policies and protocols regarding sexual harassment/misconduct cases, hazing, alcohol and drug training and other risk management related policies.
- Select and fund one software system to manage judicial process, BIT referral, grievances, sexual harassment/misconduct cases and other risk management related requirements.
- Fund and support professional development, association memberships, regional training, ombudsman/legal services, staffing be provided to ensure equitable and effective services for all campuses.
- Have an Academic Integrity Council to serve in an advisory capacity to review and suggest compliance with policies and protocols.
- Develop a department or hire a staff member to serve as ombudsman and provide legal services to students.
- Develop an assessment to measure student learning outcomes related to judicial services, risk management competencies and understanding the grievance process.

Student Engagement/Involvement

Student engagement's challenge is to deliver a vibrant and dynamic University experience for students to access co-curricular activities that complement classroom learning, promote a connection to the University, and support a campus culture centered on student learning and success. The functions that were explored in the sub-committee included Student Life activities/involvement, leadership development, fraternity/sorority life, spirit programs, clubs and organizations, and student governance.

The ultimate goal of student engagement is to build a sense of community on campus where students "make authentic connections, where learning is a collective venture, and where students grow in identity and integrity" (Creating Campus Community: In Search of Ernest Boyer's Legacy, *Journal of College Student Development* 2003). The work of Dr. Ernest Boyer describes the characteristics of an engaged college community setting; these are purposeful, open, just, disciplined, caring, and celebrative.

A college is an educationally *purposeful* community, a place where faculty and students share academic goals and work together to strengthen teaching and learning on the campus.

A college is an *open* community, a place where freedom of expression is uncompromisingly protected and where civility is powerfully affirmed.

A college is a *just* community, a place where the sacredness of the person is honored and where diversity is aggressively pursued.

A college is a *disciplined* community, a place where individuals accept their obligations to the group and where well-defined governance procedures guide behavior for the common good.

A college is a *caring* community, a place where the well-being of each member is sensitively supported and where service to others is encouraged.

A college is a *celebrative* community, one in which the heritage of the institution is remembered and where rituals affirming both tradition and change are widely shared. **

Student organizations, student governance, campus committee involvement, fraternity and sorority life, mentoring, and promoting school pride and traditions provides a variety of experiential learning opportunities that develop life-long citizen leaders. CAS Standards for student leadership states that

Because students experience leadership in many different settings—in and out of the classroom, on and off campus—virtually every student engages in some type of activity that involves the practice of leadership. Regardless of differences in academic discipline, organizational affiliation, cultural background, or geographical location, students must be better prepared to serve as citizen-leaders in a global community.

Summarizing the various dialogues of this subcommittee were suggestions such as:

- Develop a co-curricular model to guide student engagement and experiential learning outside of the classroom with an electronic model for verifying and tracking student

progress via a co-curricular transcript or student engagement and experiential learning record using a platform such as CollegiateLink.

- Electronically centralize information about student organizations via an online management system such as CollegiateLink.
- Encourage local fraternities and sororities to incorporate or affiliate with a national organization. Local fraternities who remain unincorporated will be required to abide by Title IX requirements, adopt a risk management policies in alignment with best practices for fraternities and sororities, and maintain liability insurance for the organization and its operations.
- All incoming first-year students will receive a peer mentor (Mentors: students, staff, or faculty) tied to a common course for first year students.
- Develop a mentoring program targeted to students at risk of going on probation, are on probation, or returning to school after stopping out or being suspended to aid with their academic persistence, retention, and graduation.
- Programs, services, and campus life calendars need to be designed to be inclusive, celebrative of the campus and cultural climate, support the academic mission of the institution and be accessible to students.

Student Governance

Develop an infrastructure of student governance that meets the diverse needs of the student body:

- Develop an advisory structure that supports/serves the medical school students. Each medical program would be represented by an elected/selected student. Leadership from the medical school advisory would serve as a leader with the Student Government Association. The medical student advisory would have financial and technological resources to outreach to medical students.
- Develop a graduate student advisory to meet the needs of graduate students located across the campuses. The leadership from the graduate student advisory would serve as a leader with the Student Government Association. As the number of graduate students and programs grow, the recommendation would be to have the advisory develop in to a Graduate Student Association as the governing structure for meeting and addressing graduate student needs. The graduate student advisory would have financial and technological resources to outreach to graduate students.
- The Student Government Association would be made up of representation from across the campuses with primary focus on undergraduate students. The President/Vice Presidential candidates would run together with one candidate from the Brownsville campus and the other from the Edinburg campus.

Student Organizations

- Sports clubs would be governed and supported by the Wellness & Recreation program(s) in alignment with best standards of practice as per (NIRSA). Recreational organizations may also be considered to fall into this category.
- Allow for organizations to be campus-based (unique to location) or multisite. To bring student organization community, create engagement opportunities across locations.
- Have a student organization council that provides insight into campus policy and procedures that pertain to student organizations. Potentially have leader from

organization serve in a representative role with the Student Government Association

- Host one organization awards and recognition program with Brownsville and Edinburg alternating as host site.
- Develop an Honors Society Council that has a staff member overseeing student records/invitations for those meeting qualifications and coordinating induction ceremonies. (similar to UTSA Honors Alliance)

Campus Committees & Council

- Have a staff person responsible for marketing, recruiting, communicating with appointees, insuring committee/council accountability, and tracking membership. Committee appointments would be based on calendar year (Jan-Dec.). Student appointees would be approved by the SGA.
- Primary areas for student involvement would be on Auxiliary based committees such as bookstore, vending, dining, etc.), student fee funded facilities and fee based committees
- Each academic college or school should have a college-based advisory for students to have direct input and relationship with its leadership (perhaps a student representative from each academic student organization or from each program of study)

Financial Literacy

- Develop a program that certifies all students (similar to Red to Black at Texas Tech) and provides educational workshops and assistance (similar to Student Money Management Center at the University of North Texas).

Spirit Program

- Have a regionally recognized Cheer and Dance Program that serves as an ambassador of the institution promoting good will, community relations, supports development efforts, and a college going culture.

Recommendations:

- Decide on a common software system for student engagement activities to manage clubs and organizations and serve as a clearinghouse for the wide array of programs offered.
- Develop a process for registering clubs and organization, including fraternities and sororities that will be recognized at any campus location. This recognition would grant them access and other privileges such as room reservations, fundraising opportunities, and trainings offered by various departments.
- Determine populations to target for peer mentoring programs designed to increase student success.
- Establish a student governance system that represents all of the vital student constituencies including undergraduate, graduate and professional students. The entities would represent their populations in the larger shared governance structure of UTRGV.

- Develop an advisory structure for student organizations that is supportive to the missions of the various types of student entities (e.g. fraternity/sorority governance, sports clubs).
- Include student input as a vital component in the selection of its mascot and school colors.
- Fund and support professional development, association memberships, regional training, and staffing to ensure equitable and effective services are offered at all campuses.
- Adopt Student Learning Outcomes for student engagement programs focusing on: 1.) civic engagement and school spirit; 2.) critical thinking; 3.) global citizenship and cultural understanding; and 4.) leadership and professional development.

Student Auxiliary Services

Student auxiliary services is composed of services whose funding is fee or revenue oriented and follow business practices and principles in their service design including facilities, personnel and programs. For the purpose of this report student auxiliary areas include the Student Union, Residence Life, Child Development Center and Student Media. Each of these functions supports the overall mission of the new university in creating an environment conducive to learning and success through services essential to a holistic college experience.

Student Union

UTRGV will continue the tradition of offering student life centers that house meeting, dining and lounge spaces for the convenience of students, faculty and staff. The Union facilities can serve as important gateways to aid UTRGV in its mission to create more access to higher education. The numerous out of classroom experiences taking place in these facilities serve to enhance the academic and personal development of students. As “student centered” entities, Unions also offer students various opportunities for volunteerism and leadership through its advisory boards and valuable career experience for the students employed in them. The activities being hosted in a Student Union also serve as a complement to classroom experiences and help to bring students and all other members of the campus community together.

Strong consideration should be given to the economic benefit of expanding student union facilities as they create revenue opportunities for the University and employment opportunities for students. Demand for convenient retail will be high for UTRGV due to the physical expansion of the institution through the Rio Grande Valley. Enrollment growth will also create a demand for additional student spaces for activities. UTRGV will serve as a gathering place for the community, which will necessitate expansion of current Student Union facilities to house additional meeting and dining spaces.

Offering modern facilities with adequate space and amenities to support student learning and engagement will be vital to the success of UTRGV. Giving our students opportunities to engage in meaningful activities where they connect to their faculty and to their community will help to propel UTRGV to be a highly success Hispanic Serving Institution. There is a disparity in the unions at Edinburg and Brownsville. Discussion points are highlighted below:

- The will be the vast space deficit of the current facilities. The current facilities in Edinburg and Brownsville are very similar in size with 44,000 sq. ft. and 45,000 sq. ft., respectively. In accordance with previously published CAS standards and ACUI benchmark studies, the recommended size of a Union facility is 10 sq. ft. per enrolled student. This would mean a space deficit of 156,000 sq. ft. for the Edinburg campus and a 35,000 sq. ft. deficit for the Brownsville campus (in accordance with Fall 2013 enrollment data).
- Aside from size, another challenge lies on the Brownsville campus, where the facility is currently in use for administration purposes. The subcommittee strongly advocates for consideration to be given to repurpose the facility for student use.
- Food services on the Brownsville campus will also need to be considered as a complement to student life and other programs, such as residence life.

Recommendations

- Have fully functioning Student Unions at the Edinburg and Brownsville campus locations offering a wide array of services to the campus community.
- Ensure that facilities are of adequate size to support the enrollment of each location.
- Capitalize on the financial revenue streams to support the growth of Student Union facilities and programming.

Child Development Center

Child care is a critical resource to alleviate the stress of caretaking and ease the strain of juggling competing priorities and obligations. Having access to care is one of student parents' top concerns. Child care facilities not only allow parents peace of mind and give them more time to devote to school and earning income, the facilities can also help increase retention among a group that is likely to drop out of school.

(Source: <http://www.iwpr.org/blog/2011/05/03/college-students-with-children-need-campuses-with-child-care/>)

UTPA currently has a Child Development Center (CDC) that supports students, faculty and staff. Students who receive Pell funding are eligible for reduced or free child care. The capacity of the CDC is from infants to preschool. The CDC does not have a counterpart at Brownsville.

- The CDC must ensure licensure as well as maintain agreements with the outside agencies, accreditation and secure grant funds. Discussions have been held with:
 - Texas Department of Family and Protective Services - Child Care Licensing Division
 - Workforce Solutions - Child Care Services
 - Texas Department of Agriculture - Special Nutrition Program
 - National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Program

Recommendations

- Build and staff a new child care facility at the Brownsville Campus and the continuation of the CDC on the Edinburg campus.
- Establish a charter elementary school.
- Fund and support professional development, association memberships, and staffing to ensure equitable and effective services for all campuses.

Residence Life

Residential programs offer students support in their academic pursuits by creating an on campus living environment which provides residents purposeful educational experiences.

Summarizing the various dialogues of this subcommittee were suggestions such as:

- The importance of having aesthetically appealing and state of the art housing that attracts students to the University. UTRGV will need to remain competitive with other UT System institutions that have long-standing (and larger) on-campus programs.

- Residential programs offer many benefits, such as convenience and safety, which help support students in their academics.
- The new UTRGV will need to build additional on-campus facilities to accommodate any enrollment growths.
- Facilities will need to vary in style (single to double units to traditional and apartment style) to meet the developmental needs of students attending the University.
- Future facilities will need to create advantages for the on campus student that distinguishes them from their competitors. Programmatic advantages could include: access to free washers/dryers, 24 hour security, living/learning communities, bookless libraries, faculty in-residence, student activities, in residence health services, in residence tutoring and individual leases that distinguish on-campus housing and make it more desirable to future students.
- The addition of the medical school will also create a demand for married/family housing in close proximity to the academic facilities. This will help in the recruitment of students (and faculty) from outside the RGV.
- In order to maintain an adequate number of rooms to create a residential university of all campuses, the number of rooms on both the Brownsville and Edinburg campuses should comprise 8% to 10% of the total full time enrollment. This would ensure that both campuses are providing sufficient housing for enrolled students to maintain the residential campus.

Recommendations

- Decide on a common software system for residence life to manage housing assignments, inventory, billing and other related services.
- Determine if a housing requirement should be mandated for all freshmen students.
- Develop common housing policies that will provide a consistent on-campus living environment.
- Explore options of various housing styles and amenities to attract more students to live on campus.
- Support strategic planning that includes the construction of additional housing adequate to the needs of each campus location.
- Fund and support professional development, association memberships, regional training, and staffing to ensure equitable and effective services for all campuses.

Student Media

Student Media provides an outlet for student expression and a forum for the exchange of ideas through various mediums. These mediums strive to include fair, complete, balanced and accurate coverage of events impacting the university campus, with emphasis on matters that most directly affect students. Student Media is an essential aspect of student life at both UTPA (The Pan American) and UTB (The Collegian). Both programs have served their respective campuses and have received recognition at the state and national levels. At present both campuses have print and online newspapers, web-based campus radio stations and student produced TV programs.

Because of their similarities and differences, this subcommittee had a substantial amount of discussion:

- Student Media at both Edinburg and Brownsville have enjoyed a strong presence and employ a large number of students every year.
- At Edinburg student media advising is done by faculty who teach communication and journalism courses while at Brownsville Student Media is managed and supervised by a full time professional staff member.
- Merging the two programs will be done for the mutual benefit of growing student media to continue to give students valuable experience that will help them secure internships and jobs after graduation. Working together will have the benefit of enhancing the overall mission, which is to educate students in journalism and community involvement and to find suitable employment after graduation.
- The sub-committee explored the benefits of uniting the programs under academic affairs to create uniform curriculums for all the outlets - print, television and radio.
- The creation of a governing body to oversee all of student media is also a goal of this working group. The body or “board” would be comprised of members of the student body, faculty, staff, administration and news media professionals. Bylaws and operating procedures would also be established to ensure both accountability and fairness.
- UTRGV shall strive to maintain strong ties to all local media outlets for the benefit of our students when securing internships. Local internships at newspapers, radio and television stations as well all emerging technologies such as social media, have been key to students acquiring jobs in the industry. Additionally, involving local newspaper editors and radio and television producers will add additional support to the curriculum and help students stay on trend in the field.
- Looking to the future, student media on both campuses has already been moving to offering all their content online. The market for web-based journalism and design is booming and the more our students can work with new technologies, including video and audio webcasting, the better their chances of obtaining employment in the media after graduation. The new site would also open up chances for students to work on Web advertising sales, which is another career field that has been created by this new trend in journalism.
- The promotion of careers in mass communication to high school students through the establishment of a media conference. *The Pan American* newspaper began this successful endeavor in 2001. Middle and high school students would be invited to the conference to participate in journalism workshops and contests. Visits to the schools to promote the conference will not only promote this career field but also help recruit students to the university.
- Finally, the construction of an “on the air” FM broadcast radio and television broadcast station would be a signature achievement for UTRGV. The high enrollment of Hispanic students would make UTRGV an instant and stellar university for Hispanic students pursuing career journalism and broadcasting. The creation of such a station would take time and an engineering study would need to be made along with a plan to raise the needed funds for its construction and maintenance.

In consideration of its future Student Media outlets, the recommendations of the subcommittee focus on four major components: 1.) Community and university involvement; 2.) An all-encompassing student media board; 3.) Uniform communication curriculums and 4.) Serve as a clearinghouse website and multimedia platform featuring work from all affiliated entities to supplement the traditional media production of all distinct parties.

Recommendations

- Maintain a media presence at each campus, whether by “bureaus” or themed publications.
- Create a Student Media program with one primary website to serve as the clearing-house featuring stories from all affiliated student media.
- Unite the current programs under one academic department to complement the classroom instruction in Communications.
- Consider a manager, coordinator or director to coordinate the various media publications, messages and student staff.
- Ensure the student media programs offer students the needed experience to secure internships and employment after graduation.
- Create a strong and visible student media program to spotlight UTRGV as coveted place for Hispanic students to launch them into careers in journalism and broadcasting.
- Support a Student Media advisory board comprised of faculty, staff and community members to give guidance to the various student mediums.

Student Health and Wellness

The guiding principles of Project South Texas express that UTRGV will focus on offering programs and services and providing bicultural, biliterate and bilingual education from a global perspective. The committee believes that the innovations recommended are state of the art student services that will enhance the image of the university as a leading Hispanic institution of higher learning. Support services for students have to be tantamount in importance to the academic services in order to be able to sustain the students during their academic life and improve retention and timely graduation.

By providing opportunities for our students to develop and increase their awareness of every aspect of wellness, students will become more likely to relay these habits to their success in college. The Wellness Wheel is a multidimensional, holistic approach to wellness and well-being. The theory suggests seven dimensions to complete wellness: physical, intellectual, spiritual, financial, social, emotional and environmental.

The physical component recognizes the need for regular physical activity. Students who practice physical well-being apply knowledge about exercise, nutrition, fitness, healthy eating habits, and personal hygiene into their daily routines.

The intellectual component measures the degree to which a student engages in creative mental activities. An intellectual healthy person uses the resources available to increase their knowledge and skills while sharing them with others.

The emotional component recognizes awareness and acceptance of one's feelings. Emotional wellness includes the level in which one feels positive and energetic about the life they live. Positive emotional wellness also allows one to be sensitive and have empathy towards others.

The social component encourages participation in the student's community, campus, and environment.

The spiritual component encourages students to increase their understanding of their beliefs, values, and ethics, which can help guide a clear path in their lives.

The financial (professional) component measures the satisfaction gained from working and the level one is interested in the work.

The environmental component encourages developing an awareness of the environment that surrounds an individual and enhancing the relationship that a student has with it. (Medical University of South Carolina, Wellness Works)

The Committee understands that there are major funding issues related to the implementation of a state of the arts support services program for students and is recommending evaluation of pertinent student's fees, grant funding from government and foundations as well as private corporate philanthropies. In addition health insurance billing should be implemented for those services that are covered by private and government funded health insurances.

We are committed to providing services that help students meet their wellness needs from a holistic perspective, with a focus on education for life-long learning and health. The committee

subgroups – counseling and psychological services, medical services, wellness and recreational sports, and disability services – met separately to address the topics indicated in the above subject areas and each one prepared a written report.

The Counseling and Student health committee provided several detailed recommendations for innovations that can be summarized as follows:

- Implementation of one operational organizational structure to provide oversight to both campuses counseling and student health services.
- Integration of services based on the current best practices model at both campuses.
- Collaboration with the academic departments to contribute to the educational needs of students for supervised internship experiences - medical, ophthalmology and dentistry, nursing, social work, counseling, laboratory sciences, pharmacy in addition to research endeavors.
- Implementation of comprehensive programs that meet the needs of all students: veterans, female and male health, GLBTQI, students with developmental challenges and special needs, students with alcohol and addiction problems.
- Although applicable to all students, the committee with the input of the medical student addressed the need for the provision of mental health needs of medical students cautiously protecting their confidentiality as it potentially would impact their future professional licensing.

Recommendations

The Counseling and Student Health Committee provided several detailed recommendations for innovations that can be summarized as follows:

- Implement one operational organizational structure to provide oversight to both campuses counseling and student health services.
- Implement integrated services based on current best practices model at both campuses.
- Select a common software electronic medical record (EMR) system for counseling and student health services to manage patient records.
- Collaborate with academic affairs to contribute to the educational needs of students for supervised internship experiences - medical, ophthalmology and dentistry, nursing, social work, counseling, laboratory sciences, pharmacy in addition to research endeavors.
- Implement comprehensive programs that meet the needs of all students: veterans, female and male health, GLBTQI, students with developmental challenges and special needs, students with alcohol and addiction problems.
- Explore the unique needs of mental health needs of medical students cautiously protecting their confidentiality as it would impact on their future professional licensing.

The mission of Disability Services is to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to all university programs and activities and foster a supportive and inclusive educational environment by promoting disability awareness. The Edinburg and Brownsville campuses both have a Disability Services department that are acquainted and share similar structures and offer similar services. Discussion regarding Disability Services:

- The need to educate and register students with disabilities to assess, recommend and provide accommodations that take several months to obtain (i.e. Books/ Material in

Braille, Alternate Format and provide sign language interpreters to be ready to address the students' needs the first day of class).

- Universal Design in Architecture – Should be on going with both locations in connection with Facilities Management.
- Universal Design in Learning – Training and implementation to be complete within one year of Fall of 2015 and continue on going.
- Large proctoring exam rooms with more carols.
- Use of iCloud for storage of certain programs to access from different locations.
- Testing Services for students whose documentation may need updating.
- Use of resources such as Rehab Interns, psychology interns, social work interns, etc.
- Collaborate with grant programs and research programs.
- Autism Center to focus on the need to provide services for students that are on the spectrum.
- Establishing a Student Disability Council.
- Use of Assistive Technology and software such Dragon, Kurzweil, Read Write Gold, etc. for student use by Fall 2015 at various locations (library, computer labs) at all campuses.
- Access to training via webinars, conferences, etc.
- Make full use of advances in technology and the concept of Universal Design for Learning to “promote access” to university programs and services for all, including students and employees with disabilities.
- Implement software/automation solutions to enable functional areas to harmonize and streamline services across the campuses.
- Utilize graduate and research programs to enhance services for students with disabilities.

The Disability Services committee recommended the following innovations:

- Decide on a common software system for Disability Services to manage intakes, accommodations, inventory, faculty letters and other pertinent information needed for the department.
- Consider Universal Design in future construction and renovation projects.
- Incorporate elements of Universal Design as a collective practice to be utilized in all aspects of the campus community (i.e. teaching, customer service, etc.) through training of faculty and staff to better serve the learning needs of all students.
- Create ADA friendly administrative facilities which provide the community ideal accommodations in and out of the classroom (i.e. Disability Office, Library, performance halls, auditoriums, etc.).

The mission of Recreational Sports (RS) is to enhance the mind, body, and spirit of students and other eligible individuals by providing programs, services, and facilities that are responsive to the physical, social, recreational, and lifelong educational needs of the campus community as they relate to health, fitness, and learning. To accomplish this mission, RS should:

- provide programs and services for participants that are conducive to the development of holistic health, particularly fitness and wellness;
- provide comprehensive programs and services in a variety of program formats that reflect and promote the diversity of participant interests, needs, and ability levels;

- provide participation, employment, and leadership opportunities designed to enhance learning, growth, and development;
- provide participation, employment, and leadership opportunities designed to increase interaction and understanding among individuals from various backgrounds;
- contribute to the public relations efforts of the institution, including the recruitment and retention of students, faculty members, and staff members;
- facilitate service-learning opportunities for students;
- work in collaboration with academic units to facilitate professional preparation opportunities for students;
- provide programs, facilities, and equipment that are delivered in a safe, healthy, clean, accessible, and enjoyable environment.

Discussion among the Recreational Sports sub-committee:

- Add an outdoor activities program (kayaking, hiking, camping, etc.).
- Provide a larger program for lifelong leisure activities.
- Provide online programming (e.g. video stream exercise classes).
- Implement a campus bicycle lending program (include campus infrastructure needs into campus master planning process).
- Support more wellness programming for faculty and staff.
- Host and support medical/health related research.
- Branding of recreation facilities with new university colors and logos.
- Provide recreation services at satellite campuses; maybe hotel style fitness centers at McAllen and Starr County sites.
- Insure compatibility of facility operating software at all campuses.
- Host NIRSA events (regional conferences, tournaments, workshops).
- Facility upgrades to increase outdoor recreation fields quality and quantity.
- Build jogging trail with workout stations.
- Facility space expansions to include: mind/body classes, healthy cooking demonstration kitchen, bowling alley, high ropes course, wrestling/martial arts spaces, natatorium, additional gym courts, additional weight room space, additional racquetball courts, additional locker room space, spaces to support research (laboratory), indoor soccer at Brownsville.

Recommendations

- Create and support an organizational structure that includes full-sized recreational programs and departments at all locations to provide an adequate level of services.

Student Career and Veterans Services

Career Services

The Office of Career Services is a vital component in facilitating students' career development success and attaining employment after graduation. Upon review of the departments at UTPA and UTB, both offer related services which can easily be consolidated and further enhanced and expanded to increase efficiency. The subcommittee encourages a College-to-Career culture which is inclusive of faculty, staff, alumni and employers as the new university is developed. The utilization of technology will be essential for the delivery of services and to support the office's goals to reach students both virtually and in person, using strategies for navigating their careers before and after graduation.

Excerpts of the dialogue among the subcommittee included:

- Create a College-to-Career culture that includes faculty, staff, alumni, employers and consider changing the department's name to Professional and Career Development Center.
 - Every UTRGV student should build a career development plan that spans from orientation to graduation and beyond.
- Professional and Career Development leadership must be a member of the University Council and be able to nurture relations with the following stake holders: Academics, advancement/development, alumni relations, information technology, admissions, and student life.
- Develop critical career development competency areas based on feedback from students and recruiting organization representatives.
- Establish and strengthen existing relationships with local employers, especially with those that will conduct business with the new UT-RGV as a result of the "Spend Valley First" initiative".
- Review current technology being used and options for establishing mobile offices where career advisors will have the ability to work from multiple locations.
 - Establish a single UT-RGV Career Connection from UTB and UTPA's existing online services
 - Consolidate both UTPA and UTB MyEdu accounts into a single UTRGV account.
- Establish an automated Student Employment process and adopt a student employee pay/classification plan that takes into account academic performance and job-responsibilities.

As the new university develops it is extremely important that the proposed Professional and Career Development Center be fully functional by day one. The new office will need to implement tools and technology necessary to efficiently track key performance indicators such as graduates' employment status and salaries, job posting information, as well as improved measuring of relevant retention initiatives. It is recommended that the working group visit aspirant institutions and review best practices. With sufficient resources the new office should offer efficient yet thorough career development services and programming which empower graduates to make more informed career and graduate school decisions.

Recommendations

- Develop one organizational structure to include service areas which offer an equal level of services and programming for students and alumni across campuses. These service areas should have one departmental head, Executive Director, which is located at a central office and oversees Employers Relations and Directors at each of the service areas.
- Establish a plan to promote a College-to-Career culture.
- Establish a career services office to promote effective and efficient delivery of services to include:
 - Technological resources – offered virtually or in-office for students (on campus and online), alumni and employers.
 - Budgetary resources – sources of funds and possible fees.
 - Office space needs – determine need for new offices across campuses to include: staff offices, interview rooms and locations for career fairs.

Veterans Services is a vital area within the university that provides pertinent information to veterans and military families regarding military educational benefits, university requirements and support services available within the university, with the US Department of Veteran Affairs and with local, state and federal agencies.

- Provide a holistic approach to serving student veterans and commitment to providing a welcoming environment, quality education and path to success for veterans, dependents and the military community.
- Maintain strong collaborations with local, state, and federal agencies and organizations that can provide support, events and information for military families
- Collaborate with university departments whose services will assist in the educational success of student veterans and military families enrolled at UTRGV. (i.e. career services, tutoring, counseling and testing services)
- Model schools reviewed by working group included the University of Texas at San Antonio, Texas A&M, Texas State University, Florida State University and Sam Houston State.

Recommendations:

- Provide centrally located and accessible Veteran Success Centers on each campus that performs VA and Hazelwood certifications and provides services such as academic advising, mentoring and a multi-purpose room for student gathering, study spaces and computer facilities.
- Ensure designation as a “Military Friendly Campus” by maintaining membership in and adherence to the Service members Opportunity Colleges (SOC) Consortium standards and continue to support the “Got Your 6” pledge.
- Improve process efficiencies and record retention by imaging all VA related documentation.
- Utilize the American Council on Education (ACE) guidelines to award maximum academic credit for military experience.
- Establish a Student Veterans of America student organization at the new University.
- Develop targeted outreach/recruitment efforts of student veterans.

Conclusion

In Tinto's book, *Completing College: Rethinking Institutional Action*, he states "access without support is not opportunity" and underscores the importance of academic course alignment coupled with life skills development. Student services and student life are able to complement the academic mission by providing an environment for students to affirm their academic and career aspirations, engage in self-discovery, values clarification, leadership development and civic engagement activities. Having a defined co-curriculum paves the way for experiential learning that bridges the in and out of classroom environment to create a seamless "intellectual community" (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, and Associates, 2005, pg. 145). Through mentoring, leadership development programs, integrating learning within residential communities, supporting students' overall health and wellness, providing paraprofessional opportunities through internships, research, and assistantships, a comprehensive student life program can help maximize student success by helping students better understand themselves. These programs and services also help students understand how to effectively communicate and work with others, participate in shared campus governance, and learn how to successfully navigate University resources, policies, and procedures to create a supportive campus environment which was identified as key to student achievement.

From the Documenting Effective Educational Practice (DEEP) Project research, hallmarks of effective practices that enhance student achievement featured in *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions That Matter* (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, and Associates, 2005) are:

1. "Living" Mission and "Lived" Educational Philosophy
2. An Unshakeable Focus on Student Learning
3. Environments Adapted for Educational Enrichment
4. Clear Pathways to Student Success
5. An Improvement-Oriented Ethos and
6. Shared Responsibility for Educational Quality

"Colleges and Universities with supportive campus environments are characterized by high-quality student relationships with other students, faculty, and the institution's administrative personnel. These institutions not only make available resources that students can use to enhance academic skills or to enrich the quality of their social life, but they also find ways to induce students to actually use these resources" (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, and Associates, 2005, pg. 260).

Critical Startup Elements

Student Discipline and Compliance

- Select student conduct codes and hearing and appeals procedures
- Select common grievance procedures
- Create an Honor Code
- Develop a strategic plan for effective risk management programs that address health and safety and mandated compliance

Student Engagement and Involvement

- Host elections for SGA Spring 2015 so that the leadership and representation are in place for the start of Fall 2015
- Renew/select contracts or IT developed system for tracking co-curricular learning/engagement and centralized electronic management system for student organization operations and record keeping.
- Renew/select centralized Event Registration/Facility Reservation system such as Ad Astra.
- Design and develop university ring Spring 2015 for availability for December 2015 graduates and determine other University traditions and branding in place and ready for promotion to prospective and returning students to insure affiliation and connection to institution. (electronic, print, video, and social media)
- Determine school colors, mascot, and organizational structure for Spirit Program (connected to Athletics or student life) and host try outs Spring 2015 so participants can attend camp/training and are in place Fall 2015.
- Policy and procedural development (SGA Constitution, organization handbook, etc.)

Student Auxiliary Services

Student Union

- Develop a plan to return the Brownsville Student Union building back to student life.
- Explore the possibility of including the Brownsville campus in Edinburg's existing contract with Sodexo Campus Dining and identify dining locations in Brownsville.
- Conduct a benchmark study for both campuses to determine immediate space needs (meeting spaces, dining, lounge and administrative)

Child Development Center

- New child care license
- Update accreditation certification
- Texas Rising Star recertification
- New Child Care Provider Agreement
- New Child and Adult Care Food Program Agreement

Residence Life

- A physical and fiscal assessment of current facilities will need to be conducted to determine the viability of constructing new facilities.
- Food services are a vital component of on campus housing. At present, the Brownsville campus does not have such services. Exploring the possibility of including the

Brownsville campus in Edinburg's existing contract with Sodexo will be a critical first step.

- Conduct an assessment of on-campus types and housing fees at other UT System institutions
- Finally, an analysis of existing housing policies will be needed to determine if changes should be made to the "mile radius" requirement that currently exists in Edinburg and if future construction in Brownsville would deem it necessary for a policy to be implemented there.

Student Media

- Develop a plan to move the advisement and administration of student media under Academics
- Research other institutions with student media governing bodies and policies that can serve as a model
- Work with the University Advancement divisions in Edinburg and Brownsville to discuss fundraising opportunities for the construction of broadcast stations.

Student Wellness

- Secure dedicated recreation spaces for outdoor and indoor programming at the Brownsville campus.
- Develop dedicated space for student health and disability services at the Brownsville campus.

Student Career and Veterans Services

Career Services

- Job Fairs: the schedule and logistics of all job fairs needs to be organized by March 2015 so registration information for employers can be available by the end of April 2015.
- Online infrastructure: Currently both UTB and UTPA utilize online software from CSO Research, Inc. from Austin, TX. The determination to continue services needs to be made by Fall 2014 when licenses are renewed. Additional software purchases to offer comprehensive and/or virtual services need to be completed by Fall 2014 along with any technical staff to support the expansion of services.
- Infrastructure and additional staffing should be in place by January 2015 with focus on online services and employer relations.

Veterans Services

- Approval needed from Texas Veterans Commission as the state approving agency to process educational benefits for veterans and their dependents
- Sign Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department of Veterans Affairs and UTRGV to gain access to VA-ONCE system
- Submit VA form 22-8794 to designate Certifying Official(s) for UTRGV

Sources

NaBITA - brings together professionals from multiple disciplines who are engaged in the essential function of behavioral intervention in schools, on college campuses, and in corporations and organizations for mutual support and shared learning.

<http://nabita.org/>

The International Center for Academic Integrity works to identify, affirm, and promote the values of academic integrity among students, faculty, teachers, and administrators.

<http://www.academicintegrity.org/icai/home.php>

ASCA supports higher education professionals by providing education materials and resources, intentional professional development opportunities and a network of colleagues to facilitate best practices of student conduct administration and conflict resolution on college and university campuses. <http://www.theasca.org/>

The NCHERM Group is the umbrella for eight linked organizations which serve to advance holistic, proactive prevention and risk management within K-12 schools and on college and university campuses. <http://www.ncherp.org/>

The E.P.I.C. Journey is a unique collaborative strategy addressing violations of community standards by assessing skill sets in four areas; engagement with the university, personal development, interpersonal development and community membership.

<http://utsa.edu/studentlife/conduct/epic.html>

AlcoholEdu® for College With nine published studies documenting its efficacy, AlcoholEdu is the only program proven to reduce alcohol-related negative consequences among college students. <http://www.everfi.com/substance-abuse-prevention>

Step UP! is a comprehensive bystander intervention program that will teach you: decision making steps, other factors that affect helping, including perspective taking, strategies for effective helping, the S.E.E. Model: Safe; Early; Effective, warning signs, action steps and resources. Step UP! is used by athletics, Greek life, student affairs, campus health, violence prevention centers, residence life and many others.

<http://www.stepupprogram.org/>

Student Engagement/Involvement

http://www.niu.edu/stuaff/division_employee_resources/PresentationsPublications/presentation/Boyer-SixPrinciples.pdf

Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, CAS Standards Contextual Statement, Student Leadership Programs

Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, CAS Standards Contextual Statement, Fraternity and Sorority Life

Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, CAS Standards Contextual Statement, Campus Activities

Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, CAS Standards Contextual Statement, Multicultural Student Programs and Services

Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, CAS Standards Contextual Statement, Service Learning Programs

Tinto, V. (2012). *Completing College: Rethinking Institutional Action*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Kuh, G.D., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J.H., Whitt, E.J., & Associates (2005). *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions That Matter*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Student Services Auxiliaries

¹ Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, CAS Standards Contextual Statement, The Role of College Unions

² Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, CAS Standards Contextual Statement, The Role of Housing and Residential Life Programs

Minimum Standard for Licensed Child Care Centers

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_care/

National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Program

<http://www.naccp.org>

Child and Adult Care Food Program

<http://www.squaremeals.org>

Student Health and Wellness

Counseling and Student Health Services: A visit to the Student Health Services at the UTSA Health Sciences Center indicated that the student Health services are separate from the services provided at the academic campus. They provide health and mental health counseling services to medical and allied health career students. Provision of mental health counseling treatment to medical students is of utmost importance since they present with situations that are usually resulting from the academic pressures they face. Ensuring total confidentiality of services is of paramount importance. The medical students at UTSA Health Sciences Center can access a distinct psychologist that provides the services safeguarding any potential for breach of confidentiality. "Medical school is inherently a stressful, challenging academic experience, which may make medical students vulnerable to depression, anxiety, and burnout" (and possibly suicide). (Psychiatry (Edgmont). 2009 May; 6(5): 38–45.

Article: [30 colleges receive mental health 'seal of approval'](#), Emily Atteberry, USA TODAY October 1, 2013 "The Jed Foundation, a national non-profit organization that advocates suicide

prevention among college students, has named the first 30 colleges to receive a 'seal of approval' for their respective mental health resources on campus.”

College Students Speak: A Survey Report on Mental Health, © 2012 by NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness

A visit to the UT Austin Students Recovery Center was conducted to learn about their approach to providing recovery and support services to students who struggling with issues related to alcohol and/or drug use.

Internet search: Student Health Centers at Rutgers University, New Jersey: Rutgers–New Brunswick campus - Division of Family Medicine at Monument Square - for students at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, the School of Public Health, and the School of Health Related Professions; Rutgers Health Services for all other Rutgers–New Brunswick students

Student Career and Veterans Services

CAS Standards for Career Services

<http://www.cas.edu/getpdf.cfm?PDF=E867F85C-0174-E7C6-744BF48F5D8A9965>

NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers)

<http://www.naceweb.org/>

Career Services offices

Arizona State University

<https://eoss.asu.edu/cs>

UTSA

<http://utsa.edu/careercenter/>

Texas State University

<http://www.careerservices.txstate.edu/>

Colorado State University

<http://www.career.colostate.edu/>

University of Minnesota

<http://www.career.umn.edu/>

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/csd/summary/v044/44.2saunders.html> Sue Saunders

Wellness Wheel

http://academicdepartments.musc.edu/esl/studentprograms/wellness_works/whywellwork.htm