



ASU Student Experience Task Force Report

December 12, 2017

The goal of the ASU Student Experience Task Force was to conduct an in-depth assessment of the student experience. The group's purpose was to provide recommendations to improve student retention and graduation based on student feedback.

The task force prioritized the following areas:

Lack of adequate student activity programming. The lack of programming on both campuses was a significant finding. Most students felt that reductions in staff and other changes related to the consolidation of campus activities have led to a significant decrease in programming in student activities. After some discussion, they concluded that student activities were declining even before consolidation.

Many complaints related to enrollment management. Survey results were overwhelming around Financial Aid processing and distribution. In addition, complaints about poor customer service and misinformation were numerous. However, there were also many very positive comments from the East Campus students about their orientation process which involved many activities designed to help students bond and which helped them feel connected to the University. West Campus students rated reinstatement of Degree Works as their number one priority. They were also most concerned about the lack of consistent academic advising.

Poor communications between academics, student affairs, campus administration and the student body. Few communications or repeated emails or texts which contain errors or which repeat information previously sent were found to be confusing and often lead to students to dismiss or block official emails or texts. A desire to list another email for contact rather than the University assigned email was also expressed.

Lack of adequate staff and programming in Housing. Many students reported a shortage in RAs or Area Coordinators to help with first year student problems or to provide educational programs. Difficulties in getting work orders processed and room improvements were also common complaints. Currently the lack of a housing director was viewed as problematic.



Lack of organized activities and programming to enhance the first-year experience. The seniors had many very positive first year experiences which they thought were important in shaping the overall student experience from the moment they arrived on campus. Orientation, Week of Welcome activities and peer mentors were important in shaping student engagement with ASU. The seniors believe that these activities have been eliminated and are not aware of current plans or if these are being reinstated. They also feel strongly that these activities are critical to building student engagement and a sense of belonging.

Lack of sufficient staff in Student Affairs. Student leaders commented that they have worked with three different vice presidents in the last three years. They are not sure who is over student activities and can only identify the Dean of Students as a position that can be called on for assistance. The student leaders attribute much of student engagement and focus on student programming to Student Affairs and they are not satisfied with the level of programming and attention to student success that they think should be provided by Student Affairs.

Lack of sufficient SGA representation from the West Campus student body. While efforts to bring the East and West campus together as a consolidated SGA organization are underway, there is a need to formalize that process. A rewrite of the SGA constitution and bylaws has been ongoing but the process has not been completed.

Overwhelming student concern regarding the demolition of the Holley building. The student leaders report that students and some alumni are concerned about maintaining and preserving the legacy of the ASU founder should the Holley building be demolished as planned.

Recommendations:

1. We recommend the hiring of an experienced vice president for student affairs who will focus on staffing and programming issues, and who can work with enrollment management directors to improve the first-year experience activities and programs.
2. We recommend hiring qualified Student Affairs staff to enhance programming on both campuses and to restore the level of programming prior to staffing shortages. As part of this enhancement, a student programming group including staff from various offices could be activated and led by staff in Student Affairs. A programming calendar would help identify and advertise events.
3. We recommend hiring a housing director charged with comprehensive management and leadership of Residence Life, including staff and RA training and development and



implementation of programmatic initiatives to ensure student engagement and community safety. The Housing director must also serve as liaison to academic departments, enrollment management and student affairs to develop programming focused on academic success, persistence and retention.

4. We recommend a comprehensive review of all enrollment services, especially those services being considered for the “One Stop Shop” being developed on the West Campus. We also recommend a delay in the opening of the “One Stop Shop” until a plan is developed and all offices are properly trained. A focus on cross-training and improved customer service of the enrollment management services offered should be mandatory. Training and focus on improved customer service should be instituted for all enrollment-related services.
5. We recommend the inclusion of the Holley name in some significant way on campus to ensure the history and legacy of the founder is not eliminated. We also recognize that the history of the former Darton campus should be preserved as well. Proper display and/or preservation of the history, including photos, other historical items, from both campuses should be a priority.
6. We recommend restructuring of the SGA to include officers/senators who are representative of the academic units and seek to be more inclusive of the student body in the executive officers and Senate representatives. There are several models we will put forward that are used on other campuses. The Dean of Students will also review models from other consolidated campuses.
7. We also recommend a review of the SGA bylaws and constitution, again using another consolidated campus model to write a new constitution. This should be implemented in early spring and approved before the new election of SGA officers during the Spring 2018 semester.
8. We recommend expediting implementation of Degree Works and other student self-service tools to augment in-person enhancements in student enrollment services.
9. We recommend a review of academic advising resulting in a comprehensive academic advising plan being developed before Fall 2018 Freshman Orientation.
10. We recommend a comprehensive customer service mapping process for all of Student Affairs, Enrollment Management, Business Services, and Academic Colleges and Academic Advising offices. Poor customer service complaints involve several campus offices.
11. We recommend a major initiative to review and enhance Federal Work Study opportunities on both campuses. Focus should be on identifying appropriate student employment opportunities, increasing student work opportunities; developing appropriate training for faculty and staff offices to understand Federal Work Study compliance; and developing appropriate student communications so they understand the opportunities.
12. We recommend a major initiative coordinated by the Career Center and involving Academic Affairs and Student Affairs and potential community employers to identify paid and nonpaid internship opportunities, off campus work opportunities, volunteer community service activities that might lead to workforce employment, and other work



opportunities that will help prepare students develop soft skills and have real work experiences before graduation.

Recommendation process:

The task force met for the first time on November 15, 2017. All student members were present except the SGA Vice President for the West Campus. All of the students at the meeting reside in housing on the East campus, are graduating seniors and are active members of several campus organizations. Consequently, we reached out to students on the West Campus to make sure we were inclusive in our conversations. We conducted a focus group on November 28th on the West Campus, which included commuter, international, and nontraditional students. The two groups were very different in how they defined the student experience and what they considered important to improve student engagement. As such, the task force conducted a campus-wide survey on November 29th to gather more information from the larger student body.

The task force met again on December 6th to review the campus-wide survey data and formulate recommendations. Task force members and focus group participants had lively discussions, shared personal stories and provided feedback that shaped the recommendations in this report.