Beyond the Classroom Report
2011-12

Division of University Affairs at Stephen F. Austin State University
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Introduction
The Division of University Affairs at Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU) is comprised of eighteen departments, including: Campus Recreation, Divisional Operations, Office of the Dean of Student Affairs, Counseling Services, Career Services, Testing Services, Disability Services, Health Services, Student Rights and Responsibilities, Multicultural Affairs, Orientation Programs, Student Affairs Programs, Student Services, Residence Life, Baker Pattillo Student Center, Student Publications, University Police and the Office of the Vice President for University Affairs.

Mission
The Division of University Affairs supports the development of a learner-centered environment for SFA students by providing co-curricular PROGRAMS that create opportunities for students to engage in active learning; by the creation of a friendly and welcoming environment through ACTIVITIES that strengthen students’ connections to the institution and each other; and by providing SERVICES to enhance the success of our students as they pursue their academic and personal goals.

Methodology
Data are collected through various means throughout the Division of University Affairs. These include surveys, focus groups, rubric analysis of artifacts of learning, pre-test/post-test and mixed methods projects. All programs are required to develop and test learning outcomes and each major program is required to assess these learning outcomes each year. Additionally, all departments must assess all programs at least once every three years.

All learning outcomes are derived by and connected to the mission of University Affairs and of Stephen F. Austin State University. This mission is further articulated through nine program learning outcomes. These are: Citizenship, Communication, Cultural Competence, Ethics and Values, Leadership, Life Skills, Self Knowledge, Scholarship & Inquiry and Wellness. These have been developed to express the kind of knowledge and skill our programs are meant to develop. The division has also advanced four Key Performance Indicators. These are measured in all areas. These performance indicators are driven from the mission of university affairs are help to determine the effectiveness of the division’s programs in meeting this mission. These include measuring students’ commitment to persistence, awareness of resources, commitment to diversity and awareness of co-curricular learning.
## Program Learning Outcomes
### Division of University Affairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>Students gain skills to help them to communicate effectively and professionally, using written, oral, and artistic means, as well as current technology. Students learn to listen actively and effectively, to read with comprehension, to evaluate ideas, and to form meaningful interpersonal relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Citizenship</strong></td>
<td>Through civic engagement, community service and classroom experiences, students acquire a contextually-rich understanding of complex issues and increased sense of social responsibility. Students are prepared for the challenges and opportunities of a democratic society, and to serve fully as citizens of the state, nation, and world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural Competence</strong></td>
<td>By interacting with others who are different from themselves, students gain an increased appreciation for diversity and attain values skills for success in a pluralistic society. Beyond tolerance, students increase their understanding of the beliefs, values and worldviews of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethics and Values</strong></td>
<td>Students define, refine and clarify their values, learn to keep congruence between these beliefs and their actions - and to balance their personal interests with the interests of others and society as a whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td>Through a variety of experiences, students will learn to maximize their own individualized talents and skills to collaborate with others and to motivate them towards a common goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Life Skills</strong></td>
<td>From maintaining and balancing a budget to effectively managing one's time, students learn to build strategies for leading a productive life - in college, in graduate school, in their career and beyond.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Through experiences and reflection, students discover a sense of purpose, gain the ability to realistically appraise themselves, enhance self-esteem and become increasingly independence and interdependent. These skills are useful in picking a career and helping the student to set and meet both educational and personal goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scholarship and Inquiry</strong></td>
<td>A broad-based educational foundation allows student to think critically, creatively and independently, and to experience intellectual growth. Students become committed to better understanding and advancing the knowledge of their chosen field, are prepared for the rigors of graduate study, for their careers, and for lifelong learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wellness</strong></td>
<td>Students learn to practice healthy behavior to attain a satisfying and productive lifestyle, learning to balance their physical, emotional and spiritual well-being with the demands of their life as a student and beyond.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Performance Indicators

Questions related to our Key Performance Indicators are embedded in each student voice survey. This produces data from a wide variety of students who answer these questions in a number of different contexts. Last year, more than 4,400 students responded to these questions. The tremendous diversity within surveys makes duplication less likely. Additionally, there are at least 1,000 unique respondents which can produce a confidence level of 97%.

I am committed to completing my degree at SFA.

It’s important to interact with others who are different from me such as those of different ethnicities, cultural backgrounds, or abilities.

When I have questions about SFA, I am usually able to easily resolve them or find someone to help me find the answer.

I have gained skills through student organizations, activities, and other cocurricular experiences that have helped me to understand what I am learning in the classroom.
Saliency of Program Learning Outcomes

The nine program outcomes were established in 2008 and have been measured each year on the Beyond the Classroom survey. This year, 1,187 students completed the survey. While each area declined this year from 2011 levels, each represented an improvement over 2010 levels which suggest that the results in 2011 may have been somewhat anomalously high. The percentages represent students who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statements below.

“Participating in co-curricular activities has given me skills that I can use throughout my life.”

“As a result of participating in co-curricular activities, I feel that I am better at evaluating information to determine what I believe.”

“As a result of participating in co-curricular activities, I believe that I better understand the cultures of others.”
“As a result of participating in *co-curricular* activities, I feel better able to communicate my thoughts and ideas to others.”

“As a result of participating in *co-curricular* activities, I pay closer attention to important issues facing my community, the nation or the world.”

“As a result of participating in *co-curricular* activities, I feel I behave more ethically than I did before.”
“As a result of participating in co-curricular activities, I feel more capable of leading others.”

“As a result of participating in co-curricular activities, I better understand my individual strengths and weaknesses.”

“As a result of participating in co-curricular activities, I feel that I am better prepared to maintain a healthy lifestyle.”

Participants:
1,187 students in 2012
1027 students in 2011
1089 students in 2010
1161 students in 2009
757 students in 2008
Relative Position
Looking at the relative position of various learning outcomes demonstrates how effectively we are creating learning among the nine program-level outcomes. In other words, PLOs that are consistently high are likely areas where we consistently produce new learning that is salient to students; while areas with low relative positions may indicate less effectiveness in creating salient learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE: Relative Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentages refer to the percentage of students who agreed that they had gained skills in this competency on the Beyond the Classroom survey from the year indicated. The colors also indicate change. The darker the color, the greater the change from the previous year. Red indicated downward movement, green equals upward movement. Numbers in parentheses refer to the change in relative position from the previous year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self Knowledge</td>
<td>57.49%</td>
<td>Self Knowledge</td>
<td>80.39% (n/c)</td>
<td>Self Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Competency</td>
<td>55.07%</td>
<td>Life Skills</td>
<td>77.57% (+1)</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Skills</td>
<td>54.81%</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>76.41% (+1)</td>
<td>Life Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>49.52%</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>75% (+3)</td>
<td>Scholarship and Inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellness</td>
<td>47.83%</td>
<td>Scholarship and Inquiry</td>
<td>74.62% (+1)</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship</td>
<td>47.12%</td>
<td>Cultural Competency</td>
<td>72.56% (-4)</td>
<td>Citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>45.89%</td>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>70.38% (+1)</td>
<td>Cultural Competency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>44.54%</td>
<td>Wellness</td>
<td>66.28% (-3)</td>
<td>Wellness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics and Values</td>
<td>36.06%</td>
<td>Ethics and Values</td>
<td>53.98% (n/c)</td>
<td>Ethics and Values</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis
The questions which drive these results are based on how “salient” this learning is to students. Put another way, students have to be aware that they are gaining these skill from our programs. Self Knowledge is consistently the most salient to them, and ethics and values are consistently the least salient. Life Skills and Leadership tend to be among the most salient as well. In past two years, Wellness has surged considerably and scholarship and inquiry has surged slightly. Life Skills has declined modestly, and Citizenship has fallen considerably. Looking at these changes can give us a better picture of trends in the learning of our students that can help modify existing programs.
**Engagement in the Co-curriculum**

According to Astin's Involvement Theory, those who are involved on campus should persist at higher rates. For the past five years, we have asked the following question on the Beyond the Classroom survey, “This year, have you participated in any clubs or organizations?” and “Have you been an officer/leader in any student organizations, publications, fraternities/sororities, academic groups, or honor societies?” The percentages below indicate the percentage of students who say they have participated or been a leader in student organizations.

![Involvement and Leadership Chart]

While the percentage of students who indicate they are involved on campus is at an all-time high, it’s unclear why it was trending downward for the past few years. Additionally, the percentage of student leaders has remained fairly consistent at about 1/4 to 1/5 of students who answer the survey. The best national data on this subject was collected in 2008 in the Profile of the American College Student which indicated that the national average for student leadership was about 9%. Clearly SFA’s is much higher. Additionally, when asking if students are involved in something on campus, SFA’s number was approximately 6% below the national average. Clearly there is room for growth in increasing the percentage of students who participate in student organizations.

**First Year Commons Project**

The concept of the first-year commons was intended to create a common first-year experience for residential students. Through shared resources, freshman-centered programming and access to programs that have demonstrated effectiveness in student success, the goal was to increase the retention, persistence and success of these students.
First-Year Residence Halls
- The West Tower of Steen had female first-year students.
- The East Tower of Steen had both male and female first-year students.
- Hall 16 had both male and female first-year students.
- Hall 14 had both male and female first-year students.
- Lumberjack Landing had first-year males on one side and first-year females on the other.

Theoretical Basis
Our work on the First-year Persistence Initiative was guided by Vincent Tinto’s Theory of Student Departure which suggests that in order for students to persist, they need to become both academically and socially integrated into the institution. Academic integration relates to creating “affiliation with the college academic environment both in the classroom and outside of class. This includes interaction with faculty, academic staff, and peers of an academic nature (e.g., peer tutoring, study groups)” (Nora, 1993, p. 235). Social integration refers to “the development of a strong affiliation with the college social environment including interactions with faculty, staff and peers of a social nature” (e.g., peer group interactions, informal contact with faculty, involvement in organizations, etc.) (Nora, 1993, p. 237).

Driven from this research was a proposal which placed resources which have been proven to be effective in creating academic and social integration within close proximity to the students who need them most. Additionally, introducing these services in a peer-to-peer format was expected to increase the likelihood that they will become socially and academically engaged.

Academic Integration
The centerpiece of our academic engagement was the new Ed and Gwen Cole Student Success Center. Located within the Freshmen Commons,” this facility was available to all first-year students regardless of where they resided and housed a number of programs aimed at helping all first-year students succeed academically.

Anchoring the FSC was the Academic Assistance Resource Center (AARC). This program received the STAR Award from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board for excellence in helping students succeed in college. Institutional Research shows that there is a direct relationship between the number of times students visit the AARC and their grade point average.

Social Integration
The centerpiece of our social engagement was the new “First-year Involvement Center (FIC).” Located between the two towers of Steen Hall, this resource was available to all first-year students regardless of where they resided.

Anchoring the FIC was the Peer Involvement Advising Program (PIAC). This program has been featured in national publications such as About Campus, ACUI Bulletin and NACA Programming. It connects students with already-involved, upper-class students who have been specially trained to connect them to involvement opportunities that suit the first-year student’s interests, compliment their academic program and fit within the student’s schedule.
Measures of Effectiveness
Our primary measures of effectiveness are the persistence rates of students who participate in these programs. The expectation is that students in the first-year commons (Lumberjack Landing, Steen, 14 and 16) would out-perform students in other halls. It was further expected that retention rates would be highest in the areas with the most engagement (highest number of programs, easiest access to means of academic and social engagement).

Results
Among freshmen in general, the retention rate was 63%. For students who lived in a First-Year Commons hall, the retention rate was considerably higher at 67.1%. Among first-time, full-time students who did not live within the first-year commons, the retention rate was 49.9%. In general, residential students were retained at 2.7 percentage points higher than non-residential students. In Lumberjack Landing, the retention rate was significantly higher than other halls at 74.9%. Steen Hall also did considerably better than other first-year halls at 68.7%. What is notable about this is that Steen holds more than 700 students. At that size, you would expect this sub-set to be more reflective of the characteristics of the entire population. Among students who participated in Supplemental Instruction there was a 78% success rate and clients who come to the AARC between five and fourteen times in their first semester have a 72% retention rate and an average GPA of 2.55.

Involvement Advising
Peer Involvement Advising has proven an effective solution for engaging and retaining new students. Students meet with a specially trained student leader who advises them on what activities are most compatible with their interests, goals and available time. Over the past three years, the number of students who have been advised has grown significantly. With this growth has come a gradual reduction of the retention rate. This is believed to be due to the fact that larger populations
will tend to gravitate toward the mean and also because a large number of these students are required to seek out this resource which effectively neutralizes an important factor which is the desire to seek engagement with the university. Nonetheless, this program still delivers significantly higher retention than first-year students overall and also other first-year students who reside on campus within the first-year commons.

Trend Analysis

Considerable effort and energy is directed at predicting first-year attrition (as is evident elsewhere in this document). There is ample evidence to suggest that African American and Hispanic students are historically underrepresented in college and (often as a result) are particularly at-risk of attrition. An analysis of first-year retention rates overlain with demographic characteristics of first-year students demonstrates an interesting trend: that even as these students represent an increasingly large percentage of SFA’s students, their success in the first year is declining.

It is also interesting to note that the retention of white students has grown during the same period of time. While there may be a temptation to assume that white students are overrepresented and students of color underrepresented in engagement programs, there is little evidence to support this claim. For programs in which demographic information exists, they tend to match the overall characteristics of the university. Yet, there are many programs which do not collect demographic information. In the coming year, the Division of University Affairs is placing an emphasis on collecting data about ethnicity and gender (which is also thought to be a factor in attrition).
Closing the Loop

An essential step in the assessment process is to use data in order to improve. This section discusses the ways that various areas within university affairs have used data they collected in order to improve.

- An analysis of injuries at Jack Camp demonstrated that the occurrence of serious injury that required transportation to the hospital from participation in “tribal games” and other activities was increasing. As a result, the Jack Camp team consulted with Campus Recreation to reduce risk in the games, shorten the duration of some games and additionally found a nurse who was willing to serve at the camp. As a result, there were no EMS calls or hospital transports due to injury this year.

- Student and Parent feedback from the orientation surveys indicated that they wanted an organizational fair similar to the one at Showcase Saturday. This year, we added a program to meet this need. Approximately 88% of parents who attended this program said they were very satisfied or moderately satisfied with the event.
• Last year, the Leadership and Service program in Student Affairs hosted an event called “The Gathering.” This event was intended to help student leaders meet each other and interact. Within the qualitative data was a common theme: Students did not want the program to be a “leadership retreat” with educational breakout sessions. They wanted more time to meet each other and to discuss opportunities to work together. This year, a new program based on that feedback was developed. The quantitative data indicates significant improvement in the experience of student leaders. For example, the mean score for the statement, “I enjoyed this event” was 3.4 last year and improved to 4.6 this year. The mean score for the statement, “This program was a good use of my time” improved from 3.4 last year to 4.4 this year and finally, the mean score for the statement, “This event was well planned and organized” jumped from 3.6 last year to 4.5 this year.

• Career Services noticed a decrease in overall revenues and wanted to increase revenue to benefit overall delivery of Career Services Programs by increasing participation at Career Events and through tighter control on spending. This action item was completed and assessed. Combined participation for organizations at Teacher Job Fairs (Fall/Spring), Career Expos (Fall/Spring) and the Fall Accounting Fair increased from 214 for the 2010-2011 academic year to 243 for the 2011-2012 academic year. Although CS income decreased by 10.3%, expenses decreased by 24.27% yielding an increase in overall income of 873.2% from 2010-2011 academic year to the 2011-2012 academic year.

• Campus Recreation gave the NIRSA bench-marking survey provided by Campus Labs in Spring 2012. A question was asked regarding patron impressions of safety. 94.2% of respondents stated that Campus Recreation facilities provided a safe environment. The results have been higher than in the past years and also higher than the National average. This may be due to increased visibility of Red Shirt Drills and better responses from Campus Recreation staff to safety-related situations. This is a good indication that the measures Campus Recreation has taken to improve in this area have made a positive difference.

• Students who attend Jack Camp tend to persist at higher rates. We realize that there are likely many factors which contribute to this effect. We also realize that the cost of Jack Camp can be a barrier to attendance. In response, Student Affairs Programs awarded $15,000 in Jack Camp scholarships to students from low income students. We will benefit from seeing how the retention of these students compares to other at-risk students.

Recommendations and Conclusions
The Division of University Affairs continues to improve in the tracking of Learning Outcomes and demonstration of program effectiveness. This year’s data collection represents a leap forward in these areas.

First-year retention continues to be an institutional issue and yet, all indications are that those who engage in our programs become engaged and persist. Mindful of the data in this report, we need to improve the collection of demographic data related to those who participate in our programs, we also need to proactively engage students of color and men in general and we need to continue to find ways to address students who are at-risk.
We have collected better information about the risk factors of first-year students. We know that first-generation status is a salient variable in our first-year students (particularly for students of color). For Hispanic students, nearly 90% come from families where neither parent has a college degree. As we have seen an increase in Hispanic students in the present class, we’ll need to be particularly mindful of their engagement. Otherwise, this increase may predict a further deterioration of first-year persistence in general.

Finally, the First Year Persistence project has promise. Clearly the premise that providing needed resources in close proximity to students is supported by the data. We need to seek ways to better engage students who live in halls that are not within the First Year Corridor.