STUDENT SUCCESS TASK FORCE

CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Introduction

The Campus and Community Engagement committee identified high quality experiences for our students through enhanced educational opportunities, career preparation, and building strong relationships within campus and community. These expectations support our mission statement and strategic plan (Appendix), as well as the goals and objectives of our LEP (Appendix). In order to accomplish committee charges, the co-chairs, Dawn Cathey, Lynn Kwak, and members of the sub-committee (listed below) met on a regular basis during year 2013. The committee’s recommendations are supported by High Impact Practices (Appendix).

Please note that this committee used the Carnegie Council’s definition of community engagement: “The collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.”

Over-arching conclusions

The committee developed campus and community opportunity initiatives to strengthen relationships among students, staff, and faculty. Based on the FYE Self-Assessment College Success (the responses of the incoming students from 2012), we identified five contributing factors of student success in the area of Campus and Community Engagement. These factors are:

1. Sense of belonging and identity
2. Sense of belonging to major discipline and school
3. Engagement with personal and professional support services
4. Engagement in educationally rich co-curricular activities
5. Supportive campus environment

In this document, five short-term and four long-term recommendations are presented.

Short & Long term Recommendations

1. Develop proactive advertisement and publicity efforts to:
   a. enhance the pride, sense of belonging, and identity among students, staff and faculty;
   b. focus on community engagement.

Short Term Priority

• In order to counter incorrect perceptions and encourage present and future students to consider Southern as their university of choice, increased local advertisement efforts are recommended (billboards, signage, media coverage for SCSU sports, etc.), which is highlighting our roles as employer, neighbor, advisor, and educator. For example, some people in the community think that SCSU is a community college.
• Highlighting our rich history of leadership and service (Day of Service, service learning and co-curricular community engagement).
• Promote community access to sporting events through public schools as well as local media.
Long Term Priority

- To enhance a sense of belonging to a community, offering community space and inviting community businesses (profit and non-profit) would promote “student friendly” climate on campus.

- More local community involvement such as in cultural events (through the Multicultural Center and the Library; Jazz concerts have been effectively offered on campus).

- Sports camps would create socially interacting environment. First availability would be to children of faculty and staff (Women Sports’ Day at SCSU has been successful).

- Create jointly organized events with other community organizations and charitable organizations, which can be held on campus.

- Create a “Community Day,” welcoming campus and community families.

- Community invitations to graduations (high schools).

2. Create a faculty/staff team of liaisons with representation from each school to support experiential learning opportunities on campus and within a community, including, but not limited to student teaching, field placements, internships, and service-learning classes.

Long Term Priority

- For example, the School of Business currently has staff who are in charge of community engagement and student internships. This would also promote faculty/staff who provide service within their communities (i.e., volunteer work, board of directors, etc.).

- Academic departments/academic majors should play a more significant role in providing opportunities for interaction of faculty, staff, and students. Academic units can provide an array of both social activities (e.g., barbecues) and professional development opportunities (e.g., seminars/research forums, conferences, guest speakers, etc.) at both a formal and an informal level. Events will provoke interest and education and will provide students with a sense of belonging within their department.

3. Create campus-wide collaboration through alumni affairs, which strengthens students’ professional and personal development.

Short Term Priority

- Students will be matched with alumni who are willing to mentor students in their chosen areas of interest. Mentors and students would meet, either in person, or by phone, on a set basis (bi-weekly, monthly), to discuss professional pathways and networking for students. It also helps them with their internship needs, if they have any. This bond and shared experience may help with student retention in the long run. Students will have a successful alumnus to talk to about the future and the Southern
alumni are there to encourage the students to make good and successful professional choices.

- With support from the campus community, the Alumni office can hold mentoring events throughout Connecticut, focusing on freshmen as well as our commuter population.

4. Identify new and existing community engagement opportunities that are specifically designed to support students' personal and professional success.

**Short Term Priority**

- Support community engagement “work study” and “student worker” opportunities for Southern students clearly focused on experiential learning and service.
- Create on campus and community based service opportunities that would be “commuter friendly.” This can include collaborations with students’ employers throughout Connecticut.
- Create a clearinghouse for community engagement information, which includes any and all campus partnerships.
- Expanding the AmeriCorps programming on campus, including support for the expansion of our Jumpstart Program, which is now in its second year. This allows our campus to focus on breaking the cycle of poverty, personally and professionally.

**Long Term Priority**

- An Office of Experiential Learning would provide a place where faculty, staff, students, and alumni can work together with community partners to create, support, and promote high quality experiential opportunities that support Southern’s mission statement, Strategic Plan and LEP. This office will coordinate and promote all community engagement activities on campus, devoting attention to community partnerships and faculty development while forging a new vision of what a campus and community collaboration can achieve.

5. Develop a university-wide reward mechanism that encourages active engagement from faculty and staff, fostering a supportive campus environment.

**Short Term Priority**

- Honoring staff milestone years and for outstanding services (i.e., yearly recognitions) would enhance the sense of identity and pride among staff, thus fostering a stronger campus connection.
- Encouraging faculty members to be actively engaged with Campus and Community Engagement and SCSU would reward their efforts. For example, participating as mentors/advisors in clubs/activities/intramural sports clubs.
• Offering a specific space for only faculty/staff to workout (e.g., free yoga or spinning classes) would provide faculty/staff an opportunity to create better life/balance. This includes enhancing facilities/gyms and recreation centers.

Short Term Priority

• A more effective communication (announcement) system would include all programs and events related to the campus community and local community (i.e., one calendar found on the home page and weekly event blurbs to the media).

• A list of weekend activities would be found in an accessible location for any and all students who would like to engage socially during the weekend. This will help to create a friendlier weekend climate. Encourage different departments/offices to come up with weekend activities (e.g., student/faculty softball teams, bowling teams, etc.).

Long Term Priority

• Efforts would include creating opportunities to invite faculty and staff (even families) to engage in co-curricular activities on campus and creating a group of faculty/staff mentors who would be willing to be a “friendly” face for students.

Appendix


Mission Statement: http://www.southernct.edu/about/scsu-info/mission.html

Strategic Plan: http://www.southernct.edu/academics/SCSU_Strategic_Plan.pdf