

Salt Lake Community College

**First-Year Experience
2016-2017
Program Review**

Program Review Team Members

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Salt Lake City, Utah

Introduction

On January 30 and 31, 2017, Dale Smith, Amy Bergerson and Brad Bostian visited Salt Lake Community College and met with approximately 79 stakeholders including both students and staff inside and outside of the First Year Experience program.

FYE student leaders (5 students)
Student Panel – Access U/Pace/Bruin Scholars
Student Panel – Orientation attendees at large (6 students)
Abbey Mann – Coordinator, Admissions
Adam Dastrup – Associate Professor, Geoscience
Adris Brundidge – Bridge to Success
Alena Balmforth – Associate Professor, English
Alex Czaja – FYE Advisor
Ana Archuleta – Advisor, Outreach and Access
Antoinette Fauatea – Administrative Assistant, FYE
Bob Lindsay – Asst. Director, E-Learning and Distance Education
Brenda Blocker – Instructional Designer
Candida Darling – Director, Disability Resource Center
Clint Gardner – Manager, Writing Center
Curtis Larsen – AVP, Student Life
Cynthia Bonsall – Assistant Director, Academic Advising
David Hubert – Asst. Provost, Learning Advancement
Dona Bilyeu-Dittman – Manager, Admissions
Dr. Chuck Lepper – VP, Student Affairs
Dr. Gregory Roberts – Director, TRIO (Student Support Services and STEM)
Dr. Nancy Singer – AVP, Student Success & Completion
Dr. Sonia Parker – Director, Academic Advising
Elizabeth Jones – Bridge to Math
Erin Stirling – FYE Advisor
Felix Vivanco – FYE GEAR UP Advisor
Fen Rong Liu – FYE Advisor (Brenda Santoyo / Emilinao Mora – Specialist)
Jan Coleman, Manager, Institutional Marketing
Jason Beal – Senior Director, Auxiliary Services
Jason Pickavance – Director, Educational Initiatives
Jeff Aird – AVP, Institutional Effectiveness
Jill Kemerer – Director, Outreach and Access
Joni Lindsay – GEAR UP Coordinator
Jose Crespo – Director, STEM Learning Centers
Judy Braun – Professor, EDU 1020
Julie Jackman – Manager, Student Support Services
Kate Gildea – Director, Admissions
Kathy Campbell – Director, North Region
Kati Lewis – Assistant Professor, English
Ken Stonebrook – Bridge to Success

Luz Gamarra – Bridge to Success
Lynn Kilpatrick – Associate Professor, English
Madeline Corona – Academic Standards Advisor
Maria Griffith – Associate Professor, English
Melissa Quinn – Assistant Professor, Math
Mikaela Mokofisi – FYE Advisor
Miki Crutchfield – FYE Advisor
Monica Gardner – Bridge to Math
Monica Rogerson – Coordinator, Outreach and Access
Nancy Fillat – Director, International Student Affairs
Nancy Giraldo – FYE Advisor
Paul Lerdahl – Professor, EDU 1020
Peggy Hoffman – Asst. Director, Student Life
Richard Diaz – Director, First-Year Experience
Rob Robbins – Advisor, International Student Affairs
Scott Kadera – Counseling Services Manager, Health and Counseling
Sean Crossland – Asst. Director, Thayne Center
Shannon McWilliams – Director, South Region
Shellie Jo Enscoe – Director, Office for Multicultural and Diversity Affairs
Shirley Brock – Reception and Registration Coordinator, ORAR
Sidney Brown – Program Advisor, Academic Advising
TC Stuwe – Associate Professor, EDU 1020
Tiffany Rousculp – Professor, English
Titi Kathol – Orientation Coordinator
Tung Thantrong – Manager, STEM
Venita Ross – Advisor, International Student Affairs
Verl Long – Assistant Director, Academic Advising

Through the review process, the team found a successful First-Year Experience program operating with dedicated staff under good leadership. We identified key issues to consider, and made recommendations for maximizing the effectiveness of the First-Year Experience program in a time of significant change. We put these in the form of commendations and recommendations for each area considered.

1. Department Mission, Goals, and Outcomes

The department has a mission and overarching goals/outcomes statements which are consistent with and which support the College's and Student Affairs' mission statements and goals.

Commendations

The FYE department has clearly aligned its mission with the missions of the college and the Student Affairs division. The goals and values outlined within the FYE vision match well with the College's commitment to offering "programs and student support services that provide students opportunities to acquire knowledge and critical thinking skills, develop self-confidence, experience personal growth, and value cultural enrichment." Further, First-Year Experience specifically supports the Student Affairs division's goal of maintaining ". . . an environment that nurtures our values: diversity, community, honesty, people and service."

The commitment to supporting the values and mission of both the College and Student Affairs was clear in conversations with not only FYE staff, but also in the ways that partnering offices described the work of the FYE department. FYE staff told us that they operate from the mindset of "if students come to us, they will get help," and this is clear in the way the FYE team has taken on numerous roles in supporting students from academic advising, to orienting students to campus; from helping students through the enrollment process, to thinking about how FYE course might support their persistence. Other departments clearly communicated a sense that First-Year Experience is a "go to" office, acknowledging that across campus, people recognize that students who are sent to the FYE department will get their questions answered. Students themselves related that they see the office as the place that facilitates the development of relationships with staff and faculty. These connections are essential to students who told the review team that these personal connections lead to a level of trust that is necessary for knowing the information and advice offered is good for them.

Recommendations

While the mission and values of the FYE department are clearly communicated and aligned with those of the College and Student Affairs division, there are structural issues that hinder the office's ability to completely achieve its mission. Several of those are briefly highlighted here; details related to each are found in other sections of this report.

Defining first-year student: There is a lack of definition for first-year students at SLCC. Is first-year student defined by credit hours or time at the institution? At what point does an individual move from being a prospective student to a student who is served by the FYE department, and onward to becoming a student who no longer needs the department's help? Questions such as these make it difficult for campus partners to delineate where to send students for assistance. Given the FYE Office approach of helping everyone who comes to them, it is apparent that the office is often helping students who might be better served in another office. However, there also seems to be a common desire among interviewed faculty and staff for SLCC to use a broad definition of first-year students, since students themselves don't fit neatly into categories. However, the definition itself isn't the issue. Regardless of the definition used, Salt Lake Community College needs to determine exactly which students are best served by the FYE department and other programs, and then clearly communicate this information to both students

and the campus community. In addition, it will help students if more departments adopt the same broadly helpful philosophy employed by the FYE department.

Mapping an ideal pathway for students: It is unclear when the FYE department's responsibility for student transition and retention begins and ends. At what point does the admissions process end, and a student's transition to college begin? How and where do financial aid and academic advising play into a student's transition? At what point in this process are students best suited for receiving information through a new student orientation? When does specialized advising for students of color, students with disabilities, and veteran students make the most sense? These questions illuminate the need for clear boundaries around the work of the FYE department. Without these boundaries, the FYE team's ability to achieve its mission of transitioning students to college and working to support their persistence is diluted by being asked to do the work of other offices, or providing information to students before it is needed. The focus should be on determining which information is needed at what point in the process, and then building an institutional infrastructure that supports providing that information on time. Then, this ideal pathway must be clearly communicated to students.

Weighing transition with retention:

The mission of First-Year Experience communicates a clear commitment to ensuring a smooth transition for SLCC students as well as providing support for their persistence. Accomplishing two significant commitments such as these is a gargantuan task. The boundaries on who is a first-year student, and when the FYE department is an integral part of their experience, will support the department in attaining its lofty goals. However, additional thinking needs to take place around these two related but distinct operations and how the office can harness the resources necessary to accomplish both. This includes space and personnel resources and ensuring that partner offices have the resources needed to avoid pushing their unfinished work onto First-Year Experience. Additionally, the College needs to make a decision about its commitment to a First-Year Experience course, and needs to provide the FYE office with the assessment data and support necessary for them to determine the effectiveness of their various transition and retention initiatives.

In all, the FYE Office has clear goals and a mission statement that align well with those of the College and the Student Affairs division. The review team's recommendations come in response to instances where we see the FYE department's ability to meet the goals outlined in its mission being hindered by a lack of structure, definition, and resources. These recommendations are reiterated throughout the remainder of the report.

2. Programs and Services

The department provides a set of core programs/services which are central to and consistent with FYE's mission and goals. These programs and services are responsive to the needs of the department's constituents, are cost-effective and, when appropriate, are supported by other departments or agencies both within and outside the College.

The FYE office offers several specific programs and services for first-year students. Below the review team offers commendations and recommendations for each.

New Student Orientation programs

Commendations

The review team is impressed with the FYE department's willingness to reassess and adjust their offerings for new student orientations. Across the board, we heard from students and campus partners that the array of orientation program formats, NetConnect, QuickConnect and CampusConnect, meets the needs of students in terms of introducing them to essential information for transitioning to college. The review team encourages the FYE office to continue to assess these programs to determine how they can be improved to meet the needs of both students and the campus community. Below, we provide two recommendations to consider in this continual assessment.

Recommendations

Modalities

The need for various modalities of new student orientation programs is clear. SLCC serves a broad community with many types of students. Online options are essential for individuals who cannot make it to campus to learn more about their transition to college. However, across the board, we heard from students that the in-person orientation programs are far more impactful than the online ones. Students emphasized the importance of face to face experiences meeting campus community members, including advisors, touring campuses, and learning about campus opportunities and resources. The review team encourages the FYE office to continue to grapple with how to best present the information through orientation programs, with a mind to meeting the needs of their students, but also to developing assessment data that show the effectiveness of various modalities. Since online orientations will always be an essential component of the enrollment process for at least some students, the review team recommends that the office continue to look at improving the delivery platform, particularly focusing on a platform that is more interactive, can be targeted and differentiated for specific types of students, and can provide data for the office's assessment efforts.

Campus Partners

As new student orientations have grown more efficient in meeting the needs of busy students, the offerings included in the on-campus programs have grown more limited. Some campus partners are concerned about how they will share information about their programs with students if they are not provided time at new student orientations. The review team encourages FYE staff to consider how they might facilitate the timely delivery of information about campus partners in different formats as they continue to assess the best modalities for new student orientation.

New Student Welcome Days

Commendations

The review team was pleased to see First-Year Experience utilizing New Student Welcome Days events as alternatives to new student orientation programs for sharing important college transition information with students. Club Rush was mentioned by several students as providing a good overview of involvement opportunities for students,

and the Resource Fair was mentioned by several of the campus partner offices as a good venue for sharing their resources with students.

Recommendations

Recommendations related to New Student Welcome Days relate to increasing both student and campus partner involvement. Specifically, the review team encourages the FYE Office to develop a systematic way to advertise the fairs to students and campus partners. Because the planning for these events takes place during the time with the office is busiest with new student orientations, we encourage the team to consider using technology to provide a simple registration process for the fairs for student and campus organizations. Also, we encourage the office to consider how advertising for these programs can be created in advance so that all that needs to happen in the weeks leading up to them is for the marketing that is prepared in advance to be deployed.

The review team also notes that many campus entities benefit from high student participation in welcome week events, and encourages the FYE department to utilize campus partnerships to help ease the burden of marketing. It appears that other offices that fall under the leadership of the Assistant VP for Student Life are natural partners for these events and that the ownership of Welcome Week could be shared among these offices.

Bridge to Success program

Commendations

The Bridge to Success program is flourishing under the leadership of the FYE department. The office currently receives more applications than the program is able to accommodate with the summer courses. The expansion into the math-specific Bridge into Math is also commendable. Data show that students who complete the program are more successful in their college endeavors than those who do not. The review team commends the FYE office on its thoughtful expansion of the course, and for its work to develop a new approach to the course that might be offered campus-wide in a mandatory format. The review team was also impressed with the strong relationship between Bridge to Success faculty and First-Year Experience. The faculty involved in Bridge to Success had only positive things to say about their partnership with the FYE department. The idea of continuing this partnership to expand the course offering to more students, and develop a campus-wide FYE curriculum, is exciting to be sure.

Recommendations

The review team noted that the timing is excellent for the expansion of the Bridge to Success Program into a campus-wide FYE course. The team recommends that the college continue to explore how this course might fit into the curricular reforms in progress across campus. Importantly, we encourage the college to tap into the expertise of the FYE office as this course is developed, and rely on the knowledge and experience of those who have been involved in the course over time. The review team is strongly in favor of adopting a campus-wide curriculum as opposed to developing courses in each individual pathway. And, the committee also recommends that the course be offered as a credit-bearing course. Tying the course to credit will help ensure that students complete the course curriculum, and can help make sure it can be paid for by financial aid, which will allow more students to fully benefit. For the FYE department, the review team encourages continued assessment as to the role this course plays in the success of

SLCC students. Taking advantage of the Institutional Research office to help support the need for the FYE course will be essential in generating campus buy-in for the course.

First-Year Handbook

Commendations

Providing every student the opportunity to access the FYE Handbook either as an electronic or printed version is commendable. While none of the campus partners or students talked extensively about the handbook and its utility, the review team agrees that producing a comprehensive guide to the college transition is important.

Recommendations

Given the importance of having a comprehensive guide to the transition to college available to SLCC students, the review team encourages the FYE department to continue to explore ways to make this resource more accessible to students. There may be platforms for apps or other electronic modalities for the handbook that would make producing it simpler. If the book were completely online, changes could be made throughout the year, ensuring that it is as accurate as possible, rather than waiting for the following summer to update it. Additionally, offering the book through an app that is accessible on any electronic device would increase accessibility for students.

In a similar vein to the First-Year Handbook is the StartSmart email campaign. While the review team did not receive extensive feedback from students and campus partners about the value of the campaign, it appears that the move to an app-based approach to the handbook might also apply to the StartSmart email campaign. An app in which vital, time-sensitive information pops up for student viewing and action in response would allow the FYE department to enter information into one system and tell the system when to send the alerts. That would greatly increase efficiency and ensure that the information gets into students' hands when they actually need it. The review team encourages the FYE office and the college to look for an electronic solution that applies to both the FYE Handbook and the StartSmart email campaign. The review team encourages the FYE office to consider how it can measure the effectiveness of the handbook and campaign in assisting students through their transition to college, to ensure that they contribute to the office's ability to meet its stated goals and mission.

Cohort programs

Commendations

The review team commends the FYE department for its work with several cohort-based programs. The office's commitment to the success of students who are underrepresented and underserved is most evident in these cohort programs, which serve specific students whose transition to college is highly complex. The "we will help them" mentality of the FYE staff is clear in the experiences of students involved in these programs, who have found FYE team members to be among the most supportive at the college. The FYE team's attention to the needs of these students is highly regarded across the college.

Recommendations

Some of the confusion noted above about who first-year students are and how the FYE office serves them, appears to be related to the cohort-based programs. Where the support offered to students in the cohort-based programs is comprehensive, including academic advising and support for students of color, it creates the opportunity for offices

such as Academic Advising and Multicultural Affairs to question where their responsibilities for students stop and the FYE office's responsibilities begin. And, it appears that this confusion then flows into general confusion related to who should be serving which students in what ways and when. Where the FYE department does not provide comprehensive support to all SLCC students, it may result in confusion for students who may wonder if they qualify for FYE services. More clarity is needed about how cohort-based programs fit into the larger mission of the FYE office, and how their responsibility for students in these programs aligns with the support offered by other offices. This clarity is essential for campus partners, for students, and for the FYE department as it determines how best to fulfill its mission of supporting first-year student transition and retention.

3. Leadership and Staffing

The department has a sufficient number of well-qualified employees (professional, support, student) to effectively provide the core programs/services offered by the department. Employees have clear and current job responsibilities. Employees are oriented to their roles, receive appropriate leadership and supervision, are provided with ongoing professional development opportunities, and are regularly evaluated.

Commendations

In almost every conversation with campus partners and students, the review team was impressed to hear how well-regarded the FYE department is across campus. Morale is very high among the team itself, and this is noted by many campus partners who commented on the special nature of the individuals who work with the FYE office and the team as a whole. Many people complimented Richard Diaz for his strong leadership of the team and for developing a culture of advocacy for first-year students. Additionally, the review team was impressed with the strong words of praise for members of the FYE team, who are known throughout the college as committed, caring, and competent community members who will help any student who approaches them. These foundations provide the strong base for the amazing work that the team does every day, from meeting the needs of individual students, to providing an array of support services for students, developing programs and courses that ease the transition to college, and setting the foundation for long-term student success. The recommendations below are directed more to the Student Affairs division and college, with an intention of providing the FYE office with the resources necessary for FYE staff to continue their strong work on campus.

Recommendations

Staffing

In large part due to their reputation for strong student support, the FYE department has become a bit of a catch all for the SLCC community. FYE supports a large number of programs and services as well as providing individual advocacy for students, and it appears to the review team that their scope of influence is constantly expanding. As a result, a tension exists between the transition focus of the office and the retention mandate. The Director in particular is caught in this tension, trying to attend to the management of the many transition-focused programs and services, while making time to think through ways the office can attend to the less tangible goal of increasing retention.

Further, the time-consuming work of thoroughly assessing the office's programs and services cannot be accommodated in the current staffing model.

The review team recommends that the college look into hiring an Assistant Director who could manage the transition side of the office's responsibilities while the Director attends to the retention side. This will be particularly important as the College moves in the direction of a campus-wide FYE course. However, even if that goal is not achieved, it is clear that the management of people and programs prohibits the Director from expanding the retention-focused work of the office and thoroughly assessing its impact on students.

Related to staffing is the issue of the historical context of FYE positions. Because initial FYE Advisor positions were moved out of the Academic Advising office, confusion remains about whether FYE Advisors are also general Academic Advisors. It was clear in conversations with the Academic Advising team that they continue to view FYE Advisors as overflow Academic Advisors who have a responsibility for doing general academic advising when the Academic Advising Office is beyond capacity. This assumption leads to a blurring of where one office begins and another ends, and makes it challenging for FYE Advisors to focus on their FYE responsibilities. To resolve this, the review team recommends that the FYE Advisor position title be changed to one that helps delineate a different role at the College. The Director's own description of advocacy lends the suggestion that FYE Advocate, or Success Coach, might be an appropriate title. Following this title change, the review team also recommends that the Student Affairs division make clear what the responsibilities of FYE employees are in terms of academic advising. Regardless of who at the college undertakes the important process of initially discussing courses and programs with each student, it is a critical need for students to have someone to form a connection with and go to with general questions and for help and support. This should be a key college goal.

Physical Space

Earlier in this report, the review team noted that there is not a clear ideal pathway for students to follow as they enter Salt Lake Community College. This issue is exacerbated by the physical set-up of offices in the Student Center. The review team recommends that the college assess how the physical allotment of space in the Student Center communicates the processes students should follow as they transition into the college and become successful students, and place the FYE department in a space that communicates its functions in that process. Ideally, this space will accommodate all of the office staff, so they will not be separated into different areas. Additionally, the review team encourages the college to strongly consider the need for private spaces for FYE staff who work with students and their families—often around sensitive issues. The current set-up forces students and FYE staff to have these conversations in semi-private and sometimes completely public spaces, which does little to serve the students and engender their trust in the college. Realizing that space is a serious concern for nearly all offices in the Student Center, the review team acknowledges that this recommendation will take time to implement. However, we believe it is essential for FYE staff to have adequate and centrally located space where they can easily work together to serve students. In addition, these changes to physical

architecture can be managed to create a deep synergy with other departments that share transition and success functions.

4. Financial Resources and Budget

The department has a well-defined and participatory budget planning process. This process results in sufficient resources to meet the department's core programs/services, staffing, facility, equipment, and technology needs.

Commendations

Salt Lake Community College has done a terrific job of providing resources to this new FYE department. In a time when budgets are not growing, the College has set aside resources for the critical areas incorporated in the work of First-Year Experience. There is, of course, always a need for additional resources, and this is true for the FYE department. Given the limited opportunity for growth, the review committee focuses on three specific areas.

Recommendations

Assistant Director

The need for an Assistant Director is detailed in the section above. This requires a financial commitment from the college. Given the early retirement package that has been offered on campus, the review team hopes that there will be an opportunity to redirect some resources to the FYE department for the purpose of hiring an Assistant Director. As FYE takes on more of a retention role, and the responsibilities of the department expand, there will be an even greater need for additional coordination and administrative oversight.

Orientation and Transition Programming

The FYE department self-study noted that resources for orientations, particularly those held on campus, are limited. Throughout our conversations with students, the review team noted that students who attended the on-campus orientation programs had much higher levels of satisfaction, and then talked specifically about the benefits of these in-person orientations. If these programs are to be expanded, additional resources will be necessary. The situation may be similar in regard to cohort programs, although these programs are or can be shared with other departments. The review team encourages the FYE office and the college to consider how resources can be directed toward maintaining the most effective programs of the office. Incorporating assessment will be essential in determining which programs these are.

Success Coaches

One effective tool for helping students to progress is the success coaching model. We recommend that FYE create success coach positions and work to assign success coaches or advocates to new or at-risk students. This program will require the use of student tracking technology and a coordination of resources beyond the FYE department.

5. Facilities, Equipment and Technology

The department has safe, accessible, and current physical facilities, equipment, and technological resources to support its core programs/services and personnel.

Commendations

For the most part, the First-Year Experience department makes the most of its awkward office arrangement. Staff are split up across three physical areas, and as mentioned above, many are in semi-private, or public spaces. Resolution to this, as outlined above, will only enhance the already high-quality work of FYE. The department has also started working on technological enhancements in its offerings to students. For example, work has begun on a new platform for delivering the online new student orientation modules, and the department has moved to an electronic format for the FYE Handbook. These adjustments are commendable. The following recommendations build on the work already in progress.

Recommendations

The review team recommends that the FYE department continue to explore how technology can enhance the delivery of programs and services. Continued development of the online orientation delivery should ensure that the program is more interactive, and can be customized to student needs as they engage with it. Utilizing apps to deliver on-time information to students as opposed to relying on email may also increase the impact of the FYE Handbook, the StartSmart email campaign, and even the student and parent newsletters. The review team encourages the FYE staff to explore ways to ensure that the right information is delivered to students at the right time, in ways that students are the most likely to access and utilize. More and more, to do this, offices need to look into technological tools that require institutional support for purchase. The review team recommends that the college support the FYE department and others as they endeavor to share information with students when they need it and in ways that they can use it.

Several staff and faculty members interviewed mentioned that the SLCC website was in need of revision. Ideally the website and other communication tools and media, as well as enrollment processes, will be improved with an eye toward helping key departments reach students in effective ways.

Office and support spaces should be built and/or redesigned to support the functions of the First-Year Experience department and integrate that support with other related departments. The current physical architecture works against collaboration and against the creation of generalist helpers who can give students the kind of miscellaneous support that FYE is so good at. From a student point of view, divisions between learning and support or between the various student support offices seem artificial and unhelpful. A different architecture could be designed to help integrate academic and student support functions while raising the visibility of the FYE program and its services, yet still offering more private spaces for FYE staff to offer specialized programming. For example, there is a student lab with computers, but only basic technical help available. FYE staff and students could collaborate with other proximate areas, including admissions, to provide the missing support. Expertise is generated through experience, which FYE has because it has made helping students its mission, and attempts to answer questions rather than passing students along to other areas. This expertise can and should be expanded.

6. Ethical and Legal Responsibilities

The department is aware of and compliant with statutory and professional ethical and legal standards which apply to the department's core programs/services, personnel, facilities, equipment and technology.

Commendations

We find that First-Year Experience operates in an ethical and highly professional manner. First-Year Experience has grown into an important campus entity without disrupting other offices that perform similar enrollment and support functions. The review team commends the office on its attention to ensuring that its programs are accessible to all students and presented in the most ethical ways possible. The team also commends the program and the college for making orientation mandatory for new students.

Recommendations

In general, programming should be designed with an eye toward effectiveness more than convenience. If online programs are convenient but not as effective, First-Year Experience and the college as a whole should work toward making face-to-face programming the norm rather than the exception. In addition, the FYE program, and the college as a whole, should carefully consider which programming can benefit which students more if required rather than being optional. Which student populations are unlikely to succeed without intervention? This success probability should be measured directly based on readiness factors such as high school or prior college GPA, rather than assessed indirectly via demographic categories. Which intervention programs are likely to significantly change the probability of success for these students? FYE should work toward requiring those programs when possible, and offering but aggressively marketing them otherwise, recognizing that students are not as likely to participate in or benefit from optional programming. If programming is likely to significantly change a student's academic or life trajectory, it may be ethical to require it.

Finally, the review team recommends that the college understand the value of small, high impact programs for small numbers of students. While it is extremely valuable to make broad-based changes that move the completion needle, creating deep impacts that change the lives of small numbers of students can help to create the next generation of leaders.

7. Assessment and Evaluation

The department has clearly defined and measurable core program/service and student learning outcomes which are consistent with the department's mission and goal statements. These program/service and student learning outcomes are regularly assessed through both direct and indirect measures, and the results of assessment are shared among constituents and are used for decision-making and planning.

Commendations

Throughout conversations with various campus partners, it became clear that Salt Lake Community College in general is currently grappling with how to institutionalize

assessment and evaluation for all programs and services. The FYE office is not an exception to this. Data provided by First-Year Experience indicate that the office does a good job of collecting input data; that is, data that show how many people are taking advantage of their programs and services. Where there is clear room for growth is in the area of output data; that is, data that show that students are learning what they are supposed to learn by engaging in FYE programs and services, and that they are experiencing a measurable impact in terms of their progress through the completion agenda. With that in mind, the review team provides the following recommendations.

Recommendations

Develop bold but realistic outcome targets and work to meet them. Benchmarking against similar colleges using traditional methodologies will not be helpful in making significant moves toward changing the completion trajectory for students. Identify and employ strategies that have moved the needle at other colleges, and use success measures that match student goals (credit accumulation, successful transfer, credential completion, and employment).

Assess the First-Year Experience program in terms of its impact on important college goals. Money spent should produce services that are required for students to function at the college (orientation and other forms of student information and assistance), promote and increase student success and completion according to the college's goals, or advance enrollment and retention in a way that creates a return on investment (for example, retention as an enrollment strategy).

Final Statement

Salt Lake Community College's First-Year Experience program is in a good place. It has excellent staff and capable, dedicated leadership. Even so, the completion agenda will demand significant changes in how the department operates. One of the broader challenges to meet is how to increase retention by ensuring that more new students make social and academic connections at the college. This will require significant changes to the placement of students, so that most students begin their college career by taking college level classes. It will require the thoughtful use of technologies for identifying students with an at-risk or struggling academic status, and for communicating with students in real time and by the methods they prefer. Students will need more support and structure, probably in the form of more required processes. These changes will put more pressure on the FYE program by demanding more student connections and support at each campus and online. That support could take the form of orientations, FYE seminars or other college success courses, success coaches or advocates, cohort programs, and student engagement activities. Fortunately, we find First-Year Experience to be a successful, well-managed program that is ready to meet the significant challenges in front of it.