Salt Lake Community College
Student Life and Leadership Department
External Review

Reviewers

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Summary:

The Student Life and Leadership (SLL) Office at Salt Lake Community College aims to foster student involvement and leadership development through a variety of programs and participation opportunities. Based on the published mission, vision and purpose statements, the office values "imagination, inclusivity, accountability, making a difference, and teamwork." The office has been through a great deal of transition in recent years, with changes in leadership, reduction in staff positions, and transition in reporting alignment. Recently, the office was realigned to report to the Associate Vice President for Student Success. Other departments reporting to the Associate Vice President for Student Success include: the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs; the Office of Orientation and Student Success; TRIO Programs; Career Services; Academic Advising; and the Thayne Center.

The external review team was asked to evaluate the Student Life & Leadership Office to provide additional context to the non-academic program review with consideration for the following:

- Alignment and contribution to SLCC mission, vision, goals
- Systemic integration of services across departments
- Quality, efficiency and effectiveness
- Customer service
- Congruence with SLCC values

The external review team was also asked to provide context for best practices taking place at other, similar institutions, to ensure that SLCC's approaches are in line with external standards of practice.

Over the course of two days, reviewers met with constituents from a variety of departments, including more than 30 students. Professional representatives included both those holding formal roles in Student Affairs and Student Life & Leadership specifically, as well as faculty and staff who serve as advisors to student clubs and organizations. Students were invited to participate who represent clubs and organizations leadership, SLCCSA executive roles, and students of color who are generally connected to other offices, like the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs and the Office of Orientation and Student Success. In all, the review team met with over 50 people. In those conversations, several themes emerged.

Themes:

Differentiating Student Life & Leadership Staff vs. SLCC Student Association (SLCCSA)
Throughout our conversations, there was recurring confusion about the difference between the SLL staff roles and responsibilities and the roles and responsibilities of students who hold leadership roles with SLCCSA. Examples of this include the following questions that were evident during our conversations with various constituent groups:
- Who is responsible for programming on all the campuses?
- Who makes final decisions on programming?

- What programming is offered beyond what SLCCSA does?
- Who makes decisions about the student fee allocation?
- Who will decide if the Special Assistant to the SLCCSA President for Inclusion & Equity continues as an appointed role?
- Who is included in the summer leadership training retreats?
- Who has access to the physical office space in the SLL suite?
- Who is responsible for answering student questions and providing guidance about processes/forms/approvals for student organizations?
- Who address student concerns?

The SLL staff even made mention of the confusion and one staff member shared:

> *There is college-wide confusion of the difference between SLL and SLCCSA. SLL is a department/office and SLCCSA is the student association housed in that office. The understanding that SLCC staff/faculty have is that SLL are able to schedule the students for tours, ushers, hosts and get frustrated when that is not the case. SLL allows our student leaders to make decisions, such as what speaker to bring in or what program to plan. We do not tell them what to do and some people think we just tell them what we the staff want.*

While it is important to vest students with authority to make decisions and be accountable for those decisions, it is equally important that students in leadership roles with authority are held to high standards and provided guidance. Advising styles and techniques used by SLL staff should be grounded in critically informed student development theory and demonstrate an understanding of the developmental needs of a broadly diverse student population inclusive of a wide range of social identities. The confusion around accountability on questions of access and inclusion demonstrates that more clarity and guidance is needed to ensure that principles of equity, justice and inclusion are clearly articulated and that all constituents know that SLL staff are committed to fostering an environment that engages all students, particularly those who have been underrepresented in positional leadership roles.

In addition all SLL staff need to know and understand their roles/expectations beyond advising their assigned SLCCSA Vice Presidents and be supported in communicating that role to the college at large. It is also important for staff to know the extent of their authority to direct or advise programs and involvement, with respect to the autonomy and authority of SLCCSA.

The perceived lack of inclusion and equity for students of color in SLL signature programs and leadership opportunities

We had the opportunity to talk with students of color who also serve as leaders in clubs/organizations at SLCC. A number of them were also employed on campus. It should be noted that while they all currently serve or have served in a leadership role in a club/organization on campus, only a handful of them expressed interest in participating in student government (SLCCSA) and even fewer expressed that they feel comfortable or invited

to utilize the space and resources in the SLL office. These feelings were also felt during standard SLL and SLCCSA programming events. In fact students of color used words like the following to describe SLL and SLCCSA collectively:

- A castle
- White
- Unwelcoming/Uninviting
- Confusing- what is SLL and how is that different from SLCCSA
- A "clique"

These words/feelings were also validated by faculty and staff who work with, teach and advise students of color at SLCC. One advisor shared "SLL is not on student's radar. Students don't view SLL as needed or really understand what they do."

We also interviewed a group of student leaders representing both majority and minority groups who described SLL and SLCCSA collectively using the following descriptors:

- Supportive- encouraged participation in clubs
- Helpful and understanding- but only with processes that are redundant. We would like more access and information.
- Resourceful-they have a lot but not everyone knows about them.
- Successful
- Potential
- Interconnected with everything on campus- they are resourceful
- Assisting- willing to help

These words were also supported by faculty and staff outside of the SLL.

When SLL staff was asked about the demographic make-up of SLCCSA, they acknowledged that students in leadership roles were predominantly White and male. They also mentioned that it has been a challenge to get students of color to participate (both to run for office and to vote) in SLCCSA elections. While student government elections may draw students from specific backgrounds or prior experiences, SLL staff are in a position to evaluate the degree to which leadership roles and opportunities attract students from the full diversity of backgrounds and social identities at SLCC. Several constituent groups observed that most of the students who are involved in or work most directly with the SLL staff visibly appear to hold privileged identities - as White people and as men. In addition, SLCCSA roles are accompanied by privileges as well, such as stipends for holding the roles, voting representation in the SLCC Board of Trustees, leadership development and travel opportunities, access to physical office space in SLL and opportunities for mentorship.

It is evident how student involvement contributes to retention and persistence at SLCCSA. Unfortunately, the majority of the students of color we interviewed believe that they don't belong

in SLCCSA and implied that participation in student government is a "popularity contest." Some of this may be because no one in SLL or SLCCSA "looks like" them. While the SLL staff recognized that they need to do more to serve the general student body and not just SLCCSA, intentionality around outreach to students of color for participation and engagement around campus and through clubs/organizations and SLCCSA is needed.

The perceived lack of collaboration with other departments and colleagues across campus
During our interviews with current SLL staff we asked how well they believed they collaborated with other departments. We also spoke with faculty and staff that work both directly (report to same AVC) and indirectly with the SLL staff and asked about collaboration with SLL.

The SLL staffed thought they collaborated well and shared an example of a flu shot party, the ULA- academy and their works with FYE in regards to orientation to demonstrate their collaboration with a specific major and/or student club. Faculty and staff outside of SLL, however, did not believe that true collaboration exists and provided the following words to describe SLL:

- Unintentional - specifically with regard to diversity programming
- Battle - "I don't feel welcome in the space"
- Tokenism- SLL only sends invitation to events when visible diversity is needed and expected from students of color
- Isolated- outside groups are not invited to be a part of the planning process with SLL.
- Flimsy- policies change depending on who you talk to and who you have relationships with. It's like if they don't know you or like you then you are left alone to figure things out,
- Stuck-need vision and plan. They are not all on the same page
- Power- they have space, financial resources and access. Its disproportionate in regards to students even though all students pay fees.
- Lack of transparency and lack of communication. For example, advisors are perceived to say "no" without offering a reason.

The following themes were emphasized frequently:

- SLL needs a strong vision. The staff are well-intentioned and capable, but need direction and vision to move forward cohesively as a staff
- SLL needs to focus on communication. Other departments and students are uninformed about the range of programs, services and opportunities offered by SLL, and have limited understanding of where to go to learn more. .
- SLL needs to focus on collaboration. There are many opportunities for partnership with other departments, campuses and student groups. SLL should seek and maximize opportunities for shared vision and outreach with multiple partners.
- SLL staff are positive, well-intentioned colleagues/advisors. Individual staff in SLL have potential allies and willing collaborators across campus.

Many colleagues across the college spoke highly of the current SLL staff and mentioned that additional staff may help to circumvent some of the challenges that they have experienced. In addition to staffing they discussed the negative experience/perception of their students and the physical space of the SLL being barriers to collaboration. It is important to note that a few expressed concern with the current staff's ability to function outside of what has been traditionally done and that in the past SLL has not been open to feedback or ideas.

Reducing bureaucracy and improving efficiency
In conversation with student leaders and club advisors alike, it was clear that SLL has an active role in supporting the business operations of clubs and organizations, thereby creating a dynamic and engaging environment on SLCC campuses. Through the OrgSync platform, SLL staff manage the processes for review and approval of events, access to funding, and compliance with college protocols and policies.

It seemed clear that many people at various points in this system - from the students submitting forms to the advisors reviewing information to the administrative staff authorizing approval for contract submission - see opportunities to reduce bureaucracy and improve efficiency. Tales of confusion and lack of training and understanding were prevalent amongst both student leaders and club advisors in regards to OrgSync and the approval process. It was mentioned that there is an OrgSync training online but that like the club advisor training it is not mandatory. Specifically. Interviewees shared:

- SLL is bureaucratic and a lot of red tape. Students have to go through so much to form and maintain a club (Example: the requirement that a student must be enrolled for 9 credit hours in order to serve as an organization president)
- OrgSync is challenging to use. Training on how to best maximize OrgSync would be helpful
- Policies governing student organization business are unclear to group advisors. Advisors do not know how to efficiently manage processes, get approvals, and conduct organizational business, which often results in their spending money out of pocket without reimbursement or not encouraging/advising students to pursue large goals or projects on behalf of their clubs.

In addition to the online usage of OrgSync, there were concerns shared regarding the accuracy and timeliness of contracts being submitted to the AVP for review and authorization. Interviewees shared examples of contracts having to be sent back and events being cancelled. This has at times doubled the workload those submitting and reviewing contracts and has created conflicting messages for students.

Refocusing leadership development efforts
Based on the name (Student Life and Leadership) alone, one would assume that leadership is a primary focus of SLL. While SLL staff members affirmed that leadership is the focus of the

office; faculty, staff and students were unclear and did not connect leadership development to SLL.

One SLL staff member felt very strongly about the need for leadership across the college and felt that while SLL does a good job of providing exposure to leadership development to active student leaders through the annual leadership conference. However, it sends a strong message to provide leadership development opportunities for those who are not in positional roles as well. Former SLL staff also shared the formal and informal leadership development that SLL was responsible for and that there was hope of developing a leadership minor for students to pursue. There was even mention of previous programs like StrengthsQuest as well as current efforts like the NSLS honor society, but overall these did not warrant the perceived focus on leadership that the staff have.

When the majority of students were asked about the focus on leadership development, they did not readily identify ways that SLL fosters and trains students on leadership development. When asked about the summer retreat for organization leaders, many acknowledged that they had attended and enjoyed the experience but it was not a transformative leadership development experience. One student expressed the hope that they could have done follow up trainings with one another to solidify and reinforce the bonds that were created during the retreat. Many students expressed an interest in continued leadership development.

When advising faculty and staff were asked about the role SLL plays in leadership development of students, no one really could speak on efforts outside of the summer experience and conference. On person shared that Students are expected to do and know so much and not given the proper training and or leadership

If leadership is going to remain a focus and it is in fact a degree requirement, SLCC may need to consider how it can be incorporated beyond SLL.

Physical space and resources
We had the opportunity to spend time at the Taylorsville campus in the student center. Several meetings took place in the Student Life and Leadership Office Suite. The physical space is open and contains both staff and student offices. There are several resources for students including lounge space, a kitchen area with snacks, meeting space, and a quiet reflection room. Perhaps a result of timing at the end of the semester, we did not see many students in the SLL space. This space is a great asset to the department, and could be leveraged to further the mission of the department in engaging students and promoting learning through student involvement.

Another refrain that we heard from some staff members was the importance of enhancing the physical presence of SLL at all campuses, not solely the Taylorsville campus. Staff housed at other locations who work to engage and support students shared some frustration about feeling forgotten or that there was confusion about how SLL was meant to serve them. It seems that, that as long as the responsibility for engaging branch campuses falls to SLCCSA Vice

Presidents, it will be inconsistently executed. Inconsistent programming efforts may result in lack of confidence from students about the opportunities available to them through SLL.

Consideration should be given to the best ways to structure SLL staff responsibilities to support programming and intentional student outreach and engagement efforts at the Jordan and South City campuses, in addition to the Taylorsville campus. It is the view of the reviewers that delegating this responsibility to SLCCSA Vice Presidents is not sufficient, and that one or more SLL staff members should have position assignments that include responsibility for supporting student engagement on other campuses through enlivening the SLL spaces at Jordan and South City, and also.

When we asked students what they thought of the space or what their experience in the space was, they shared:

- I don't feel like I can hang out in the space
- I dont think its a safe space and I avoid going there.
- The doors are always closed so it's not inviting
- It's perceived as a SLCCSA Office; I didn't even know it was really the SLL Office.
- When I have used the space to make copies, the people there were rude and pushy. I remember them saying things like: "What do you need? Are you done? How many more copies do you need?"

When we asked the faculty and staff outside of SLL, they shared:

- Unwelcoming- don't feel welcome when I walk in. I don't feel comfortable as a staff member here.
- The structure of how it looks. It's like I have to "check-in" at the front and then all eyes are on me when I walk in.
- The office needs more diversity

Organizational Structure

The perception of inadequate staffing came up through multiple groups. Students questioned if there was enough staff to support the varied programs supported by SLL. We heard from several staff members that they sympathized with the SLL staff and were uncertain how the existing staffing model would support an expanded scope of responsibility. Consideration should be given for how best to align staff responsibilities and ensure that each person is positioned to be successful in supporting student engagement.

It was noted that over the last several years, at least two Coordinator positions were eliminated as staff retired or moved on to new opportunities. When asked how the change in staffing has impacted the department, the following words were shared:

- Coordinators have to manage more areas and advise more SLCCSA VPs. This impacts communication between EC and Advisors
- Executive Committee members may only serve one term; there isn't enough time to work with them
- Meant that they paid less attention to student groups

When we asked the club advisors what they needed from SLL, they agreed:
- Communication
    - Updates
    - Training

Some expressed the sentiment that there are silos within the SLL department that impact how others work with the office. For example, one SLL staff member may say and do one thing related to a policy and or process and then another staff member may do the opposite or say that the other staff member does not know the policy and or process. Policies are not followed consistently, and information differs based on who is communicating.

Training and development for SLL staff
Time with the SLL staff proved to be very beneficial and their commitment to SLCC and student engagement was evident. There was however a resounding need for clarity in their roles and how it translates to the student experience. They each agreed that they did well with students that were active on campus but have yet to connect and engage with general students, those not actively involved on campus. They also expressed concern about the lack of diverse representation in SLCCSA and the election process in general.

As such training and development should be provided around the following topics:

- Ways to better engage general student body
- Policies/Paperwork
    - Contracts
    - OrgSync
    - Timelines
- Student advocacy and social justice
- Assessment
- Strategic Planning
- Leadership development
- Student LIfe Programming
- Serving as a club advisor

It seems like the staff is unsure of how to best market SLL and engage students outside of SLCCSA so training around marketing and oublizing activities and leadership opportunities would also be beneficial.

Recommendations

Based on our meetings with faculty, staff and students as well as our review of provided documents, the following is a list of general and theme-specific recommendations provided by the external review team:

General Recommendations

- Develop student learning outcomes for SLL that are aligned with SLCC values and CAS Standards and ensure all programs offered and/or sponsored by SLCC map to specific learning outcomes. Discontinue programs that do not support one or more values and standards
- Establish learning goals and evaluation rubric for Student Life and Leadership Office programs, focused on values-based competencies tied to co-curricular involvement
- Clarify competencies like intercultural communication; dialogue across difference; self-awareness with regard to social and personal identities; and relationship to systems of power and oppression as part of identified goals for students involved in all SLL programs
- Establish programmatic priorities for SLL, separate and apart from the SLCCSA programming priorities, and align staff responsibilities to supporting these programs

Recommendations by theme:

Theme	Suggestions
Differentiating Student Life & Leadership Staff (SLL) from SLCC Student Association (SLCCSA)	• Realign the advising "footprint" so that Coordinators, Assistant Director and Director have a combination of distinct areas of advising responsibility as well as shared investment in and accountability for departmental program priorities. This should be reflected in Position Descriptions and the departmental organizational chart • Consolidate advising SLCCSA to one or two Coordinators within the SLL to reduce the overlap of SLL and SLCCSA responsibilities • Create programming responsibilities for Coordinator position(s) and concentrate efforts on those programs which most align to department and college values • Market and advertise SLL and SLCCSA to all students, beginning as early as orientation, using strategies that appeal to current students (Social media channels, face-to-face strategies)

The perceived lack of inclusion and equity for students of color in engagement opportunities	- A multi-pronged approach is needed to address the resulting imbalance in privilege and opportunity. Establish on-going short- and long-term goals for outreaching to and involving students of color - Center outreach to students of color in planning sessions, retreats, staff meetings, performance reviews and other efforts to focus strategic goals of SLL. - Address the climate perceived by students and staff of color, through a robust professional development program that helps SLL staff identify and challenge inequities, build skills in cultural humility and align values to the needs of students of color . - Ensure that access to and benefits of positional leadership are distributed in such a way that supports student engagement broadly. This may mean realigning the opportunities for stipends, leadership development, travel or other benefits of participation. - Meet regularly with staff leaders from Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs, TRIO Programs and the Office of Orientation and Student Success, among others, to build relationships that support collaboration and shared student advising - Develop a summer bridge or leadership program for minority students that include leadership development and a pathway to SGA - Encourage and incentivize intentional collaboration between student organizations that support students of color and SLCCSA - Include social justice and cultural competence training in all student leadership opportunities, including the summer retreat and on-going training sessions. Consider sending student and staff leaders to the Social Justice Training Institute.
Perceived lack of collaboration with external departments and colleagues	- Create intentional opportunities for partnership - Schedule recurring opportunities for joint planning, such as day or overnight retreats, quarterly shared staff meetings, and informal gatherings designed to build and reinforce trust - Establish collaboration-centered goals for each SLL staff person and incorporate those goals into performance management planning - Create shared map of natural collaborative partners with units both within and outside of Student Affairs

Reducing bureaucracy and improving efficiency	- The Director of SLL should designate a campus lead for OrgSync or replacement system who can serve as an expert and advocate for systematic improvements that center student learning. - Undertake systematic and comprehensive review of every business process and workflow required to manage a student organization. Seek opportunities to reduce redundancy, clarify processes and flow, and establish clear instructions and training for all involved, particularly student leaders and club advisors. - Establish and maintain regular communication with club advisors from SLL staff with information and clear instructions on required responsibilities - Create and/or review Club Advisor Training for clarity and relevance
Refocusing leadership development efforts	- Conduct inventory on the leadership development opportunities for students at beginner, intermediate and expert levels - Map opportunities for leadership development to the calendar year and to a variety of formats and intensity levels - Create rubric for programming and consider leadership as a core component. - Identify one or two leadership theories or models to center leadership training efforts - Identify collaboration opportunities with other Student Affairs departments
Physical space	- Evaluate how the physical space furthers the mission of the office to deeply and broadly engage with students. - Create opportunities to draw more people to the SLL office suite, through programs like: - Common office hours - Open House - Events hosted in the space - Establish shared expectations for outreach and accessibility for all office holders, especially SLCCSA student leaders, to ensure shared values and common understanding of the responsibility of dedicated office space - Publish expectations and values statements about the SLL visible to all visitors, students, guests, etc.

Organizational Structure	- Director and AVP should evaluate the current SLL organizational structure to consider if department values, strategic goals and objectives are sufficiently supported by current staffing model - Consider how staffing model supports both department values and pragmatic needs of serving multiple campuses - Evaluate each full time role within SLL to determine professional and practical scope, impact and goals - Consider creating Business Officer role within SLL to serve as an expert in compliance, efficiency and business processes - Develop short and long term goals for staffing, including how to best serve campus needs with current staffing structure vs. with additive staffing structure .
Training and development for SLL staff	- Develop a 30, 60 and 90 day onboarding process for all SLL positions that includes: - Shadowing - Alignment to CAS Standards - Performance management and expectations - Create quarterly goals and semi-annual performance management meetings - Set annual performance goals tied to the department's strategic plan and shared goals - Provide opportunities for professional development that center on shared departmental goals for inclusion, leadership development and collaboration