

**Salt Lake Community College
School Relations Department Program Review
Team Report**

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Introduction

The School Relations department at Salt Lake Community College (SLCC) provides recruitment, outreach and access services to a wide variety of constituency groups throughout the state of Utah. This includes promoting the college to high school students by informing them of the admissions process, academic programs, and financial aid opportunities. The outreach efforts consist of providing similar information to alternative high schools, community groups, and businesses. Also housed within the office are grant-funded access programs, PACE and Gear UP, which promote early college awareness and preparation among underrepresented students.

Purpose and Program Review Team

The program review team was comprised of three higher education professionals with expertise in access, outreach, admissions and marketing and communication. The purpose of the program review was to conduct a broad assessment of the department through reading the departmental self-study and participation in a two-day site visit consisting of interviews with stakeholders both internal and external to the college. These included interviews with college academic administrators, School Relations staff, community-based organizations, Salt Lake Community College students, junior high school administrators, and high school counselors; all individuals and groups that work closely with the School Relations area. It is important to note that observations contained within the report are based upon limited and select interviews and do not reflect all viewpoints from all departments across campus.

Commendations for School Relations

- School Relations' self-study is comprehensive and well-written;
- Consistent with the self-study and feedback from middle and high school administrators and counselors, School Relations has built and maintained strong relationships within the schools it serves and its recruiting efforts are a strong component of those strong relationships;
- Access programs are an excellent compliment to the School Relations department in that these efforts are highly targeted and progress and outcomes are well-documented. During site interviews, the GEAR UP program which serves 5 schools in the Granite School District was highlighted as one of the best programs offered.
- Community partners speak highly of the School Relations staff and its efforts. Specifically, the Native American community commends School Relations on providing resources for events that target Native American students;
- Units across Student Services overwhelmingly agree that School Relations does a good job in its recruitment efforts;
- Staff understands goals, roles, and responsibility with respect to the recruitment of prospective high school students.

Observations & Recommendations

The following observations and recommendations are organized around the School Relations department and its goals, and larger questions surrounding marketing and communications, as well as admissions and enrollment.

SCHOOL RELATIONS

- One of the commendations of the School Relations office is the strength of its recruitment efforts with high school students. However, high school administrators and career and technology education (CTE) counselors mention the need for more robust recruitment strategies that include bringing faculty along on visits to conduct in-class demonstrations. This specific strategy, recently implemented by another college in the Salt Lake City high school, proved highly effective in promoting the college, as well as career and future job prospects for students.
- From external groups interviewed, the efforts coming out of the School Relations are clearly understood. However, internal to the campus, there seems to be some confusion as to the role of the School Relations department. An example of this is provided in the self-study when School Relations comments on conducting calls to admitted students to remind them to enroll in classes. The enrollment services group views this type of effort as a natural extension of recruitment work. However, given the multiple constituency groups School Relations is responsible for yielding to the college, there needs to be some clarity around when recruitment functions end and enrollment services work begins. It is also important to note, that in some colleges the responsibility for calling students to enroll in classes is traditionally a Registrar's function or a collaborative between multiple offices.
- The self-study suggests the exploration of a name change for the School Relations department. Interviews with both internal and external groups demonstrate a basic knowledge of School Relations as a traditional high school recruitment office. However, there was limited knowledge of the access and outreach components of the office's charge. Specifically, high school counselors commented that the name School Relations is confusing to students seeking admissions information. The self-study documents the evolution of the School Relations department and how it has adapted to the changing needs and requests from the larger community. This includes serving more students in secondary schools, conducting workshops to grades 9 and below, requests from community-based organizations, state entities and business community. Additionally, the area has become home for grants or programs/services that had no other clear organizational place. Coupled together, these comments support that the name School Relations is not intuitive or instinctual to prospective students looking for admissions information about Salt Lake Community College nor is the name comprehensive enough to describe the work occurring in the area.

Recruitment

- Interviews with student Ambassadors suggest that the students understand their roles and enjoy the experience of working with prospective students. Research suggests that satisfied students are an institution's best recruiters (Noel Levitz, 2005) and a trusted source of information for prospective students (Eduventures, 2007). Therefore, we can infer that a current students' influence on prospective student enrollment is significant. To bolster recruitment and outreach efforts, it is recommended, that the Ambassador program be strengthened through the recruitment of a more diverse (ethically, racially, linguistically and gender) pool of students. Ambassador training should include an understanding of norms to know what informational needs should at the forefront of the recruitment and/or outreach conversation.
- Communication to prospective students at various stages in the recruitment process appears inconsistent. It is recommended that robust prospective student database that allows the department to capture prospects, as well as those students who have applied but not registered and stay in communication with them. This could improve gathering of prospect information at all enrollment marketing and outreach events for follow up.
- Create an appreciation event for the local counselors and administrators and bring them on campus for a day. Highlight the CTE programs and SLCC resources and services that are offered for their students. This would help build a relationship with the schools.
- Create a family night for career/college day and, if possible, provide two to three dates and times. Providing different dates and time options allows for better participation from parents with difficult schedules.
- Interviews with academic services team expressed interest in working with School Relations in recruiting students into specific departments and programs. It is recommended that School Relations develop closer collaborations related to recruitment of students.

Outreach & Access

- Greater collaboration with SLCC to better leverage community resources and college resources. Create a consortium or "community" committee that includes important business stakeholders, local school administrators, SLCC department representatives and community organizations which include ethnic community groups. Define groups' purpose/objectives and collaborate on ideas on reaching all community groups in the surrounding area.
- Collaborate with Division of Workforce Services to help start a refugee club at the college. Create a space where refugee students would be able to find resources and services DWS offers along with services SLCC offers. This relationship could be expanded to local refugee communities with the addition of the club and space for this specific population. The club would be a motivating visual aid for the students.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

- There is no comprehensive communication plan to prospective students that drives applications from targeted audiences. Due to the open-access nature of the college, and its various constituencies, communication is admittedly difficult. School Relations' communication to specialized outreach and access programs (e.g., PACE, GearUP, etc.) is not formalized with institutional marketing and varies by program in content and data collection and tracking.
- Marketing and presentation materials used by School Relations staff are not always targeted toward each population the department serves. It is suggested that stronger connections are developed with Institutional Marketing to segment populations in a manner that addresses common needs and priorities and then design and implement strategies to reach these populations that are consistent with the College's overall messaging and specific to the event and/or program's call to action.
- It was mentioned in numerous interviews that the current presentation materials to high school students are too long and not engaging. It is recommended that these presentations incorporate technology that students use daily, such as YouTube videos and interactive activities that relate to life decisions in presentations.
- Print materials such as the current view book do not show the vibrancy of the campus community. It is suggested that print materials are more active and include pictures of current students.
- The SLCC website is the main medium for information among high school students and their families. The School Relations webpages are currently organized in a manner that is reflective of the internal structure of the office and its function but does not demonstrate logical next steps for a student from admissions to enrollment. This lack of clarity may unintentionally create barriers to access and enrollment. It is suggested that these webpages are redesigned to support student navigation than be a reflection of the department's internal structure.
- In reviewing the marketing materials made available by the School Relations staff, the current print materials do not drive prospective students to landing pages that correspond to the specific call to action of the communication.

ADMISSIONS & ENROLLMENT

- There is no consistent strategy for proactively targeting the various types and ages of adult applicants and encourage their enrollment. Interviews with various groups support there is no clear definition of an 'adult' student beyond the college definition of a student that is two years out of high school. A suggestion is to create a clearer definition of an adult student that is agreed upon by SLCC as a whole and to formulate a consistent strategy for reaching the adult student population. An interview with the academic services groups suggested that the

definition of adult student may need to be expanded to include adult student ‘characteristics’ which could be defined as working full-time, supporting a family, etc.

- The self-study asked the review team to address the idea of creating an admissions office and offer ideas on what that office might include. A significant benefit to creating an Admissions Office or an office for prospective students would reduce and/or eliminate the multiple entry points that currently exist into the community college. Additionally, the creation of this office would align both name and function of the office that makes the office recognizable to external groups.
- The self-study documents that School Relations is collaborating with the Enrollment Management Committee and the Access & Strategic Enrollment Council to better understand recruitment issues and coordinate goals. Interviews with Enrollment Services and members of each committee reveal there is no shared understanding of recruitment issues or shared vision for recruitment goals. Salt Lake Community College, like every community college in the nation, has a very distinctive role. It is a college for the people. Its ‘open access’ nature, coupled with the responsibility for the academic transfer preparation, vocational and technical training education, and developmental education make it critical for a shared vision. The site team suggests these groups come together to identify areas from the college’s strategic plan areas relevant to its enrollment position and then identify, segment and prioritize its enrollment targets and set measureable goals.
- After review of the self-study and at the conclusion of interviews with members of the campus community, the site team did not glean a shared vision for what the student experience should be. Having a clear, shared and widely communicated vision on the student experience is of importance because it provides a viewpoint, a student’s viewpoint, that it is different from college administrators and staff. The site team suggests to the committees charged with enrollment management look into the feasibility of using a strategic enrollment management (SEM) approach for its efforts. SEM as a concept and process enables the college to fulfill its institutional mission and its students’ educational goals. SEM makes the entire college active in and responsible for recruiting, retaining and graduating students. Several questions the review team offers to the enrollment planning committees are “What is the experience you want students to have?” Is it a form of seamless navigation from the point of inquiry to graduation? If the answer to the question above is to provide students with a seamless experience from initial point of contact to graduation, services, including marketing, admissions, financial aid, first-year experience and advising, must be aligned in a way that supports student navigation through those processes. Under this model, the communication across these areas and accountability for student success becomes shared. Currently, a number of these services reside in the enrollment services organizational structure. If School Relations remained outside the enrollment services area, the review team suggests that steps be taken to ensure good collaboration, communication and data sharing.

Conclusion

The SLCC School Relations department needs more staff to do what is necessary for them to be even more effective. It would be good for all staff members dealing with communities to receive intense training around cultural responsibility to ethnic populations. This should include the historical perspective that highlights the soft skills needed to outreach and retain the student. School Relations would benefit from offering more events and programs that are tailored to serve specific populations (students of color, immigrants/refugees, and adult learners). Once these groups come onto SLCC campus, utilize your faculty to promote transferrable degrees programs and CTE programs. In addition, using international students as ambassadors would give the ethnic and immigrant/refugee communities a visual aid that they can relate to. SLCC has had an increase in their immigrant/refugee population and, knowing that, it would be beneficial for the School Relations department to collaborate even more with local community organizations that serve the immigrant/refugee population. This collaborative effort will help ensure that the services and programs SLCC offers will reach and serve this population. I would also suggest that SLCC School Relations make a commitment to using alternative language in describing ethnic communities from “minorities” to “students of color.” The term “minorities” has a negative connotation as “less than” while “students of color” looks at the external lenses of the population served. Find alternative ways to connect with your adult students through events and daily activities where adult students feel welcome to ask questions. Having the ability to utilize students as the voice and visual for the college is a positive. Studies show that students who can see themselves as the students or person talking with them have an instant connection. School Relations must find alternative ways to using more of their students of color (African-American, Latino/Hispanic, and Native American), ESL, refugee/immigrant, and adult students on campus in their outreach and recruitment efforts.