

This External Review Process for the Division of Student Affairs at Ohio University was framed by Vice President Pina's fundamental questions and desired outcomes including, but not limited to, the following:

Fundamental Questions:

- Is the Division of Student Affairs organized to meet the needs of current and future student demographics?
- Does the work of Student Affairs lend itself to collaboration across the University?
- From enrollment to graduation, how might the programs and services for students be best organized and aligned to meet student needs?
- Is the Division of Student Affairs organized to ensure employees have the appropriate mix of experiences, skills and job responsibilities to maximize deployment of resources?
- How might Student Affairs provide opportunities for departmental leaders across the university to gain new knowledge and skills related to addressing student needs and success?

Desired Outcomes:

- Offer an external perspective on the Division's direction, opportunities for excellence and needs for more focused attention.
- Indicate whether the Division is organized to advance both the university pathways and the Division of Student Affairs' strategic objectives.
- Help us understand to what degree the Division is viewed as a critical part of the University operation.
- Share perspective on how senior leaders and trustees view the work of the Division of Student Affairs.
- Make recommendations on organizational composition and hierarchy (departments and organizational chart).
- Offer any additional information you deem appropriate as you learn more during this review process.

This final report offers twenty recommendations to address these questions and the desired outcomes shared at the onset of this external review process and throughout the entire review process. We hope this report will allow the Division of Student Affairs at Ohio University to continue its strong commitment to excellence within the student experience. Further, it is our hope that these recommendations will strengthen the working and collaborative experiences of staff within the Division and with other valuable campus partners.

RECOMMENDATION 1:**Define goals for the Division of Student Affairs' Strategic Objectives Plan.**

Divisional colleagues feel confident that strategic priorities for the Division of Student Affairs have been rightfully identified and align with the university's strategic pathways; these priorities will assist with the realization of the university's stated pathways. There is a general sense that it is time to advance these priorities steadfastly by defining goals and articulating the specific implementation process. Staff are poised to progress these priorities but need leadership to advance them.

Additionally, the Vice President for Student Affairs has clearly articulated his commitment to diversity and inclusion. However, many stated that it is time for the Division to advance these efforts. As the campus has prioritized "being an inclusive campus", it is clear that divisional staff can lead the campus in figuring out how to be more inclusive for faculty, staff and students. Student Affairs staff can assist in training faculty around diversity and inclusion. Many colleagues on campus know that the Student Affairs is essential in helping to lead diversity and inclusion initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION 2:**Leadership in the Division of Student Affairs must lead as one division.**

There was conversation, at many meetings, about this notion of a "division within the division." Leadership within Student Affairs must continue to speak with one voice and focus holistically on the division with greater clarity about the role of the Vice President for Student Affairs and that of other senior leaders. All staff must have 100% focus on the work of Student Affairs while also maintaining 100% focus on the work of the university. Understanding the Division of Student Affairs is one strong division, with many different departments, will create a more cohesive experience for staff.

RECOMMENDATION 3:**Create more meaningful, efficient and effective organizational structures and alignments.**

From nearly every discussion we held, it was clear that there is significant confusion about the current organizational structure in the Division. Staff feel that there is not an organizational alignment and, as such, the structure itself creates difficult dynamics and lacks efficiencies and effectiveness. Some recent cultural shifts have slowed things down, affected smaller units differentially and lessened autonomy. We heard many recommendations to consider, regarding necessary changes to the current structure including, but not limited to, the following:

- Center all wellbeing units together including:
 - Recreational Sports;
 - Counseling (for it to allow for both a preventive and responsive focus);
 - Health Promotions; and,

- Volleyball/basketball courts led by Housing and Residence Life.

Additionally, strong partnerships with the Health Center (Campus Care) and Services for Students with Disabilities must take place. In addition, it is recommended that Ohio University reduce significant redundancies between Student Affairs and Well Works by strengthening these partnerships.

- Given that there has been a 50% increase in participation in Greek Life at Ohio University over the past five years and 18% of the student population is involved in Greek Life, it is strongly recommended that you make Greek Life a standalone department, with a director and add more staff. This department should report directly to the Dean of Students or Vice President for Student Affairs. Given the size and scope of your Greek Life community, and national issues surrounding fraternity and sorority life, it is essential that Ohio University move in this direction. Again, this move will allow Ohio University to continue to step-into its commitment to excellence for the student experience.
- Event Services should share central scheduling with other event systems primarily as this is very necessary for campus safety issues. It is important, from a safety and security perspective, to be able to share event management systems. Additionally, Event Services should be better partnered with Campus Programming and with Performing Arts/Concerts.
- The Career and Leadership Development Center should report directly to the Vice President for Student Affairs specifically given the university's interest in and focus on the credentialing/badging process. It would be very helpful to allow this office to serve as an office for learning partnerships, to work in partnership with University College and other academic units, as mentioned more comprehensively in the next recommendation (Recommendation 4).

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Strengthen academic and student affairs partnerships after organizational alignments have been made.

We received significant feedback that there needs to be strengthened relationships with academic partners. This feedback was particularly critical as the Division of Student Affairs strives to advance the university's named strategic pathways. The scholarship of Student Affairs, specifically related to student learning and human development, is not well known at Ohio University. It is abundantly clear that faculty and academic leadership does not understand the Division of Student Affairs significant contributions to the learning environment. It will be important to continue to identify and articulate how the Division continues to support the academic mission. We recommend that the university align divisional

and academic learning goals. We also recommend that the Vice President for Student Affairs and college deans meet at least once a semester to share goals and ideas.

In order to elevate this priority and strengthen essential partnerships, we recommend that a divisional leader be named to serve as central partner/coordinator with academic units. This leader/unit, likely Career and Leadership Development, could foster greater connections with academic partners related to, but not limited to, the following:

- Living Learning Communities;
- Orientation;
- Credentialing/badging;
- Performing Arts;
- Community Engagement; and,
- Experiential Learning.

Should you move in this direction we also recommend that you consider renaming this office to signal the importance of learning and/or academic partnerships.

While all of these academic partnerships are valuable we want to underscore two in particular given the issues raised. First, and foremost, most Orientation programs are housed within divisions of student affairs across the country. If Ohio University continues to keep this unit within academic affairs, it is essential that partnerships with Student Affairs be strengthened considerably for this program. Today, Orientation programs are still yield events and offering such programs must allow for the holistic student experience, both curricular and co-curricular. Second, given that Ohio University has a College of Fine Arts, the Division of Student Affairs' Performing Arts and Concert Series needs to establish a much stronger partnership with this College.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Post organizational alignments and restructuring consider the organization of leadership team meetings and structures.

Once better organizational alignments are created, it will be very important to consider the structure of leadership team meetings. Since the current organizational structure is problematic, with duplications and lack of efficiencies and effectiveness, the current set-up of leadership team meetings are complicated and seemingly inequitable. Once new organizational alignments occur, ensure leadership team meetings follow suit.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Develop specific roles and strategy for the Strategic Leadership Team.

The Strategic Leadership Team is grateful for the opportunity to come together. They think there are great possibilities in their opportunity to gather. However, they recommend that senior leadership establish strategic priority goals and define their role as a team even more so.

They recognize that they have only met twice, and need more time in formation, but know that more clearly articulated goals and stated strategy would be helpful for their success and contributions.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

Learn to tell a more cohesive Student Affairs story.

As the organizational structure is complicated and complex, it is difficult to tell a cohesive story about the Division of Student Affairs. Once organizational structural changes occur, and strategic priorities advance, it will be much easier to tell a more cogent, coherent story of the work of the Division. It is also recommended that you invest in the newly formed communications team that helps support the telling of the Division's story across all departments and for the university.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

Create more opportunities for Division of Student Affairs staff development.

One constant and positive theme, ascertained from staff from numerous departments/areas within the division, is the desire to get together more in-unstructured ways for greater staff development. Staff value Friday Forums where they get the opportunity for professional development. However, staff desire more unstructured time together to get out of their silos and get to know each other better as members of the same division. They feel that this will help them move forward as a unit to tackle issues that are within the Division and on campus in general. Some of the examples shared included semester/annual retreats, town halls with focused time for staff development, and celebrations (awards, years of service recognitions, etc.). These new staff development efforts could also include the on boarding of new staff. Although these are encouraging opportunities, considerable thought will have to be expended to ascertain the best way to support staff development in new and innovative ways. One option would be to create a new position dedicated to staff development, which may include other areas of responsibility as well. If funding or other issues are problematic, there may be an opportunity to utilize existing staff in new ways. Whatever the solution, the good news is that folks desire to spend more time together to further strengthen themselves as a team.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

Articulate priorities for a Student Affairs development campaign.

The Ohio University Division of Student Affairs is no different from any other campus regarding the need to increase the level of support from private funding. However, in its continued commitment to be a pre-eminent public university, it must focus on philanthropic giving from student leader alumni and parents/families. This will, and should be, a constant focus for the Division as they collaborate with the university's development office. It is imperative that the leadership of the Division create a list of funding priorities for the Division and make sure these priorities are shared both within Student Affairs and across the university. The core of these

efforts will be to enrich the student experience, and everyone needs to be able to share the same “elevator speech” regarding the most important Student Affairs funding needs for students at Ohio University.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

Improve the Division of Student Affairs partnership with Higher Education/College Student Personnel Faculty.

When meeting with the graduate assistants, there was a very strong sense of support from the Division of Student Affairs and, for the most part, they felt their experiences within Student Affairs and other areas of campus (mostly Student Affairs) were positive, educational, and offered the appropriate training needed after graduation. These students did mention that there should be efforts to develop further the partnership between the Division of Student Affairs and the Higher Education/College Student Personnel Faculty. When pressed to offer suggestions, the students shared that it would be extremely helpful if there were an opportunity to bring supervisors and graduate students together to ensure a positive and meaningful experience. An additional opportunity, if this is not already happening, would be to have the Vice President for Student Affairs and other members of the Division of Student Affairs Leadership (particularly those with graduate assistantships) to meet with these faculty to further partnerships and increase the overall positive experiences for graduate assistants. Graduate assistants also indicated that it would be great to have some alone time each year with the Vice President for Student Affairs.

RECOMMENDATION 11:

Establish systems to gather more and better data, and connect data sets, to make data-informed decisions.

This came up both internally and externally as a challenge for staff and the campus. It seems that data exists in many areas around the campus and exists in a silo. It was also apparent that there is resistance to sharing data from some colleagues within Student Affairs; data is only shared depending on who thinks they own the data and if one has a relationship with an asking colleague. The practice of not having a central data warehouse has been challenging to staff within the Division to have knowledge about whom they are serving. From the staff point of view, in order for the Division to become a data-driven organization they need access to existing data. There was also mention of how data would better help with the strategic planning process and cohesion around the student experience would benefit the campus from some type of centralization of data.

Outside of the Division there is frustration, especially from the academic side, that Student Affairs will not share data that could open up real conversations around the student experience, what is working, what is not working, review of resources, etc., and so that there is

not a duplication of efforts. We recommend that a culture of sharing data is cultivated. We also recommend that a data assessment leader be added within the Division of Student Affairs.

RECOMMENDATION 12:
Institutionalize the credentialing/badging process.

There is significant support at all levels and divisions of the institution that the credentialing/badging process be institutionalized. There is significant investment in this program. It is clear that this work will allow the University to better achieve one of its stated pathways to enhance the overall academic quality for students. However, although the work was commissioned by academic affairs but primarily done within Student Affairs and not in full partnership with academic partners, there is much work to do to institutionalize this process. We recommend that you elevate a leader(s), as named previously, to help organize and lead these efforts.

RECOMMENDATION 13:
Manage significant divisional and university “change fatigue.”

It is apparent that everyone on campus is aware of the significant changes that have occurred at Ohio University. As one person put it, “We have had four different Provosts in one-and-a-half years. That is bound to have some effect on a campus.” Additionally, there is a new president and several more changes to come with deans. People need additional support and care in change processes and this is something that has to be looked at in terms of the implications for the Division of Student Affairs.

RECOMMENDATION 14:
Develop more of a presence with regional campuses.

Student populations on regional campuses have recently decreased, losing 15% of enrollment since 2010. With this situation in play, the Division of Student Affairs will need to have more regular outreach to regional campuses for updates, professional development, and other connections. Communication will have to be increased as well. Use of technology could be helpful to connect with regional campuses to meet some of these needs. There has already been recent awareness of the regional campuses and a feeling of support from the leadership of the Division of Student Affairs. For example, student senate has created a position to represent regional campuses. The challenges that regional campus students have include more first-generation student issues and economic challenges. The Division of Student Affairs can play a critical and helpful role to assist in meeting these challenges. There are also students who relocate from regional campuses to the Athens campus, and potential transition issues should be continuously considered and responded to for students in need.

RECOMMENDATION 15:

Find more enhanced ways to communicate with students.

Students at Ohio University appear to thoroughly enjoy the experience they have as part of this community. Students stated there is a feeling that Student Affairs, and the campus as a whole, really help them feel supported and grow as individuals. This might have a strong correlation with the level of satisfaction from alumni that was noted several times. Yet, one area expressed by students that will require some attention, relates to communication. Students shared that campus information pertinent to them is sent primarily via email and this method of communication is not working. In this age of advancing technology, different methods to communicate important information to students should be explored.

RECOMMENDATION 16:

Create greater connections with the Graduate Student Senate.

Graduate students shared the need for additional assistance with numerous campus services, including health insurance, wellness center, meal plans, and housing. They indicated that university connections to graduate student life feels like it is "getting worse." Students feel that the Division of Student Affairs is the only area that looks at the full life of the graduate student, and they want more engagement from divisional leadership but they get the sense that this is not allowable. Specific concerns were raised related to graduate orientation which they felt was superfluous. Students desire more collaboration regarding student programs, specifically orientation, but only get consultation. Further, they felt that graduate student orientation and other essential services and programming needed to be looked at through the lens of an entire year and avoid being undergraduate focused. Students also raised significant issues related to international orientation and the insensitivity experienced for international student issues on many levels. There did not seem to be an awareness of the variance in the levels of proficiency in English or understanding of local and national cultural references. Finally, it was recommended that there needs to be some communication mechanism for graduate students to share their issues and concerns.

RECOMMENDATION 17:

Address growing insecurities and fear given the decrease in enrollment.

Many staff expressed significant concern about the decrease in student enrollments. There is uncertainty about what this decrease in enrollment means for the university, Division of Student Affairs and, in particular, people's jobs. Senior leadership needs to tend to this concern as a way to allay fears to allow for greater productivity and investment.

RECOMMENDATION 18:

Engage in an educational campaign about the Student Affairs budget as a way to prevent the Division of Student Affairs from becoming a target for budget issues.

There is lack of clarity about the differences between auxiliary and academic costs centers. Colleagues do not understand the significant need for auxiliary units to have reserves as a way to manage physical capital, which they have responsibility for as appointed by the president and/or board. Additionally, there is limited knowledge about all that the Student Affairs budget supports outside of the Division including student scholarships and more.

A couple of items were addressed several times with different colleagues external to the Division of Student Affairs. The first was around the auxiliary areas having tension with the academic areas based on declining enrollments and the challenges around who has the revenue to share costs. An example given was centered on scholarships and the pressure to provide them for students in need, while questioning the role of auxiliaries in the bigger budget picture for the campus. After a few questions, it was articulated that the academic units and some of the administrative units do not understand the work of Student Affairs nor the commitments that they already have around revenues that come from the auxiliary side. It was voiced several times that the campus needs to know more about what Student Affairs supports both within the department and outside the Division. As a whole, the campus does not fully understand what is happening in the Division regarding budgets. As such, we recommend that Student Affairs leadership create a “roadshow” that would educate the campus on not only what is happening within the Division, but also where the budget is going and how they support the campus.

RECOMMENDATION 19:

Leverage alumni for mentorships and internships.

Colleagues would like to see Student Affairs continue to create a holistic approach around the student learning experience that happens inside and outside of the classroom, creating better integration with the academic mission and clarity on how they support the academic mission. Utilizing the alumni base, which is organized and willing to help, to be utilized more effectively as mentors and to recruit students to the campus needs to be an important priority for the Division of Student Affairs. There are alumni who had a positive experience on campus and have been very successful and, in turn, they want to give back to the campus. It was recommended several times by senior leaders across the university that Student Affairs take advantage of this pool of alumni in a coordinated way. This work can also be done in partnership with the University College. Engaging alumni to offer students mentoring relationships and internships will help the University achieve its named strategic pathways.

RECOMMENDATION 20:

University leadership should focus on a central message and model for the university.

There is a need for the campus to move away from thinking and speaking about central versus college or administration versus college. Administration, including the Dean's, need to figure out what they want to achieve strategically as a University, decide how the University gets there and who does what to get there. This could help with the communication silos between vice presidents and deans. It appears that senior administration has a tendency to make decisions without consultation with each other and without conversations with the academic deans. While vice presidents are responsible for strategy, it would behoove them to involve each other and the college deans in such. Additionally, Student Affairs leadership would benefit from understanding when their plans affect the overall University experience and when best to involve others from the campus before a decision is finalized.

It has been our pleasure to meet with campus colleagues at Ohio University. It became abundantly clear that you have a campus corps of faculty, students, staff, alumni and administrators who care deeply about students and achieving meaningful university aims. It was a joy to be in your company and assist in this external review process. It our hope that these twenty recommendations allow the University to better realize its strategic pathways and the Division of Student Affairs its strategic objectives. We wish the very best for the staff of the Division of Student Affairs, as well as that of the entire Ohio University community. Please feel free to reach out to us at any time if we can be of further assistance.

Christina Gonzales
Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
University of Colorado - Boulder

Patty Perillo
Vice President for Student Affairs and Assistant Professor of Higher Education
Virginia Tech

Victor K. Wilson
Vice President for Student Affairs
University of Georgia