Peninsula College
Student Programs Review

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Peninsula College Student Programs/Government Review

Introduction

The Associated Student Council and Activities organization is a diverse group of student leaders who serve as a liaison between the administration and the student body in order to maximize student opportunities and experiences. Additionally, this group of students is tasked with creating a campus culture and student life program which benefits the students, staff, administration, faculty, and community.

This document reviews the student life practices and evaluates basic structure, campus culture, programming, and student facilities. It does not consider strategic initiatives, promotional strategies, mission, vision, or values.

The information gathered through this report is a guide which may help with the continued development of student life at Peninsula College. Ultimately, it provides an outside view of best practices and areas of improvement recommended through general observation and qualitative feedback of the 2004-2005 student leaders.

Since the interviews in the spring of 2005, significant changes have been made to the student life structure and a further review should be conducted to provide an updated overview. In addition, it is recommended that a retreat or training session should be conducted to review promotional strategies, strategic initiatives, and mission, vision, and values.

General Knowledge, Office Structure, Job Descriptions

The information was gathered through a lengthy meeting with the Associated Student Council officers at the college. It was very impressive to see the energy and commitment of the student leaders on campus. I was particularly impressed with Associated Student Body President Rob Darling and his knowledge of the campus and processes. However, it is clear that most student leaders did not have a comprehensive knowledge of government or activities practices to achieve a high degree of success on campus. This was evident in conversations with student leaders as they discussed their daily routine in the office and on campus. Students indicated that they held office hours, but admitted that they were fairly unproductive during their scheduled time. There was a lot of discussion from the council officers that “they didn’t know what to do while in the office.” Upon further discussion, all students agreed that they felt they were available for students if there was a student need. However, all students agreed that they should be doing more to serve the student body and wanted to learn more about their positions.

The major component of the discussion revolved around actual job descriptions and the understanding of each position. Some of the officers did not know their position title or the job description in their respective office. Furthermore, their knowledge of the entire Student Council was limited. I was impressed with the positive attitude and servant leadership of the student leaders, but recognized that there were no clear goals or
initiatives for the year. When asked about their goals or initiatives for the year, the student leaders responded by stating that they addressed needs of students when they came to the forefront.

It is difficult to establish a clear line between the Student Government objectives and the Student Activities objectives. The Associated Student Council President was the only individual interviewed who appeared to have a comprehensive knowledge of campus decisions. According to ASC President Rob Darling, he was extremely satisfied with the administration and their attitude toward student life and growth. However, none of the other council members were aware of any college initiatives. The officers (excluding the President) were more focused on the initiation, planning, and execution of activities for the campus. As a result, it appears that there is limited student input regarding campus decisions and certainly limited student initiatives proposed to the college administration.

Recommendations

It is recommended that a more intensive training session be scheduled prior to the commencement of the fall quarter. This retreat would include more than general leadership practices and focus on actual programming of college activities and council issues. This would help eliminate students “not knowing what to do while in the office.” In addition, a transition retreat or training (in the spring quarter) should be held with the outgoing officers and the incoming officers to ensure continuity. Also ensuring continued growth and success is a more focused effort on maintaining files and information from year to year in the student office. The advisor(s) for the ASC is the key ingredient to ensuring continuity for the production of activities, maintaining relationships with agencies, and educating student leaders on current (and historical) council issues. Therefore, the advisor(s) must take a more active role in creating an intensive training session. This will provide a cultural shift for the student officers to understand that Student Council is much more than a position or title. It will provide channels for the energy and enthusiasm to be realized in a tangible goal oriented process and growth of student leaders.

Current job descriptions need to be analyzed regularly to ensure that they are descriptive and comprehensive. The entire student council should have a shared job description or list of expectations which they all abide by during their tenure at Peninsula College. This should be in the form of a comprehensive mission, vision, and values document. This will help in the development of an organizational expectation which will assist in the development of the organizational culture. In addition, each individual position should contain a comprehensive formal and informal job description. Finally, there needs to be a quarterly evaluation process by the Student Council advisor. This ensures that student leaders are developing, earning their stipend, and serving the Associated Students.

It is of utmost importance that the physical space of the office be reconfigured to create a quality working environment. It is strongly recommended that work stations be configured in the office to provide adequate personal working space for each student.
This allows students to have a culture of autonomy and avoids the clutter and confusion of multiple students sharing the same space. The service window which opens to the cafeteria is a nice touch and allows for the associated students to see the officers at work. Students indicated that students rarely utilize the window for customer service. Therefore, it should be looked at to determine if it is utilized enough for the intended purpose. If not, it would be recommended to remodel the office and construct a true office setting without a customer service window.

Finally, there needs to be a significant change in the structure which differentiates the Activities organization from the Government organization. As it currently exists, the Associated Student Council basically assists in the production of the activities on campus. Government should be more focused on student issues and initiatives and working with the administration via committees. The Activities and Government organizations need to be clearly defined and each organization must develop their own culture. Following this development, the two organizations can collaborate and duties will not overlap. In order for this transition to be successful, job descriptions must be extremely well defined. For instance, instead of multiple “activities programmers,” the jobs must reflect specific responsibilities (such as Comedy/Concerts, Outreach/Recreation). In addition, Government officers should also have specific responsibilities or titles that reflect their position (Administrative Senator vs. Government Representative).

**Student Life, Activities, & Events**

It was a thoroughly enjoyable experience to spend time with the student leaders discussing current activities, brainstorming new events, and spending quality time talking about the possibilities for the growth of their program. The general observation was that students did not realize the possibilities of advancement for the program. It appeared that many of the students put limits on their own ability (or the program’s ability) to achieve greatness. The students felt that they lacked the resources and knowledge to initiate, plan, and execute events on campus.

For instance, students expressed and brainstormed a large number of ideas which they were interested in programming for the upcoming year. But, they indicated that “they did not know where to begin” or “how to get a hold of people to plan the events.” Throughout the discussion, it was clear that students were energized about the possibilities of programming, but lacked knowledge of agencies, businesses, or companies that they could contact for event planning. Students stated that most of their events were booked at an annual booking conference.

I was very impressed with the entertainment series which was planned throughout the year. In particular, the bands and musical artists which performed on campus were diverse in nature and promoted campus wide. I felt the entertainment series was the most appealing and student friendly portion of student life at Peninsula College. In addition, the physical set up of the dining hall was an excellent venue for student life. It allowed students an area to congregate while enjoying music or activities. From an artist
standpoint, the facility has a very easy loading area, great sound, lights, riser, and seating area for students. This venue is certainly an example of what a community college “hub” should look like in terms of physical space.

In addition to the musical acts on campus, the college also promotes two additional programs which focus on diversity and community connection. However, these programs are facilitated through offices that are not directly in partnership with student leaders. The Associated Student Council approves funding for the programs, but is not involved in the production of these educational, cultural, and social programs.

The “Sound of Unity” program appears to be a successful production of cultural and educational programs with a target market that revolves around the local community. Speakers are selected by the staff coordinator based on honoring community requests, researching trends, and seeking popular topics. When interviewed, students were not aware of any of the speakers which were promoted through the “Sound of Unity” program. In addition, the staff coordinator stated that “it was difficult to get students to attend programs of this nature.” The students are funding this community series through their student funds and essentially delegating the selection and planning of lectures, awareness, educational, and cultural programs to a staff member outside of Student Programs.

There was not a lot of information presented (in the time permitted) regarding the office of Cultural Education. My understanding is that a staff coordinator works to promote a cultural series and speakers which help enhance the understanding of cultures locally, regionally, and globally. Again, students were not aware of any programs promoted through the office of Cultural Education. In addition to the Cultural Education staff member, there was also a faculty events coordinator who promoted activities and events from the faculty arena. My understanding is that this coordinator promotes and initiates programs which are related to academic issues. Through limited discussion, it appears that neither program receives services and activities fees. It does not appear that students are not heavily involved in selection process for the cultural or faculty events.

Another student life component discussed was the execution of an intramurals program on campus. It exists independently of the Associated Student Council and has limited input or involvement from the student leaders. A part time staff member, paid from student fees, coordinates the program each quarter. It was not clear how many students (or community members) or what segment of the student population participated in this activity. Based on the interviews, it appeared that the Associated Student Council had limited information and involvement in the process.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Associated Student Council significantly expand their Student Activities program. Utilizing their currently successful entertainment programming model (as a base), the Associated Student Council must work to expand the overall student life program. As previously mentioned, the entertainment series has a nice blend
and diversity of music and entertainment. By expanding this base to other types of programs, it leads to a comprehensive events and activities program.

Specifically, student leaders must become involved in the initiation, planning, and execution of educational, cultural, social, and awareness programs. These programs currently exist outside of the Associated Student Council and must be brought back into the student life office. The primary recommendation is that all parties (Students, Faculty Events Coordinator, Sound of Unity Coordinator, and Cultural Events Coordinator) have a collaborative committee which targets multiple audiences (students, community, faculty, staff) for educational and cultural programming. A more exclusive approach would be to shift the Sound of Unity series to student activities and focus the target on students. Regardless of the decision, the duplication of efforts that exists on campus (regarding programming) needs to be eliminated. This will create a more collaborative approach on campus and benefit all students, faculty, and community. Secondly, since student money contributes to the program, there should be a significant student voice in the process.

In addition to including student initiated cultural and educational events in the student life program, there should be an expansion of offerings within the general entertainment events and activities. For instance, local activities for students (such as paintball, movie theatre nights, coffee night on the town) would enhance the opportunities for all students and diversify the type of events initiated at Peninsula College. The most important recommendation which directly impacts the continued enhancement of student life is the development of signature events. These events which are developed and held annually will create an excitement and “buzz” on campus. It provides students with a specific event to look forward to monthly, quarterly, or annually. An example of a signature event may be a “Dialogues Session,” “Welcome Back Festival” or a “Spring Fling.” A signature event should have a significant element which provides student anticipation and provides an element of growth annually for student life.

The intramural program must also be strongly assessed and a student initiated focus be brought into the program. As a small campus, it is certainly possible to manage the program from a student leader perspective. The benefits of a part time staff member are extremely important and aid in the development of the program. However, the responsibility of conducting an intramurals program can be successfully planned and executed by a student. When initiated by a student, more interest can typically be generated throughout the entire student body. The staff member can then serve in a supervisory role to ensure that all risk management and conduct issues are being upheld in the process.

The most important recommendation to ensure continued growth and success of activities and events management lies within the training of student leaders. Again, this helps eliminate students “not knowing where to begin” or “who to contact for an event.” An intensive training must be planned by the advisor to include specific training for working with agents, businesses, and artists. It is critical that the advisor also ensure that files are maintained annually and that relationships are maintained with the aforementioned artists.
and agents. In addition, students should plan a comprehensive calendar with entertainment, educational and cultural events, intramurals, signature events, and community outreach activities at least one quarter in advance. The focus of the training can be tailored to the needs of the student group each year. (For instance, some groups need more focus on event management and communication issues. On the other hand, other groups may need to discuss talent agents and artist negotiation). The advisor must spend a great deal of time training the students and helping them make contact with agencies/artists prior to the commencement of the school year.

The student life facilities at Peninsula College provide a great venue for entertainment and a nice congeration area for students. Again, I was extremely impressed with the dining and performance area and feel that it is definitely a huge asset to the student life program. It is strongly recommended to purchase a professional black curtain which could cover the windows behind the riser in order to eliminate distraction and add to the professionalism of the area. In addition, the dining facility needs some minor upgrades which would add to the professionalism of the facility. In particular, the tables and chairs in the dining facility appear to be over 20 years old and detract from the facility. Also, replacing garbage cans with new colors and style, will add to the facility. These simple upgrades will continue to enhance the facility and students will feel an increased professionalism as they arrive to their student center.

Finally, the theatre which is located in the student center could bring a whole new element to student life at Peninsula College. Based on the discussion with students and staff it has historically been under utilized for events and activities. However, if the student life program chooses to expand their program, it would be an excellent venue for speakers, comedy shows, and other professional events. The theatre also needs minor refurbishing in order to establish the professional theme which is recommended in this document. Overall, the student life facilities have an excellent foundation and can be some of the premier facilities if minor work is completed to update the amenities and portions of the facilities.

**Conclusion**

Peninsula College has tremendous potential to bring “life” to the surrounding community and the students, staff, faculty, and administration. I felt comfortable, welcome, and excited about the continued growth and development of student life on campus. Students were interested in discussing possibilities, exploring opportunities, and putting Peninsula College student life “on the map” in the region of community colleges.

As stated in the introduction, this document reviews the student life practices and evaluates basic structure, campus culture, programming, and student facilities. I have concluded that an additional in depth session should be conducted to assist in the development of strategic initiatives, promotional strategies, mission, vision, and values.
This document simply serves as a guide for student leaders to achieve enhanced growth and development of the Associated Student Council. The most important element to consider is training and development of the ASC. It is critical to annually develop goals or initiatives for the team which will provide a focus each year and ensure the long term success of the program. An intensive and in depth training session must be conducted prior to commencement of the school year. Activities and Government officers must learn the current and historical trends of their position while developing specific knowledge of their position. The advisor(s) remains the critical component for the success of each student group by introducing programs, agencies and artists, and providing current and historical information about the college.

In addition, it is of utmost importance to create clearly defined roles between the Associated Student Government and Activities organizations. Currently, the Government mainly focuses on the initiation, planning, and execution of activities. Government needs to become more focused on student issues and initiatives while Student Activities can create the culture on campus. Roles must be specific and well defined for each officer in the Associated Student Council. This eliminates overlap of duties and gives students the opportunity to focus on specific duties. Although some changes were developed last year, it will be important to continually evaluate those changes. It may require (and probably will require) specific titles and job descriptions to reflect the focus of each position. Those collective positions should reflect the long term strategies and initiatives of the program.

The physical space of the Associated Student Council office must be changed to allow a quality working environment for students. The current setup creates confusion and clutter for students and psychologically creates a barrier in their ability to be autonomous. In addition, the customer service window may be unnecessary and students may accomplish more work if the office is configured in a “work station” area for each student. Although it will be a financial sacrifice initially, the benefits of an autonomous work area for each officer will greatly enhance the production of each officer.

Minor upgrades to the student center will greatly enhance the incredible student friendly facility. In particular, the purchase of tables and chairs, garbage cans, and a backdrop will create a first class production area and student life building. In addition, with the development of the program, a balance of the programs can be transferred to the theatre located in the Student Union Building. This location will enhance the production of many of the events produced on campus.

Finally, the Student Activities program must be expanded to incorporate more than entertainment events. In turn, this creates a comprehensive student life program which produces educational, cultural, recreational, and social events and activities. In particular, students need to initiate or be heavily involved in the Sound of Unity series and Cultural Events series. It is strongly recommended that a committee be established to produce an educational and cultural series which includes a variety of target markets. This collaboration would help eliminate multiple events being produced by the college and turn the focus to a unified production of events and activities. Overall, student
leaders (activities members) must be at the forefront of activities and event production. Specifically, the college intramurals program should be student initiated and supervised by a staff member. The college should spearhead student focused signature events such as a “Welcome Back Festival” or “Spring Fling.” These productions create a long term “buzz” and anticipation for the Student Life program.

Peninsula College Student Programs has a tremendous opportunity to move to the forefront of “active student life” on campus and in the community. With student generated activities such as the music series, students have begun to be understand the opportunities that exist in the student life arena. The expansion of opportunities only enhances the ability of student leaders to develop personally and professionally. In addition, it adds to the recruitment opportunities for the college and will make the college an increasingly viable opportunity for students to grow educationally, socially, culturally, and recreationally. The Associated Student Council has an opportunity to enhance their program and student life on campus through expansion, careful management, and a strategic outlook for student leaders at the college. This document can be used as a guide for that enhancement, but more importantly it will be the careful observation, consistent research of students and trends, and hard work that dictates the enhanced growth and success of the Associated Student Council.