

DRAFT

Brooklyn College Division of Student Life

DATE: August 15, 2005

**TO: Myra Kogen
Provost Matthews**

RE: Student Focused Campus Sub-Committee Summary-Strategic Plan 2005-2010

FROM: Milga Morales, Dean, Student Life

Overview

The Student Life Division coordinated five working groups consisting of faculty, staff and students, to focus on the overarching goal of the Strategic Plan: *To assure a student-oriented campus by creating an environment that puts student needs and concerns at the heart of our concerns and activities.*

In surveying the many and varied recommendations from these working groups, four major themes seem to underline the majority of the suggestions:

- I. Advocating programs and approaches that foster intentional and more definitive links between the academic disciplines and student affairs, with the awareness that we all seek the holistic development of our students through out of class experiences as well as those in the classroom and to offer additional incentives for the same. *An example of one such recommendation,” As with the academic schedule of courses, there should be a recommended co-curricular profile of out-of-class experiences for students with various options for volunteer service, co-curricular experiences, service learning, leadership and internship opportunities.” In addition, faculty should be recognized for their participation and contributions to the student life of the college.*
- II. Identify the interests of students and provide “student focused” customer services providing additional on line and hotline (for complaints) services. Expand the availability and appropriateness of services targeted to evening, weekend and graduate student populations. Recommendations representative of this concern: *develop curricular as well as co-curricular approaches that would recognize what evening/adult students are doing in their current lives; provide more resources for Y.E.S.S. Center, childcare services, extended hours for a fuller range of services including cafeteria, fitness center, central depository, career, academic and veterans counseling and advisement..*

DRAFT

- III. Promote/develop diversity initiatives that encompass the full spectrum of diversity (intellectual, political, religious, ethnic, etc.) Among the recommendations given: *classes should not reflect only one type of political perspective – rather more of a balance of viewpoints; that there be periodic campus-wide discussions sponsored by the Center for Teaching on these topics.*

- IV. Engage the entire Brooklyn College community in discussions on citizenship and community service, ethics and civility. Promote campus pride by fostering a familial, safe campus environment conducive to faculty, student, and staff interaction. *Among the suggestions given in this area: every course should have at least one class devoted to ethics in their discipline. Spaces (benches) should be provided across campus for the community to gather. A virtual on line community should be established.*

Methodology

Outreach to the working group participants was initiated by convenors from the Division for Student Life. Students, faculty and staff were asked to participate in one, two or three meetings depending on the availability of the group members to meet during May and June. A Chair was recommended for each working group to develop a one- to two-page summary. The minutes of the groups' committee meetings were distributed. Also, it should be noted that these working groups had [active and vocal students from both the undergraduate and graduate divisions](#) represented but would have profited from additional student voices. We should note, however, that convenors did outreach and encouraged students to participate even if they utilized email to send in recommendations, thoughts, or ideas around this topic.

The titles of the working subcommittees were:

- [Student Life and Learning Goals](#)
- Student Fee Funded Services
- Intra-group/Intra-group Student Community Relations
- Student Governance
- Student Leadership

Other Thoughts

A focus on student's choice to participate, or not, in campus activities may be discerned throughout the working groups; [although the consensus was to develop approaches which encouraged such participation with the awareness that student learning outside the classroom benefits students' personal and intellectual development.](#) Linking students' academic interests with their interest in student governance activities was suggested as one way to increase student involvement in student

DRAFT

government and in other campus organizations and events. Diversity in its broadest context, including religious and political diversity, was discussed in at least one of the working groups with suggestions made to encourage the Center for Teaching to sponsor debates on the topic of diversity of viewpoints in the classroom.

Consistency and timeliness of communication of information is recognized as one of our challenges as well as building a supportive and welcoming environment for all of the members of the college. **The current BCNN and the campus bulletin boards help in this regard. However, the effectiveness of the BCNN monitors and bulletin boards should be reviewed and locations added or changed if needed. It was suggested that the new web portal, with its more individualized approach, might include messages about campus opportunities geared to the students' interests. This would be particularly useful in providing information to evening and weekend students. While services to evening and weekend students are available (e.g. YESS Center, Central Depository, Information Booth), in general they are limited in scope and hours. Concern was expressed in a working group about the need for increased support and funding for services for more specialized populations, such as veterans' counseling and child care services and increased hours for the Fitness Center.**

The emphasis on assessment of campus services and programs was noted as a way to improve effective service delivery to students. In examining student fee funded services, it was noted that as part of students training in life competencies encompassing real world problem solving and personal responsibility, an emphasis would be placed on student fee funded referenda groups being accountable for providing the services for which they have been funded and establishing an ongoing assessment that reflects the uses of all student fees. Also, providing incentives to student leaders to involve others and to help transition groups after leaders graduate should be a priority.

The college's encouragement and provision of concrete incentives to faculty to integrate more experiential activities *into their curricula* and to work in collaboration with *students and student affairs* was also suggested in different group venues. A suggestion to develop a "virtual community" was suggested in one of the working groups (see attached visual). However, *assuming future unlimited resources*, at least two working groups discussed the salutary effect and creation of real community that would be possible with the provision of campus housing for faculty and students.

An underlying theme throughout all subcommittee discussions was inspired by the *Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus On The Student Experience* article coordinated by The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators and The American College Personnel Association. Among the key points of the article were:

- a. *"The integrated use of all of higher education's resources in the education and preparation of the whole student. ... for transformative education – a holistic process of learning that places the student at the center of the learning experience."*
- b. *"Learning (defined) as a comprehensive, holistic, transformative activity that integrates academic learning and student development, processes that have often been considered separate, and even independent of each other."*

DRAFT

The following main points of the article will be used as a guide in presenting the working groups' recommendations:

1. *Creating the environment for a student focused campus ...which*
 - Recognize and support student engagement in well conceived, well structured and academically linked co-curricular activities as a meaningful college learning experience.
 - a. Identify classes that incorporate student learning goals such as leadership initiatives within the syllabus so that there can be intentional linkage for student experiential learning with student life campus programs.
 - b. Similar to SEEK- model, delineate benchmarks and expectations for student success resulting in a portfolio of experiential activity.
 - c. Design a CORE course to specifically incorporate personal empowerment, ethical decision making, leadership and civic involvement initiatives that stimulate students to become civically engaged.
 - d. Develop a campus-wide “student employment training program” (to be utilized by all departments/offices employing students) that intentionally expose students to leadership skill development, personal empowerment, ethical decision-making, and civic responsibility.
 - e. Provide an incentive structure for faculty and student involvement.
 - f. Improve campus communication overall.
 - g. Encourage each professor to identify which of the leadership skills s/he is including in the course syllabus as a student learning goal (*suggested skills: Self-Confidence/Personal Empowerment; Communication Skills – oral and written; Ethical/Integrity Skills; Knowing Self – self-introspection/interpersonal skills; Public Speaking Skills; Problem Solving Skills; Perseverance/Persistence Skills; Analytical, Creative & Strategic Thinking Skills; Respect for Diversity/Appreciation of Difference; Time Management Skills; and Taking Responsibility/Initiating Action*).
 - h. Reinstate a **cross-discipline** Leadership Course (currently not offered); several sessions should be available to allow a greater number of students the opportunity to enroll in the course.
 - i. Develop and share with incoming students a “Top Ten” media piece that challenges students to seek out and experience leadership and personal empowerment skills during his/her tenure at the college.
 - j. Encourage each faculty member (during the first week of class) to spend one class session – or a portion thereof – facilitating a “Cultural Exchange” discussion (asking each student to bring to class an item that represents his/her cultural/ethnic heritage

DRAFT

(each student would be permitted up to 5 minutes to explain the item and its relationship).

- k. Create a “buddy system/mentoring program that involves faculty/administrators/staff and upper class students (e.g. “6 to 1 Program” – 6 new students to each mentor).
 - l. Develop a “Handbook for Success” targeting both undergraduate and graduate students (*suggested content: Develop a “Handbook for Success” targeting both undergraduate and graduate students (suggested content: finding mentors; key offices to visit; developing essential skills; community involvement/possible activities/campus run programs; broadening horizons- global perspectives: study abroad opportunities; clubs and campus organizations; special campus events; top ten elective courses; courses you never knew existed; leadership courses; comments from recent alumni (various majors) their reflections and advice; helpful tips from faculty and administrators; special programs- hot to qualify; and Q & A section based on popular questions asked by students)*). Also, highlight departmental programs and resources and include on the web.
 - m. Continue the “self-help” seminars for students provided by Psychological Counseling (e.g. Test Anxiety; Study Skills; Time Management; etc.).
 - n. Classes should not reflect only one type of political perspective; there should be more of a balance of viewpoints.
 - o. Community Service is an effective way to help students learn, especially when there is a period of reflection after the service has taken place.
 - p. Develop initiatives to foster academic integrity and plagiarism (e.g. establish a campus “Honor Code”, students sign an agreement regarding plagiarism, class discussions of values and ethics, etc.).
 - q. Develop a procedure to academically recognize life experience of evening/adult/graduate students.
 - r. Establish a “Welcome Center” to serve all students, with a special section of the room set aside for transfer students and establish a “Two cent meeting” to achieve community feedback.
 - s. Augment writing and coaching support – expand services to undergraduate and graduate students for discipline-specific writing and coaching support.
 - t. Make advisement more accessible and transparent.
- Initiate Strategies To Increase Student Involvement In Campus Governance.

DRAFT

- a. Offer a course in Political Science targeted at students interested in governmental operations – using the Student Government organizations as a “learning laboratory” (e.g. academic credit could then be tied to Student Government involvement).
 - b. Encourage faculty to motivate students to become involved in campus governance – faculty need to be apprised of university structure (e.g. By-laws) relative to student governance, co-curricular activities, etc. – need to get more students involved (the same students are involved in several campus organizations).
 - c. Offer intentionally linked courses providing opportunities for leadership development and civic involvement. Revisit the Leadership course offered through Psychology and others offered through business and offer information on these courses to students.
 - d. Establish a retreat for Student Government elected officials to talk about issues, elections, laws, meeting management, conflict resolution, political issues, etc..
 - e. Evaluate the current CLAS Student Government structure – should representation on Student Government be done through academic majors?
 - f. Recommend having a Student Government website prominently displayed in the College’s web page (not buried within the Student Life link) – the University of Dallas website would be a good model.
 - g. Recommend that there should be a co-curricular requirement for civic engagement.
- Reward faculty and student participation in co-curricular programs through compensatory time, released time, certificates, etc..
2. Identifying and addressing the needs of urban commuter students at Brooklyn College
- At a commuter campus, there is definitely a need for a “common hours” – however, the existing common hours (Tuesdays/Thursdays from 1:30pm to 3:30pm) may not be convenient. Also, a need for common spaces to gather around the campus with other students, faculty and staff.
- Change location of major clubs in the WEB to more central spaces.
- Faculty should work on more projects in collaboration with students.
- Provide extra credit for participating in Wolf Institute or other campus programs.
- Provide a “meal plan” for students on a commuter campus.
- Provide adequate safety and security including more lights at night.
- Develop a “virtual community” website.
- a. Should be run by students with oversight by IT or Student Life (use information booth as a model).
 - b. Encourage departments to create internship positions where the intern would have responsibility to keep department information up-to-date and answer questions left for the department site.
 - c. Encourage interdisciplinary courses connecting students to community.
 - d. Provide SERVA credit for work done.

DRAFT

- e. Recommended departmental “visual community representation”: *Clubs; Alumni; Tutors; Housing; Events; Swap Meet; Student to Student; Course Information; Academic Departments; Student Discounts; Help Wanted; Archives; Blogs; Suggestions; Links.*
 - f. Would require College support so that academic departments, as well as administrative offices, participate and support the virtual community.
 - g. Increase academic advisement hours as well as other campus services especially for evening and weekend students.
 - Streamline Central Depository to promote greater customer service for users of that operation.
 - a. Provide adequate services for evening and weekend students – develop ways in which same resources are available to them as provide for day students.
 - b. Enforce referenda groups to use their allocated student fees as set forth by the respective referendum (e.g. Entertainment Committee; Academic Club Association; Forensics, etc).
 - c. The College should examine the existing structure of student-funded programs – to ensure that student funds are used for activities and staff that develop leadership or enhance the academic or civic lives of students.
 - d. Design a website on the College home page devoted to student fee-funded services – what they are, where they are, and updating all activities on at least a weekly basis (not part of the Student Life website).
 - Within budgetary constraints maximize Health Service offerings.
 - a. Provide adequate services for evening and weekend students – develop ways in which same resources are available to them as provide for day students.
 - Maintain and improve Athletic, Recreation and Intramural offerings.
 - a. Provide adequate services for evening and weekend students – develop ways in which same resources are available to them as provide for day students.
 - b. Provide intramural programs for evening students.
 - Develop a sense of community through additional housing close to campus.
 - Creating campus spaces with benches and places to informally meet with faculty and others for dialogue on current challenging issues of the day.
 - Provide more on line services to increase student access to services.
 - Increase YESS Center hours.
 - Improve customer service.
3. Building in on-going assessment in student affairs and student focused programs...
- Assessment should be done on student fee-funded services, their effectiveness and usefulness.

DRAFT

- Assess the usefulness of the College bulletin boards – check placement of bulletin boards to ensure that they are located in high traffic areas (e.g. there are few bulletin boards in the Library, Boylan Cafeteria, registration area, financial aid area, bursar area).
- Assess students, informally, about what will work for them to fill their needs – then follow-up with action plans to address the feedback.
- Assess the BCNN Plasma Screens – how effective are they in promoting campus events/programs.
- Establish a complaint hotline for processing student complaints and providing feedback to students.
- Embark in a major initiative to cut red tape and include students in the process.
- Assess process of encouraging intellectual, political and other types of diversity in student programming to ensure balance of viewpoints.
- To increase retention, identify why students leave or transfer out to other colleges.
- Help transfer students transition to Brooklyn College by assessing their particular needs.