

# **Assessment Cycle Academic Year 2016-2017**

## **Department of Student Life**

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### **Northwestern State Mission**

Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution that is committed to the creation, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge through teaching, research, and service. The University maintains as its highest priority excellence in teaching in graduate and undergraduate programs. Northwestern State University prepares its students to become productive members of society and promotes economic development and improvements in the quality of life of the citizens in its region.

### **The Student Experience Mission Statement**

The Student Experience provides the University community with programs and services to support the academic mission of creating, disseminating and acquiring knowledge through teaching, research and service while empowering a diverse student population to achieve their highest educational potential. The Student Experience creates a stimulating and inclusive educational environment that is conducive to holistic personal growth. The commitment to students initiates prior to entrance, sustains throughout the college experience and continues beyond graduation. Enrollment Services provides equal access for education to potential students throughout the state and region and promotes economic stability and financial access to citizens. Student Affairs enhances student development and broadens intellectual, social, cultural, ethical and occupational growth. The Student Experience works closely with faculty, staff, students, and the community to ensure graduates have the capability to promote economic development and improvements in the region.

### **Student Affairs Mission**

The Division of Student Affairs prepares students to be productive members of society and to improve the quality of life of students. Student Affairs provides support services in career development and placement, advocacy and accountability, academic support, mental and physical health, disability accommodations, student activities and organizations, student union life, and opportunities in leadership, community service, and programs for new students. Through hands-on involvement in programs and

services, Student Affairs promotes personal development in a student-centered environment, which delivers innovative practices in an environment of respect. Student Affairs encourages integrity, diversity, and collaboration with all members of the university community.

## **First Year Experience & Leadership Development Mission**

The Office of First Year Experience and Leadership Development, in collaboration with the University community, is committed to engaging, supporting, and empowering first-year students as they take ownership of their college experience. By providing programs, resources, and strategic services that meet the diverse needs of first-year students and families, we facilitate a successful transition to university life and set the tone for academic success, personal growth, and meaningful connections.

### **Methodology:**

1. The First Year Experience and Leadership Development department is both service-oriented and focused on student learning. Therefore, both service and learning outcomes will be utilized. Assessment methods will be qualitative and quantitative, direct and indirect, and summative.
2. The Executive Director is responsible for the assessment process.
3. The Executive Director will share assessment results with both University and external stakeholders, and community agents.
4. Based on the sharing of data, revisions and recommendations for improvements will be made for the next assessment period.

## **First Year Experience Service Outcomes**

**SO 1. First Year Experience programs will create a climate that is inclusive, supportive and respectful to all.**

Measure 1.1. Ninety percent (90%) of students will respond, “Strongly Agree” on the First Year Involvement Challenge assessment that the program met the stated objectives.

**Finding:** Target not met. Although the 90% of students responding with “Strongly Agree” was not met, 100% of the students completing the First Year Involvement Challenge evaluation indicated that the program met the stated objectives by “Strongly Agree or Agree.”

- Understanding of the importance of setting and achieving realistic goals in college – 89% Strongly Agree

- Exposure of the various demands that college life presents – 81% Strongly Agree
- Exposure to the various resources available to students on campus – 83% Strongly Agree
- Realization that there are many obstacles to face and overcome during the freshman year - 89% Strongly Agree
- The opportunity to meet other new students – 80% Strongly Agree

**Analysis:** A total number of 212 surveys were completed representing 89% of the 236 first-year students participating in the 2016 First Year Involvement Challenge. The surveys are administered at the end of the two-hour long interactive program and facilitated small group discussions. The survey asks questions concerning students' understanding of setting and achieving realistic goals in college, exposure to the various expectations of college, understanding of campus resources, obstacles and challenges of the first year, and the opportunity to meet other new students. It's also important to note that 89% of the students participating remained for the entire program, including the small group discussion with current student leaders.

**Action - Decision or Recommendation:** In addition to the survey, small group discussion groups will utilize a group recorder to document the experiences of first-year students participating in the first year simulation exercise. Based on the survey responses to the question "what aspect of the program was most beneficial," students gain an understanding of the importance of setting goals and utilizing campus resources. Activities for future simulations will be updated using the survey responses.

Measure 1.2 Thirty (30%) of on-campus students participate in the Demon Days (42 total) program activities, specifically Freshman Connection, The Inferno, Color Chaos, Convocation, President's Picnic, and First Pep Rally.

**Finding:** Target met.

- 84% (1,200 of 1,459) of entering first-year students participated in Freshman Connection at the Natchitoches, Leesville and Shreveport campuses.
- 53% (769 of 1,459) of entering first-year students submitted a RSVP and attended New Student Convocation and the President's Picnic.
- 39% (568 of 1,459) entering first-year students attended the First Pep Rally and/or participated in The Inferno Run at the first home football game. Another 300 Inferno t-shirts were distributed on the Natchitoches campuses and delivered to the Leesville and Shreveport campuses.
- Color Chaos, a first class day tradition, had more than 850 in attendance, however, there is not a breakdown by classification.

**Analysis:** Two signature events held during the Demon Days Welcome, New Student Convocation and the President's Picnic, had significant participation among first-year students with 53%. The First Pep Rally and Inferno Run, at 39% participation among first-year students, is the introduction to campus traditions and building affinity towards the University.

**Action - Decision or Recommendation:** The First Year Experience and Leadership Development Office supports the transition of all first-year students. Programmatic areas include Freshman Connection (orientation), Demon Days (welcome events), family and parent programs, and various first-year experience initiatives. All of our programs need to be implemented with a data-driven, student-centered approach to ensure a successful transition to the University. At this point, they are not. The Freshman Connection student and parent surveys are administered, however Demon Days satisfaction has mostly been gauged by feedback from small group discussion and focus groups. Future initiatives of the First Year Experience and Leadership Development Office will be evaluated immediately following signature events such as Move-In Day, Convocation, and Demon Days.

## **SO 2. Parents participating in the University's First-Year Experience will be satisfied with the program and services offered.**

Measure 2.1 Ninety percent (90%) of parents will be very satisfied with program and services stating, "Very Satisfied" as measured by a satisfaction survey.

**Finding:** Target Not Met.

- Pre-Parent Connection Information – 73% Very Satisfied
- Helpfulness of FYE Staff when calling the office – 72% Very Satisfied
- Check-In at Parent Connection – 71% Very Satisfied
- University Welcome – 89% Very Satisfied
- Student Services Panel – 78% Very Satisfied
- Academic Life at NSU – 74% very Satisfied
- Straight Talk with NSU Students – 92% Very Satisfied
- Paying Your Bill & Financial Aid – 74%Very Satisfied

**Analysis:** Although the target was not met at 90% "Strongly Agree" with the services and resources provided, 100% of parent evaluations indicated that the participants "Agree or Strongly Agree" that they were satisfied. Parent Connection evaluations were collected from only 16% of those in attendance. The data collected also did not account for those parents/guardians who completed one survey per family unit.

**Action – Decision or Recommendation:** A better process needs to be in place to distribute and collect parent satisfaction surveys, not only at the orientation program, but all parent programs. The FYE Office needs to be more strategic in soliciting feedback on programs such as Move-In Day, Family Day, and other major campus events

planned for families. Per the data, parents most enjoy the interaction with faculty, staff and students. This information will be utilized to restructure the summer orientation program for parents.

### **SO 3. Training of select students will allow them to coordinate, lead, and facilitate First Year Experience activities.**

Measure 3.1. At least 100 students will volunteer to participate in the selection process for orientation leaders understanding only 30 are selected.

**Finding:** Target Met. A total of 121 students attended one of the informational sessions on becoming a Freshman Connector. 59 students completed the application process for orientation leader and attended the group interview.

**Analysis:** The data shows that 62 students used the informational sessions as opportunities to explore the responsibilities and duties of the orientation leader role, and to learn more about completing the application to serve. However, their application did not advance beyond the informational meetings.

**Action – Decision or Recommendation:** Additional outreach to students, faculty, staff, and Recognized Student Organizations is needed. Continued social media and communication efforts will take place in early fall, allowing students more opportunity to ask questions and complete the application. Research is needed to identify additional compensation for students serving in the orientation leader role.

Measure 3.2. Ninety-five percent (95%) of volunteers will attend the required activity training.

**Finding:** Target Met.

**Analysis:** 100% (24) of the orientation leaders participated in a semester-long course, with more than 100 hours of out-of-class activities to supplement the experience. Of the 30 Demon Volunteers assisting throughout the summer orientation programs, 100% (30) of the students participated in a minimum of 10 hours of training and development throughout the spring semester.

**Action – Decision or Recommendation:** Orientation Leader evaluations indicate that personal and skills development is a key component of team development and facilitating small group discussions. The “As I See Myself” Behavior Style Profile and the “FISH Philosophy” were utilized as a component of the training program. This instrument, or a similar instrument, will continue to be used. In addition, a pre-test for leadership readiness for the orientation leader position will be administered prior to the training and development programs.

## **First Year Experience Student Learning Outcomes**

**SLO 1. Students who participate in the Presidents Leadership Program will be**

**able to apply foundational leadership concepts, develop a personal leadership philosophy, become self-aware, understand the dynamics of decision-making, become involved in the community and engage in a positive - inclusive learning experience.**

Measure 1.1. Ninety-five percent (95%) of students will respond they “Strongly Agree” that their expectation of this program were met.

**Finding:** Target Not Met.

- Understand and apply foundational leadership concepts - 88% Strongly Agree
- Begin to develop a personal philosophy of leadership – 84% Strongly Agree
- Increase self-awareness through the exploration of values, beliefs, culture and identity – 88% Strongly Agree
- Learn the basic of group roles, dynamics, and decision-making in order to function constructively in group settings – 87% Strongly Agree
- Increased awareness of opportunities for campus and community involvement – 87% Strongly Agree
- Engage in a positive, inclusive learning experience where all students are challenged and supported – 87% Strongly Agree
- Accelerate connections to the NSU community – 84% Strongly Agree
- Learn about and actively participate in campus activities, programs, and administrators – 85% Strongly Agree
- Network with faculty, staff and administrators – 79% Strongly Agree
- Build relationships with other new students – 85% Strongly Agree

**Analysis:** Although 95% of students did not indicated that they “Strongly Agree” that the program met their expectations, 99% of students indicated that they “Strongly Agree or Agree” that their expectations of the President’s Leadership Program were met.

**Action – Decision or Recommendation:** The end of experience evaluations indicated that students are engaged in the process and there is a strong interest to do more – in the program, on campus, and in the community. A mid-term survey will be implemented in future semesters to solicit additional input from students concerning their leadership experience.

Measure 1.2. Sixty percent (60%) are engaged in campus activities in a leadership role by the end of their first year.

**Finding:** Target Met. 84% of students participating in the President’s Leadership Program indicated that they are involved in more than 42 Recognized Student Organizations and activities and holding leadership roles. Intercollegiate athletics, Greek Life, faith-based organizations, honor societies, ROTC, student media, spirit groups, service organizations, and residence life programs are among those identified.

**Analysis:** While the data is useful in terms of assisting first-year students in crafting their leadership story, there is no pre-test data on the knowledge or experiences they are bringing with them to college. The data from the Emerging Leaders surveys indicates that prior to participating in the President's Leadership Program Emerging Leaders Day, 95% had never participated in a college program of this type and they are eager to engage at the collegiate level.

**Action – Decision or Recommendation:** The goal of 60% of campus engagement was met. However, additional information is needed on how prepared the students are for assuming a leadership role prior to their arrival on campus. Research is needed on a pre-test of leadership skills and readiness. This information will be used to improve the first-year leadership experience.

## **SLO 2. Each student will complete a Community Impact Project incorporating the lessons learned in the program.**

Measure 2.1. Students will attain a minimum score of 80 on their Community Impact Project per a multi-component grading scale.

**Finding:** Target Met. 98% of the students attained a minimum score of 80 or higher using the multi-component grading scale for the Community Impact Project. In addition, 93% “Strongly Agree” that the Community Impact Project helped them connect with the University community, understand the importance of civic engagement, and connect with other students.

**Analysis:** The evaluation provided the opportunity for students to identify the components of the program they found beneficial in their leadership journey. Specific questions were not asked concerning the challenges they faced as first-year emerging leaders. Questions will be reviewed for content.

**Action – Decision or Recommendation:** Projects were evaluated based on the agency or community impacted, as well as group presentations, mentor feedback, and student reflection. Additional work needs to be done with identifying community needs, as well as a formal training program to assist community representatives.

Measure 2.2. Ninety percent (90%) of projects will be sustainable through infrastructure and community commitment as judged by a focus group of faculty, peer mentors, and community representatives.

**Finding:** Target Met. All eight (8) Community Impact Projects implemented in the spring 2017, were identified as sustainable to the Natchitoches community:

- Animal Welfare – Hope for Paws and the Natchitoches Humane Society
- Freedom is Never Forgotten - Military and Veterans Support
- Demons through the Ages – Natchitoches Council on Aging
- Red River Area Special Olympics – Louisiana Special Olympics
- Get Lit for Literacy – Friends of the Natchitoches Parish Library
- Instilling Pride in 115 - The Natchitoches Boys and Girls Club

- Blue and Brew – Support of City of Natchitoches Police Officers, Natchitoches Parish Sheriff’s Department, and Campus Security Officers
- Fork Litter – Campus Litter Education

**Analysis:** There is an inconsistency in providing the appropriate mentorship and guidance for all Community Impact work groups. Some groups hosted projects as opposed to implementing a program. There is also the challenge of identifying established programs, versus those initiated by the group. The activities of the groups varied – from major service initiatives involving over 150 volunteers, to writing a grant for litter education and campus beautification. Student reflection papers reinforced the concept that each student should play a major role in identifying the Community Impact Project that best fits their passion for serving others.

**Action – Decision or Recommendation:** More work needs to be done to prepare the work groups. The [1 of 7] service initiative utilized in the President’s Leadership Program involves picking one day of the seven and doing something for someone else. This course requirement needs to be more consistently utilized throughout the fall semester in preparation for the spring impact projects.

### **Comprehensive Summary of Key Findings and/or Decisions:**

The first year is a big deal. Knowing the experiences of our students and the impact of first-year programs is key to creating positive change and impacting retention. The Office of First Year Experience and Leadership Development supports the transition of all first year students as they become members of the University community. The programmatic initiatives and services offered help us fulfill our mission of engaging, supporting, and empowering first-year students as they take ownership of their college experiences.

The 2016-2017 assessment cycle proved to be a year of growth for the department. Although not all activities and services are reflected in this report, we have seen tremendous growth in most areas. During this time:

- We served over 1,220 first-year students, as well as parents/guardians of first-year students on the Natchitoches, Shreveport, and Leesville campuses.
- Collaborated with more than 125 campus and community partners to host the First 42 (Days) at NSU, offering more than 100 programs, to provide out-of-classroom activities to meet the academic and social needs of students.
- Over 220 students were involved with facilitating FYE programs aimed at:
  - Facilitating successful academic and social transitions to the University.
  - Engaging the entire campus community in reaching out to new and continuing students.
  - Introducing students to programs and resources.
  - Fostering a sense of belonging at NSU.

A great college experience starts with a great first year. Collaboration and partnerships are important in all phases of the Proposed changes will include:

- Additional work on data collection, especially utilizing pre-tests and post-tests.

- Program evaluations and surveys will be assessed to determine the impact of each program and revised as necessary. We will continue to utilize the information to make strategic decisions about each program or service area.
- Continue the leadership and development of the student leaders, volunteers, and professional staff engaged with the First Year Experience and Leadership Development programs.
- Focus on developing and advancing campus and community collaboration for the benefit of new students.
- Identify an instrument, such as the CIRP Freshman Survey, to gain a better understanding of our diverse first-year student population in order to better meet their needs and facilitate a successful transition to university life.

**Source Map:** Fall 2016 FYI Challenge Evaluations; 2016 Freshman Connection Registrations; 2016 Convocation & President's Picnic RSVPs; 2016 Inferno T-Shirts at Pep Rally and Game; 2016 Parent Connection Evaluations; Fall 2016 Freshman Connector Informational Meetings/Applications/Interviews; Orientation 1100 Class, Orientation Leader Training and Retreat Evaluations; Spring 2017 President's Leadership Program Experience Evaluations and Student Reflections; Spring 2017 President's Leadership Program Course Grades, Class Presentations, and Mentor Reflections