

Luoma Leadership Academy 2015-2016, Action Learning Project #2

MnSCU/SMSU Transfer Experience, Executive Summary

Project sponsors: Allan Vogel, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Success (No longer at SMSU); Matt Suby, Director of Admission; Pat Carmody, Registrar; Dwight Watson, Provost/VP for Academic and Student Affairs; Louise DiCesare, System Director, Collaboration and Transfer, Academic and Student Affairs, MnSCU System Office

Team members: Jennifer Brookins-King, Julio Vargas-Essex, Nicki Carlson, Poh Lin Khoo, Sean Olson, Tony Zahler.

Team Charge: Evaluate and improve upon the transfer process between the MnSCU system as well as into SMSU from other MnSCU schools.

Process:

After our initial meeting with the executive sponsors and email conversations to gain understanding of current processes and issues, priorities and a clearer focus for the action learning project were determined. The team met in-person with a SMSU project sponsor in February 2016 and moved forward after conversations about the desired outcome for this project. The following were determined as priorities for the action learning team:

- Evaluate SMSU online/website materials and student information
- Create flow chart of how students receive information (current process)
- Understand student perspective and customer view
- Survey Southwest MN State students

Key Findings:

- Transfer students receiving multiple, conflicting answers to their questions
- Students are not aware of available transfer tools
- Changes in registration processes (such as visiting students) make it difficult to track outcomes
- 31 schools in MnSCU make it difficult for cut-and-dry answers; University of MN system also impactful
- Overwhelming amount of info available to students
- Course numbering is different, no common course numbering exists between all MnSCU institutions
- Students don't know who to ask questions and staff helping students may get different information from different sources
- Students not knowing terminology about transfer
- Students have issues using Transferology
- Technical college advisors not well versed in transfer
- Budgets reductions have impacted staffing to address this issue

Recommendations:

- Meetings with key department stakeholders should be held to set operational priorities for FY2017 and beyond. Annual meetings should be held with the leadership team to conduct a mid-year assessment of progress.
- The Enrollment Management Division, IT Division, and Communications/Marketing Division should develop an integrated enrollment and marketing plan for the university.
- In order to advance the enrollment and marketing goals of the SMSU, the Enrollment Management division will develop and implement new recruitment initiatives, provide enhanced service through technology and collaboration, and enhance their ability to lead an effective university-wide enrollment efforts.
- Within this Strategic Plan SMSU will establish a student centered and culturally competent approach in the academic context of the university that will make enrollment management of transfer students the responsibility of everyone.

Lessons Learned:

- Understand that group dynamics and development will take place regardless of who makes up the group. Each group will find challenges and can turn them into opportunities for growth.
- Focus on a few things that really matter and where you can make a difference, then tackle those items.
- It takes all leadership and learning styles working together to be a successful team.
- Leadership requires the ability to develop group pride and commitment in order to achieve a common goal.
- Create ways to empower individuals to help foster an environment of accountability and creativity.