Student Success Initiative Core Values
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The Student Success Initiative's (SSI) ten core values shall inform all policies, practices, and procedures to improve undergraduate student experiences at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. These core values are foundational to the SSI and promote structural and systemic change across the university. With students at the heart of every decision, each value shall be embedded throughout the initiative to preclude racial equity gaps, inconsistencies, and miscommunication between institutional stakeholders. Common language shall be derived from these core values fostering an inclusive anti-racist environment and an unwavering commitment to student completion.

Assessment and Evaluation: In collaboration with key institutional stakeholders, e.g., students, faculty, student affairs, and the division of management information, the SSI is responsible for ensuring that the holistic needs of students are met, particularly those from minoritized and disadvantaged social backgrounds. Therefore, members apply qualitative and quantitative methodological practices to capture data about student experiences and other university engagement efforts. When inequities and structural barriers are uncovered, SSI members propose equitable and justifiable policy recommendations for change based on institutional data, nationally recognized best practices, and critical frameworks.

Communication and Partnership: To equitably meet the holistic needs of students, cooperative efforts with key institutional stakeholders are essential. The expertise and specialized knowledge of employees working closely with students daily through instruction, advising, and counseling are valuable assets to all student success efforts. Students are more likely to build close relationships and share personal experiences with employees who share similar backgrounds and interests. Therefore, listening to the voices of these institutional stakeholders is critical for improving student persistence and graduation rates.

Culturally Responsive Practices: Members of the SSI honor the diversity of undergraduate students with respect to their multiple intersecting social identities, lived experiences, and cultural backgrounds. Members are always cognizant of their own societal privileges and biases. Therefore, they make thoughtful and deliberate efforts to learn about the differences, i.e., language, education, traditions, and family roles, of all students using critical research before developing policy recommendations and solutions.

Equity Consciousness: Before implementing or redeveloping institutional policies, members of the SSI recognize that it is the institution's responsibility to establish an environment free of structural and systemic barriers impeding student success. Therefore, they understand how racism, bias, and inequity function through higher education policy, practice, and resource allocation, negatively harming the lives of racially minoritized students. The experiences of Black, Indigenous, and people of color differ vastly from those benefitting from societal systems of privilege. Members of the SSI are acutely aware of these realities and actively work to eradicate all systems of inequity at the university.

Honesty: Addressing structural inequities and systemic biases directly are top priorities for the SSI. Therefore, an honest and authentic commitment to recognizing and revealing injustice is critical for institutional change. Members of the SSI educate themselves about the university's sociohistorical facets, particularly related to racism and other forms of oppression. They understand how oppressive factors poorly affect the physiological and psychological health of students holding minoritized social identities in modern-day, followed by creating policy recommendations to discontinue harmful behaviors to improve student experiences.

Inclusivity: Members of the SSI understand that undergraduate students enter the university with different experiences and goals. This includes incoming high school students, adult learners, and transfer students. Some students matriculate while managing racism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism, trauma, racial microaggressions, caring for dependent(s), economic difficulties, citizenship concerns, homelessness, and food insecurities. The SSI acknowledges these individualized experiences and is committed to enriching equitable policies that foster an inclusive community grounded in care, love, respect, and belonging, especially for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Therefore, increasing student retention and completion.

Institutional Climate and Culture: The SSI is committed to cultivating an environment absent and intolerant of racism, white supremacy, hate, antisemitism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression. Through intentional and deliberate efforts, members of the SSI work to create an institutional climate and culture where all students feel a sense of belonging inclusive of their multiple intersecting social identities. Additionally, the SSI embraces student, faculty, and staff activism, focusing on the various aspects of social justice and equality for all.

Professional Development and Training: Continuous professional development and training for university employees are critical for improving student persistence and retention efforts. Therefore, members of the SSI resist traditional norms centering on whiteness and gender bias. They are committed to developing new equitable policies and practices where each student feels supported by university employees. Therefore, policy and training recommendations about hiring competencies, curriculum, promotion, background screenings, and onboarding practices are essential for closing existing racial equity gaps. Members of the SSI are committed to creating an environment where students feel safe and supported by all university personnel, and this begins

with educational efforts substantiated by anti-racist practices and critical approaches within higher education.

Student-Centered: When developing policy recommendations, members of the SSI will always prioritize student needs using an equitable lens and critical framework. Listening to, learning from, and centering the experiences of students who have been historically minoritized is essential for achieving structural and systemic change at the university. Therefore, all policies and practices recommended by the SSI include input from students representing diverse social groups and experiences on campus. Members of the SSI understand that no single undergraduate student can or will experience the university in the same way. Therefore, it is critical to understand the unique perspectives from diverse voices to effectively and equitably improve student support services.

Student Voice and Accountability: Members of the SSI are responsible for ensuring that all feedback solicited from students is considered and enacted. Accurate timelines, details regarding challenges, areas for improvement, and successes are communicated to students and university Deans, Directors, Advisors, Counselors, etc., nurturing an ecosystem of trust and transparency.

Additional Resources

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