

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

DIALOGUE PART I

1. Stories

Listening to Needs

- Focus Groups (Joan Kammerer)
- Focus Groups with students (Roland Haines)

Supporting Academic Success

- Student development services
- Teaching support centre
- Assignment calculator – tool to develop project timeline (Wendy Kennedy - Libraries)
- Centre for Continuing Studies
- (Carole, Director of Nursing Studies) Committee with student representation/voice of students. Grad committee created space, office, lounge – cross fertilization
- Nursing students, work placements, Bus257
- Expectations of program – Nursing students – endorsed in placements & curriculum content
- Grad Studies in OT
 - Focus on providing “basics”
 - Direct access to expertise is what they’re looking for and funding
 - At Elborn, difficult for students
 - Grad students focused on resources
 - Identity is closely associated with school
- Linking graduate students to the services and program services to best support them (Clare Tattersall, Grad. Studies)
- Integrated courses for grads re how to present papers/access research grants, patent rights (partner with Ivey) (Jerry Battista)
- Helping students connect to their field of study – business, music, OT, law – forum on identity for this

Student Services

- In planning – consider what we offer – summer student orientation – academic counselling
- Work with the program; use technology e.g. getting ready for University – online course, Housing Parent website
- Warm welcome on recruitment and “image”
- Online SAO for adult or transfer students; residences have foreign exchange students
- First year recruitment
- Transition and course registration

“Focus Groups” – Joan Kammerer

Taylor Library set-up student focus groups of undergraduate and graduate students and asked them for their feedback. A number of specific actions came out of this.

1. Make the physical environment more inviting – repainted the library making it less institutional
2. Instituted the courtesy notice system where students receive notice in advance that their books were coming due, to avoid them getting overdue notices. The new system made it easier for students to renew books.

- Transition programs for first-year students and same for graduate programs
- CFNS – connect with off-campus via SAO web, informal network (Parent Purple Circle expanded for parents, transition some)
- Financial aid – financial fitness—budgeting, teach Life Skill
- Work study opportunities, mentorship/leadership – Life Skill
- Fees: communicate as much as possible what's expected; use judgement to help with emergencies; provide financial assistance/ASAP
- Hire students – work bursary
- Peer mentoring program
- Leadership experiences; research into student issues e.g. surveys into dissatisfaction

Residence Life

- Residence education – leadership, working with faculty, service learning, mentorship training (upper year) (Bob Gough)
- Residence: special needs – physical, emotional, snoring [single room], web site programming in Residences
- Residences tapped into offer letters to Transfer students – they fill the residences
- Backpack to briefcase
- Going beyond academic to connect with and prepare for the real world
- Service learning is important – automatically built into some programs
- Alternative Spring Break (service learning experience)
 - DR – orphanage
 - Florida – Habitat for Humanity
 - Students pay 90%
 - Yr1 – 6 or 7 participating, Yr2 – 20, Yr3 – 50
- A portion of budget to residences – to purchase what the students would like (Chris Bumbacco)

Space

- Building Access (Mark Denomy)
- Increase access to classrooms during spring exams (Larry Warden)
- Enhancing the environment in the Social Sciences Building – study areas/wireless access, encouraging students to stay in the building, interact with each other (Brian Timney)
- Resource rooms for students in Political Science (Faye Murphy)
- Consult students on design of buildings, maintaining residences (best in Canada); let's celebrate Caretaking staff's relationships with students in residence- recognized by students at year end with coffee & donuts
- Celebrate the environmental awareness students have
- We help with students in Engineering on their projects (Dave Riddell)
- PowerPlant touring/support to Engineering students (Rod Crichton)
- HazMat Team (Sue Mark)
- Contribution of outdoor environment to the student experience and academic success (Jim Galbraith)
- London's geography

Food

- Focus on customer needs e.g. branding (franchises) that they wanted (Gerry LaHay)
- Hospitality Services – Lifestyles program in response to survey
- Food safety programs
- Vision statement – “Thinking like a Student” (Food Services)
- Employ over 200 students each year (Food Services)
- Food Forum – giving them what they want – Brand – Tim Horton’s
- Food Services – addition of branding – customers have asked for their voice to be heard. Enhance day of customer. Focus on their needs, healthier, food safety, heard from customers, vision statement
- Campus Rec – employs more students than anywhere else on campus, high number of students come through each week, high customer service
- Campus Safety & Security

2. Challenges

- Need for face-to-face interaction with students
- Communication – develop relationships
- Connecting with students, communication with students
- Improved technology – wireless, speed up service, accessibility of our services
- Younger students, more parental involvement, less maturity, require good instruction, good academic counsellor
- “Instantaneous response” environment creates challenges
- Students today have very high expectations –instantaneous response
- Changing student body and their way of behaving. How do we manage responding to them?
- Know more about Grad Students – don’t know enough about them and their needs
- Opportunities for upper year students – programs
- Enough staff to support increasing number of students
- More faculty – student faculty ratios
- Classroom flexibility – creates some challenges
- Some students feel our programs are out of sync with goals and the future needs of the profession – frustration
- Design of buildings affects communication
- Getting students to participate in CFNS; diversity of students – different backgrounds protecting their individuality
- Reasonable way of operating campus vs. student behaviours – keeping campus beautiful and operating
- After 1st year – what are doing past first year to ensure that these students are not “left out” of the University experience? SAO good but students in big programs e.g. SS, Sci, Arts needs more transition counselling within program and between University and the work world
- Support/network for grad students

3. Recommendation: “Given the challenges identified, what’s one thing Western can do to ensure an excellent student experience?”

Learn and Market

- It’s the little things we do, not the big things we say
- Ask students what the best experience is about
- It’s important to invite students to provide feedback on their experience and that we be seen as responding to their feedback in a timely way
- Practically, its important to seek feedback on areas that we can reasonably expect to respond to and that those responses make sense strategically
- Identify level of satisfaction
- Choose issues to address
- Share successful programs – interactions – communicate
- Ensure the consistency of message and the way it is conveyed
- Need buy in from top down – values affect how we treat students and others
- Work to ensure that action is undertaken within the timeframe of the student experience
- Keep within a sensible strategy approach
- Market services already available to students with goal to enhance participation of students
- Marketing/connecting students to services that exist
- Encourage faculty to take advantage of Teaching Resource Centre in their early years
- Profile research \$ more to attract students → how do we do per capita compared to other schools?
- Easier funding process for grad students
- Office space for new graduate students – funding for building new space
- Support staff for new graduate students

Student Support

- Create more opportunities for student involvement + leadership → opportunities is key: the non-academic (Life) skills are as important as the academic experience
- Give course credit to students for participation
- Year 3 and 4 students – transitions and programs
- Review how we advise, counsel and mentor students – how do we bring people together to share those skills & experiences (Western News feature)
- Review what we do in advising, counselling etc. – do more sharing of ideas among roles that involve mentoring, leadership of students or advising student – academic counselling, mediation, academic and personal counsellors, course selection, to be consistently excellent
- Assignment calculator (from University of Minnesota)
- Western Library web – under Research resource
- Cut across disciplines, enrich the experience from (Medical Biophysics – ways to help students present their research)

Creating Community

- Emphasize being part of a community
- Community within - how do we develop a sense of community
- Give the student a level of connectivity with UWO – start @ program

- Active participation not possible – honouring their voice – letting them do it – empowering, developing, support
- Challenge is getting the vision clear – honouring relationships – honour the voice
- Need to treat TA’s well, develop their communication skills, as they are on the front line with undergrads
- Help faculty and staff be a greater part of student functions such as orientation and graduation
- Increase the level of diversity training for faculty and all of the staff
- Need to train and support staff to understand “best experience” so it’s a challenge but not intimidating
- Support our staff through service challenges – when try to deal with students who are upset when trying to deliver the best experience. Time to reflect on challenging situations and opportunities for skill development so the challenge of best student experiences is welcomed and not a threat.
- Leadership and support, mentoring for academic counsellors, residence managers, faculty etc.
- Increase & motivate staff complement and provide resources to automate as much routine work as possible, as well as rewards and recognition for teams and individuals who do a great job
- As University grows, staff and faculty must grow

Infrastructure Coordination

- Coordinate services across campus better – create consistency in service e.g. during exam periods: coordinate the facilities that are open – libraries, hospitality services etc., caretaking services on weekend, access to buildings
- Break down financial silos and have a more centralized service i.e. charge out or recoverable. Core curricular costs are downloaded to students and students are fed up with increases in athletic fees. Called an ancillary unit, should be called a core curricular and not all costs should be on cost recovery. Whole experience is to study and we need to support that and communicate more between departments and faculties.
- Improve facilities – state of the art labs and facilities – although ours are good – want to keep ahead of the pack
- Handling line-ups better (space)
- Design of campus – newer building on the outer limits of campus – need to maintain sense of community
- Movement patterns
- Create some institutional memory – when starting from scratch want to create a process that allows committee management easier, therefore makes leadership easier
- Residence programs are critical
- Constant innovation in student services so some functions can shift to different services
- Ensure we maintain a multifaceted approach to communication i.e. newspaper, email, leader forums (presentations)

Food

- “Lifestyles” program in Hospitality Services
- Lighter Options on Campus – L.O.O.C. – a focus on options at each franchise for healthier eating

DIALOGUE PART II

4. Issues: “Identify at least one issue to address as we increase our graduate student numbers.”

What do we need to know?

- To maintain quality, need a concerted path
- We don't have a good handle on Grad Students needs
- Grad Experience – we had a number of different and diverse opinions & dialogue on the Grad experience. Got to the point that we needed a better understanding of the needs of their group. We recommend that there needs to be more dialogue directly with this group to get a better understanding of the issues.
- Better understand motivation of students to attend graduate school and expectations for career – how long will it take, what it will cost, foreign students view. Do the drop outs reasons come from anything here?

Resources and Programs

- Need the parallel of faculty complement to match the increased numbers of graduate students
Need sophisticated staff to support grad students/TA's → PhD staff
- Impact on faculty members to support grad students
- Faculty-student ratio's – maintaining a strong undergrad experience at the same time
- Greater level of depth to support graduate student growth
- Academic programs for graduate students must be current – are our traditional programs meeting the current needs
- Individual members of faculty need to think about how they teach/what is taught i.e. is it meeting current needs and expectations
- Takes 3 to 4 years to start a new program
- Pressure on faculty members for them to support grad students → if you have more grads, then what does this mean to faculty members? How do students and researchers connect?
- Grad students feel affiliation to their program.
- Women in science and math

Attracting Grad Students

- How do we attract professionals contemplating a return to academia?
- Industry partnerships
- More lab based programs and needs (physical structures, good practices (safety) and office spaces)
- Library – strong Canadian \$ to ensure access to international publications
- New funding model – communicate it to students – not OofR Student Services but the Faculty or Grad Studies or Departments, starting for the Summer Term – Ron Wagler as the key system developer
- Funding increased in faculty Health Sciences, also in Engineering, for grad students. ITS has one time expansion but more funding is required to support other units.

Support Success in Programs

- Put tips on website – how to apply for a PhD Program – how to connect with Faculty Advisor – offer resources and support to mature grad students
- Provide a service of “how to apply for doctoral program” and how to apply for external awards – need a faculty member to “shepherd” them. Could we have an institute in the summer to assist them?
- Need strong mentoring to support it – drawing card → retains and moves them through
- There’s an opportunity to increase an awareness of how to “set yourself up for success” as a masters’ student in moving on to a graduate program
- Wisdom program (existing) – mentoring programs for undergrad by grads to increase grad participation
- Funding for campus visits and open houses to allow students to meet UWO faculty
- Interviews for prospective students – help selection and recruitment

Sense of Community

- Look at opportunities to develop a sense of community for grad students to the University
- Grad Students in general don’t feel a part of community
- Lack of recognition for PT students
- Keeping experience personal while increased student numbers – can not rely too much on TA’s – need faculty contact as well

Cultural Needs

- As a University we’re not addressing the “overall” needs of Grad Students, especially international
- International students, language and communication skills – needs to be developed
- International students need even more hands-on hand-holding. Not as independent as North American students
- Cultural differences – dietary issues
- Really need to focus on diversity issues – have this ever more ingrained into our culture

Space Needs

- Space needs in general i.e. office
- Space (office/lab) residences for families
- Housing – adequate?
- Housing Impact – new residence – upper year – kitchens, new real plans (2 + 3 bedrooms)
- Glenmore is limited
- Space – where will we put the increased Grad students – review/assess
- Housing – affordable and appropriate
- Platt’s Lane Estates – very positive feel in community

Personal Needs

- Daycare/physician?
- Spousal employment
- Increased needs in general – food/equipment