May 7 Faculty Senate mtg

There are approximately 25 offices or departments within Student Affairs and upwards of 90 staff members; each office and individual committed to the university’s academic mission.

While their daily work varies, all are united under our **Four Foundational Principles.**

1 Commitment to Student Learning and Development

We engage students in the discovery of knowledge, exploration of skills, connection with others, and application of behaviors that cultivate self-efficacy and lifelong learning.

2 Commitment to Diversity

We understand and fully embrace the responsibility of every office, every individual within the Lehigh community, to make a real, tangible, and readily identifiable commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. This deep and sincere commitment is often effortless, sometimes comes with challenges, and is always present in our work.

3 Commitment to Purposeful Action

Our community is important. Lehigh, South Bethlehem, and beyond - the history of our campus is deeply ingrained in the history of our local community. Through our work, students are afforded opportunities, pathways, support, and encouragement as they explore ways in which they can be actively engaged in their communities, both during and after their time at Lehigh.

4 Commitment to Staff Growth and Professional Development

We foster a professional culture that values and promotes staff members learning and engagement, as well as the sharing of knowledge and expertise, both on and off campus. An up to date, first rate, talented staff is a must. It is imperative that we remain current within our field if we are to continue to provide relevant, meaningful, well-informed guidance and support to students.

For the 2020-2021 academic year, and in direct acknowledgement of the unique circumstances presented by the pandemic, three priority areas were identified to best ensure student access to resources, staff responsiveness and proactivity in light of campus and societal issues, and demonstrable support of the university’s academic mission. The Areas of Focus represent our work around emerging and ongoing issues, which span multiple departments within Student Affairs.

1 Unwavering Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

In line with and in support of our students’ growing embrace of social justice and fundamental fairness, we bolstered our already strong efforts in the area of diversity, equity and inclusion. Student Affairs supports the university’s broader goal of becoming an anti-racist institution through student development, empowerment, advocacy and support.

2 Partnerships and Relationships with Faculty and Staff

From the early days of the pandemic when we quickly shifted to remote operations, it was clear that Student Affairs would serve as leaders and partners in seeing that students’ interests and needs were best served in and outside of the classroom. Student Affairs supports the academic mission of the university and looks to do so by collaborating and strengthening working relationships with faculty and staff to enhance the academic experience.

Of particular note, our Office of Assessment and Student Life Curriculum collaborated with the Office of Institutional Research & Strategic Analytics, Graduate Student Life, Communications, and the Deputy Provost for Academic Affairs to create and administer the Fall 2020 Student Engagement Survey. The results of the survey – the results of this key partnership – were used to inform several initiatives campus wide and, perhaps more importantly, give us valuable insight into how our students were doing.

3 Enhanced Access to Student Affairs Offices and Staff Members

We have committed to having access to our services and programs be seamless. While traditional modes of contact remain, our offices have also incorporated Zoom technology, online/real-time chat, virtual office hours, and various other uses of social media and technology to remain in touch with students and student organizations. Through our on-campus presence and virtual interactions, we have been in many ways able to remain in touch with students – and even their parents – throughout the pandemic.

Fall of 2021 will see continued adherence to our Foundational Principles and this year’s Areas of Focus will again be incorporated into our work. In addition, several priorities have been identified and will be refined during our end of year retreat:

**Re-Orientation**

There will not be a singular 3 or 4 day sophomore re-orientation designed to serve as a definitive re-introduction to campus for the class which had a freshman year unlike any other class of first year students.

We will, of course, devote time to the class of ’24 to ensure they have a chance to recapture at least some of the in-person elements to Orientation that they did not experience last year.

In reality, our entire campus is going to experience a significant and sustained period of re-orientation.

The gradual transition from our current health and safety protocols to fuller access to campus facilities, services, and events. Reintroduction to physical spaces on campus and a melding of their former and future utility.

Class commutes. Work commutes. Roommate disagreements that will inevitably come with a move from all single residence hall rooms to doubles and triples. With more in-person student interaction will likely come more instances and reporting of relationship and sexual aggression and violence. On and off campus drug use and increased town-gown issues.

Club and organization involvement. In person tutoring. In person meals. University travel. Lehigh traditions such as the Rally, Convocation, Family Weekend, Le-Laf Week.

And we’ll be getting a new president.

Fall 2021 will present an opportunity for Lehigh to envision, define, and act on its best self. Our new norm can and should tap into the knowledge gained and successes had over the past year and a half. We will surely reboot and continue traditions and ways of going about business that were interrupted. But the creation and dissemination of knowledge is ongoing and fall 2021 will in many ways serve as a starting point for the next stage in the evolution of the university.

We will re-orient our thinking on everything from -

Conduct hearings, which have become more efficient while retaining the ability to take great care to affirm students’ rights.

Impromptu meetings with students, faculty, and staff have been much easier to schedule and “zoom into”

“Grab and go” dining remains a preferred meal option – at least some of the time – for students who are constantly on the move.

All just to say that some of what we’ve experienced during the pandemic will remain and be incorporated into our “new norm” and will make the university an even better place. But it’s imperative that the process of re-orienting our way of thinking begins sooner rather than later.

**Belonging and Community**

We know, without question, that students want to feel like they belong here. Recent and current surveys and student interactions have sent clear and consistent messages that students’ sense of belonging and feeling that they are a part of a community have suffered during the pandemic. Student Affairs will take full advantage of the planned return to in-person campus engagement to improve these and other indicators of student satisfaction.

**Student Affairs will be a leader in campus efforts to see that student are presented with a comprehensive, and better coordinated, array of wellness related services and resources**

Wellness (mental health and otherwise) has been an important and recurring theme, and will continue to play a significant role in student success. During spring 2021, I charged a Committee on Wellness - comprised of students, faculty, and staff –

Chris Liang & Kathleen Hutnik, co-chairs

Chris Burke, Terry-Ann Jones, Jeremy Littau and Valerie Taylor, faculty

The committee is examining Lehigh’s wellness offerings, and making recommendations, including suggestions on a signature/branded university wellness initiative. The committee will complete its work by early summer 2021 and recommendations will immediately be considered and implemented.

* Define “Wellness” at Lehigh
* Better alignment, coordination, and advertising of wellness related resources
* Signature Lehigh wellness initiative

**Redoubling of efforts to ensure that our work is assessment and data informed, and student driven and supported**

We will take full(er) advantage of our ability to engage with and poll students on their experiences, interests, and needs. We will also continue to be responsive to students’ recurring requests for more, and more transparent, communication regarding policies, programming, services, and decision-making related to the student experience.

**Residential experience**

Our student population is increasing in size and diversity. A new college has been introduced, as have new residence halls. As Lehigh has evolved, so has our identity as a residential campus. Student Affairs will work to identify key indicators of an optimal residential experience, to help ensure our offerings are distinctive and exceptional.

* Residential College models
* 3 year housing requirement
* Gryphon Society
* Town/gown relationships
* **Greek life**