Report of the
Ohio University Division of Student Affairs
Second Year Experience Task Force

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Co-Chairs
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Introduction

Tetley, Tobolowski, and Chan (2010) state that there are nine steps for creating a second year experience program. Those steps are:

1. Ensuring commitment by the institution
2. Building support from key campus stakeholders
3. Creating partnerships between academic and student affairs
4. Gathering local campus data
5. Surveying and adapting what already exists on campus
6. Identifying the gaps and creating new initiatives
7. Intentionally packaging and marketing the product
8. Assessing the program from the outset
9. Using assessment to improve existing initiatives and to suggest new ones.

This report will address all nine steps and make recommendations for the future.

Ensuring Commitment

Beginning in Summer 2008 and over the course of the next year, the Department of Residential Housing formed a team to research the needs of second year students and create a second year experience program. The findings of the team were presented to the Division of Student Affairs. With the initial research complete, the division created this second year experience task force that was charge with looking closely at division-wide resources and presenting a plan of action to address a division-wide second year experience initiative.

Building Support from Key Campus Stakeholders

The Residential Housing Second Year Experience Team identified several university stakeholders necessary for a second year experience initiative. Those stakeholders include:

- Division of Student Affairs
- Dean of Students Office
- Residential Housing
- Career Services
- Campus Involvement Center
- University College
- Academic Advancement Center
- Alumni Center
- Campus Recreation
- President and Provost
Several of these stakeholders were asked to provide membership to the Division of Student Affairs Second Year Experience task force. Those who participated in the process are:

- Andrea Adams-Manning, Residential Housing
- Randy Kitchens, Residential Housing
- Drew Holzaepfel, Campus Involvement Center
- Patti McSteen, Dean of Students Office
- Kristine Hoke, Career Services
- Enrique Hermosilla-Palma, Residential Housing
- Kayla Lennon, Residential Housing
- Amanda Hobson, Residential Housing
- Stephanie Day, Residential Housing
- Joe Wakeley, Campus Recreation

These individuals have committed themselves to the development of an SYE program here at Ohio University. They have identified intentional and practical strategies that can be implemented with little to no cost that are centered on collaboration among the departments within the Division of Student Affairs. They have also brainstormed specific programs that could be developed easily within the Division that are aimed to the development and retention of our sophomore student class.

**Creating Partnerships Between Academic and Student Affairs**

Partnerships between academic and student affairs currently exist at Ohio University, but more can be done to strengthen the partnerships to make a positive impact on a second year experience initiative. It will be vital to bring University College on board this initiative, considering so many of our second year students are in University College until they declare a major at the end of the second year. In addition, research regarding the second year experience indicates that second year students want more connections with faculty members. At Ohio University, students indicated that they want to attend faculty research presentations. Some of these connections currently exist in the form of learning communities within the residence halls. Several ways to improve the partnership between academic and student affairs would be to utilize the Career Services office by collaborating with faculty members to facilitate career outreach during class and with academic departments to coordinate internships across campus. To be more successful in this area, it will be vital that faculty be involved in further second year experience discussions and planning opportunities.

**Gathering Local Campus Data**

According to Tetley, Tobolowsky, and Chan (2010), one effective way to gain understand of the engagement needs of second year students is to conduct focus groups. The Residential Housing Second Year Experience Team had the opportunity to conduct four focus groups with the following populations:

- Bush Hall (freshman, co-ed)
- True Hall (mixed, co-ed, substance free)
- Adams Hall (upperclass, co-ed)
- The Residents’ Action Council (mixed, co-ed)
Students were asked questions about what they would want from a second year experience program. The results of the focus groups were consistent with the literature regarding the second year experience. Students at Ohio University want information in regards to graduate school, majors, employers, internships, and off-campus living. Students also want ways to be involved with faculty, including faculty research presentations, meet & greet sessions, and visibility on campus. Students also want more learning opportunities outside the classroom, including personal interactions, panel discussions, and field trips. To further gain information from students regarding the second year experience, it is suggested that second year specific questions be attached to an already existing survey administered by the university.

Surveying and Adapting What Already Exists on Campus

The task force made an intentional effort to look in every department in the division and others outside the division to identify programs that currently exist at Ohio University that would be a benefit to a second year experience program. The following list includes programs that should be included in a second year experience initiative.

- Involvement Fair
- Majors Fair
- Education Abroad Fair
- Off-Campus Living Fair
- Career and Internship Fair
- 21st Century Leadership Series
- Bobcat to Bobcat Panels
- Resume Writing Workshop
- Mock Interviews
- On-Campus Job Opportunities (PACE, Residential Housing, Bobcat Orientation, Peer Mentor, etc.)
- Community Service Opportunities
- Career Counseling
- Upperclassmen living environments
- Study Abroad Opportunities
- Internship Opportunities
- Social/Recreational Opportunities
- Summer Session classes
- Academic Advisor meetings

These current programs provide a great foundation for starting a second year experience program. The task force also identified Residential Housing as a structure that is great for hosting and marketing events because of the living requirement of second year students in the residence halls.

Identifying the Gaps and Creating New Initiatives

After reviewing our current programming efforts within the division, we found several gaps in the necessary framework for our SYE program at Ohio University. The gaps have been converted into short and long term goals.
Short-term goals:
- Create a SYE Calendar of events that includes specific program targeted to the sophomore class. All collaborating offices would work together to identify these programs and streamline efforts specific to this population. Events would both included academic and student affairs initiatives.
- Create a brand for the packaged events specific to the sophomore class. Brand may include a poster series, a specific logo and more.
- Develop a career development series similar to the 21st Century leadership series.
- Coordinate communication efforts in the summer months to publicize SYE.
- Maintain a long term Division Committee to oversee the efforts and progress of SYE.

Long-term goals:
- Welcome back programs for second year students. This program would include bring back the sophomore class back early, developing social and intentional programs that will help refocus and jump start their academic year.
- Passport program/checklist. The committee has identified a timeline of events that second year students would check off as they progress through their quarter. This checklist would help keep them focused throughout the year and help them identify services to utilize.
- University College second year class. This class would be used as a method of creating cohorts within the greater sophomore class. The class would be designed to specifically target those students who haven’t identified a major at this point in their development.
- A Sophomore Retreat. Other universities offer this as an option to their sophomore class. The retreat is focused on helping students through the transitions of leaving their 1st year class and progressing to a senior. The retreat serves as a motivational tool to get students revved up for the year and feel more connected to the university. Most retreats would involve using alumni and visiting career opportunities elsewhere.

Intentionally Packaging and Marketing the Product

Research states that without branding the SYE program we would run the risk of losing attendance and customers. The purpose of this brand is to create a consistent message that sophomore students would understand and recognize. The committee has identified several methods that we could easily implement across the campus that would Brand this product. The committee’s recommendation is to 1) create a logo that would be placed on all publications of events that target the sophomore class, 2) create a calendar of specific events for the sophomore class, 3) market this product to parents and students during the summer prior to the start of their 2nd year. University Communications and Marketing is on board with our project and is ready to brand the SYE program.

Assessing the Program from the Outset and Improving the Second Year Experience

In an effort to assess the effectiveness of the SYE program we suggest creating a permanent divisional team that will monitor its progress, develop focus groups and identify assessment methods. Specifically we suggest utilizing the EBI’s supplemental questions to aid in the evaluation of this program. We also suggest that this team would monitor the retention numbers of those students who chose to participate in the SYE program and those who do not. While benchmarking
Beloit University, we found that those students who participated in their program here more likely to graduate than those who did not. The literature lists three reasons for assessing sophomore programs; 1) it is a new area of emphasis for student affairs in general, 2) intentionality in linking goals to outcomes in second year programming requires assessment, 3) assessing the program would allow our division to use our budget intentionally (Tetley, Tobolowski & Chan, 2010).

Moving Forward

The committee is very committed to this effort and is awaiting your feedback, thoughts and recommendations. The committee is willing to move forward once we receive our new charge as our initial charge was to provide the Dean of Students with a report and recommendations.

References