

## Student Life and Success Briefing

### BACKGROUND

Enhancing student life and success to complement the academic experience at Oregon State University must be intentional, responsive, holistic and nimble. Student life at OSU is the responsibility of all faculty and staff, not any one single unit or department. Efforts are focused on equalizing student access and success, which includes understanding and removing processes and structures that create unnecessary barriers for students. This report provides a snapshot of initiatives that directly contribute to advancing student access and success in the context of Strategic Plan 4.0 (SP4.0), updates on previously reported priority areas, and highlights of emerging student life issues.

The unique experiences and perspectives of students must be considered in the context of current global and societal dynamics. As of this report, our world is engaged in one of the most, if not the most, historic challenges many of our students have ever experienced. The COVID-19 pandemic is all encompassing and impacts nearly every facet of student life at Oregon State University. Throughout this report, references to COVID-19 and ways in which new strategies have been — and will continue to be — developed to provide a holistic, student-centered experience are provided.

### PROGRESS AND METRICS RELATED TO STRATEGIC PLAN 4.0

#### **Strategic Plan Focus Area: A Culture of Belonging, Collaboration and Innovation**

##### **Inclusivity Survey: Creating a Sense of Belonging**

One effort to operationalize OSU's commitment to creating a more inclusive environment is through the Inclusivity Survey. Conducted every other year by the Division of Student Affairs, this tool helps faculty and staff identify areas we need to focus on as an institution to continue to create an environment in which students truly believe they belong. In the 2019 survey, a primary focus was relationships, experiences and environments (e.g., the classroom and living environments) and the extent to which they influenced students' sense of belonging at Oregon State.

The 2019 survey also examined student experiences with bias, both direct experiences and those they witnessed. This survey complements the bias response process and allows us to learn more about student experiences of bias. For example, in the 2019 survey, we learned that over half of those who have *experienced* or *witnessed* an act of bias do not report it (52.3% and 51%, respectively). In partnership with the work of the Office of Institutional Diversity and the Bias Response Team (which provides support, referrals and resources to those who report bias and elevates reports to appropriate offices), the Inclusivity Survey provides information needed to better understand 1) the frequency and nature of students' encounters with bias and how they respond to those experiences; 2) whom students regard as resources and support; 3) what knowledge students have of OSU resources; and 4) possible barriers to students' use of institutional resources.

We look at student responses through a number of demographic lenses including race, gender, class standing, college, socioeconomic status, religious practice, experience of disability and more. From this, we gain a better understanding of how students from different populations and identities experience belonging at Oregon State. The spring 2021 iteration of the survey is being planned; the focus and content will depend largely on the timeline for when students return to campus following the COVID-19 pandemic. Considerations are being made for how inclusivity and belonging need to be thought of differently after the remote learning and pandemic experience.

### **Faculty Student Mentor Program (FSMP)**

FSMP is a pilot program launched in 2018 born out of the Undergraduate Student Success Initiative (USSI) that primarily serves students of color, first-generation students and students with high financial need. College-specific faculty volunteers are paired with paid student peer mentors to lead groups of one to five new-to-OSU students in bi-weekly meetings throughout students' first year. The program is intended to create community and break down barriers between faculty and students.

The first-year retention rate for FSMP students who participated in at least one mentoring session was 88.4%. The retention rate for a group similar to the FSMP participants (disproportionately first-generation students and students of color) was 81%. This difference is statistically significant. Based on early success, permanent funding for this program has been prioritized and the program will be administered through the Educational Opportunities Program moving forward. Conservative estimates indicate the expenditures necessary for the program will more than offset from revenues from increased retention.

### **Student Mental Health**

The number of students seeking mental health treatment continues to grow consistent with national trends. The total number of students served by Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) in 2018-2019 (3,170) is 6% higher compared to the previous academic year (3,004), and 67% higher compared to just four years ago (1,897). The number of total clinical appointments provided in 2018-2019 (15,316) is 2% higher compared to the previous academic year (15,026), and 53% higher compared to just four years ago (9,985). OSU-Cascades has also seen growth in students seeking mental health support. Mental Health Counselors served 78 students with 415 appointments in 2018-2019 which was 37% higher than in 2015-2016 (the first year a 1.0 FTE counselor was hired for the campus).

Despite increased demand, the number of students who had to be assigned to a CAPS waitlist decreased, from 1,078 students in 2016-2017 to 806 students in 2018-2019. This 25% decrease in students assigned to a waitlist, despite increased utilization, can be attributed to CAPS' continued emphasis on providing efficient clinical services. This efficiency focuses on interventions that use fewer resources (e.g., group therapy). Additionally, the "glass half full" view of this increased utilization is that many OSU students feel comfortable seeking help and experience fewer barriers in seeking help at CAPS. CAPS' Single Session Clinic (SSC) continues to be located in the Memorial Union and has become a high-demand request that serves many students. The SSC was created to serve students who seek support to resolve a specific issue (e.g., how to better manage stress), but do not need ongoing therapy. The SSC is therefore designed as a one-time visit. The total number of single session appointments provided in 2018-2019 (411) is 19% higher than the number of appointments provided during 2017-2018 (345), the SSC's first year. Because the SSC has been so successful, population-specific clinics are being developed for the College of Veterinary Medicine and the Graduate School. These population-specific clinics began remotely in spring 2020, and the plan is to transition them to onsite locations in the fall.

While the increased focus on efficiency has increased CAPS' capacity to serve students, part of any reasonable solution to the supply and demand challenge must include consideration of increased staffing. To this end, CAPS' budget request was approved to hire four additional counselors starting in the 2020-2021 academic year. Completing this hiring action is pending full assessment of the budget implications of COVID-19.

Student Health Services (SHS) has also faced an increasing demand for mental health care, including management of increasing high acuity and co-occurring health and mental health needs. Critical

services provided by SHS include psychiatry, as well as mental health care provided by primary health care clinicians as part of a health care visit. SHS provides nutrition counseling and substance use disorder counseling, both of which have seen an increase in demand. Overall, visits to SHS specifically for mental health increased 50% between fall 2018 and fall 2019. Currently, mental health represented over 20% of all diagnoses made by SHS clinicians. OSU-Cascades offers student wellness support via a Health Advisor who provides physical and behavioral health referrals based on insurance coverage available in Central Oregon.

### **Sexual Violence Education, Response and Prevention**

Sexual violence prevention and response is organized as an integrated approach, combining healthy relationship and consent education with prevention and response strategies that are trauma-informed; gender-based violence education; and bystander training. These programs reach key groups, including student athletes and members of fraternities and sororities.

Since opening on the Corvallis campus in 2015, the Survivor Advocacy & Resource Center (SARC) has seen 1,278 survivors of sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, stalking, and gender-based harassment and discrimination, and has also provided over 8,900 individual advocacy services to survivors ranging from immediate crisis support and safety planning to housing accommodations, academic support and accompaniment throughout reporting processes. SARC regularly consults with university and community partners on behalf of survivors and works closely with OSU academic faculty and the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access to request academic support for survivors. SARC collaborates with university and regional partners to create a holistic and trauma-informed approach to survivor care, raise awareness and promote the safety and well-being of the OSU community.

The sexual violence education, response and prevention approach focuses on promoting the persistence of all students in their academic pursuits. With this in mind, through ASOSU Office of Advocacy and Counseling & Psychological Services, intentional support has been added for responding students in sexual misconduct cases.

### **Strategic Plan Focus Area: Transformative Education that is Accessible to All Learners**

#### **Black Student Access & Success Initiative**

Launched in fall 2017, the Black Student Access & Success Initiative was created to address the decline in enrollment of undergraduate students who identify as Black as well as lower rates of persistence and graduation among Black students when compared to the total student population. While there have been improvements in persistence and graduation rates for Black students since 2017, the gap between their success and the overall average is still notably wide and the Black Student Access & Success Initiative remains a priority.

For example, 69.6% of first-year undergraduate students who joined OSU in 2016 and identify as Black were retained to fall 2017. In comparison, 76.7% of first-year undergraduate students who joined OSU in 2018 and identify as Black were retained to fall 2019. Though there was a 7.1 percentage point improvement in persistence rates, there remains an 8.7 percentage point gap between students who identify as Black and the overall average. Likewise, while there has been an increase in the six-year graduation rates for students who identify as Black between spring 2017 and spring 2019, the graduation rate remains 11.3 percentage points lower than the overall average. The Black Student Access & Success initiative seeks to address these inequities by creating a more inclusive and supportive community on the Corvallis campus, enriching relationships and overcoming negative perceptions with the Black community in the Portland area to improve enrollment, and strengthening partnerships with middle and high schools through visitations and advising.

Since last year's report to the Board of Trustees, the Black Student Access & Success Initiative has worked with university partners to create the new [Nia Black Scholar Living-Learning Community \(LLC\)](#). As detailed in the New Projects and Initiatives section, this new LLC aims to create a stronger sense of community among Black and African American students, and those students who are dedicated to supporting Black and African American student success. Other efforts taking place on the Corvallis campus to support Black and African American students include college, faculty and staff collaborations to address educational obstacles. The initiative has also worked with the Center for Teaching and Learning to find ways that students can provide anonymous course feedback, with the Black Alumni and Friends Network to provide workshops, and with the Honors College strategic planning team. Initiative staff also taught a Black Minds Matter course to faculty and staff.

Working with community-based organizations, the initiative helps create pathways to Oregon State for Black students. For example, the African American Youth Leadership Conference (AAYLC) will bring over 300 predominantly Black middle school and high school students to the Corvallis campus next year. Though postponed until 2021 due to COVID-19, the initiative is planning an equity conference for K-12 educators at the OSU Portland Center. The Building Blocks 2 Success program holds LEGO robotics classes for middle school students in the Portland area, and the program completed the first Beaver Achiever STEM Camp in collaboration with the College of Engineering. There are plans to double the number of students by partnering with Science & Math Investigative Learning Experiences (SMILE) (the second camp is also postponed to 2021 due to COVID-19).

#### **Native & Indigenous Access & Success Initiative**

The Native & Indigenous Access & Success Initiative collaborated with the Educational Opportunities Program, Diversity & Cultural Engagement, University Housing & Dining Services and the ethnic studies program to create the [munk skukum Indigenous Living-Learning Community](#). The munk-skukum LLC offers a residential space for students to find community, explore cultural identity and learn about the lands on which they will be residing. This past year, Native & Indigenous Access & Success Initiative leadership partnered with Division of Student Affairs and Office of Institutional Diversity leaders to strategize about how to increase access for Native and Indigenous students. See the New Projects and Initiatives section for additional information on the munk skukum LLC and the Indigenization Project proposal.

#### **Food Insecurity Taskforce: Access to Basic Needs**

In fall 2019, a Food Insecurity Task Force was created to review and increase the scale of our programs and services that help reduce food insecurity among our students. This task force was made up of university administrators, faculty, student government leaders in Corvallis and Bend, as well as representatives from Farmers Ending Hunger, the Department of Human Services and Partners for a Hunger Free Oregon. Due to the complexity of addressing food insecurity, the task force was organized into five sub-committees: Education; Services and Interventions; Bigger Picture Solutions; Needs Assessment/Data; and Coalescing Partners.

The task force put forth the following recommendations under two guiding premises. First, student food insecurity is a symptom of poverty and inequity. Food collected or dollars raised to feed OSU students will not address root causes. Second, OSU has been a thought and action leader on this issue. From opening one of the first campus food pantries in the country, to building the Human Services Resource Center (HSRC), we have led the way and should continue to do so. The following are actions underway:

**Needs Assessment:** Conducting a survey to assess the scope, depth and location of food insecurity among OSU's campus-based and online students.

**Regional Food Security Summit:** Hosting a regional summit on student food insecurity that gathers students and colleagues from other institutions and provides a space to engage with the problem of student food insecurity and share best practices.

**Research Initiative – Not A Food Problem:** Creating a Food Insecurity branch in the Improving Human Health and Wellness research initiative.

**Enacting Our Values – Showing Students We Care:** Proposing language to the Faculty Senate on basic needs support in course syllabi.

**Expanding Programming – Building on What We Have:** Creating HSRC-branded satellite pantries across campus, since not all students are going to the Human Services Resource Center.

### **Fundraising in Support of Student Access and Success**

Engagement with alumni and donors was called out as an emerging issue in the 2019 report to the Board of Trustees. Since that time, a new Division of Student Affairs fundraising strategy was developed to align efforts to increase student access and success while leveraging existing gift opportunities. As covered in greater detail in the New Projects and Initiatives section, the newly adopted fundraising plan focuses on the university's strategic priorities. The OSU Foundation has put support and resources behind this work (for example, campaigns to support food insecurity and emergency funding that have received broad university support).

Fundraising has played an important role in supporting programs that enhance student access and success. In partnership with the OSU Foundation, the Division of Student Affairs set a goal to establish a \$2 million level baseline of support annually. This level of support has been maintained for the past two years, and it was surpassed this academic year by April 2020, with more funds raised year-to-date in FY2020 than FY2019. There is also an increase in the number of donors and current use dollars secured for the division, money that can be used in powerful ways to support students. Other examples of programs that have benefited from the division's fundraising efforts include the Educational Opportunities Program, the Black Student Access & Success Initiative and the Native & Indigenous Access & Success Initiative.

### **Supplemental Instruction (SI)**

SI implements a student-centered learning model that creates community around collaborative group study tables for challenging courses at OSU. By providing a voluntary support program, SI avoids common tutoring stigmas connected to remediation, while recognizing the difficulty of course content and creating a low-stakes environment where students can practice what they learn in class with trained peers. Each SI table is run by an SI leader, a student who has previously been successful in the course and has undergone over 40 hours of pedagogical training in areas such as facilitating student belonging, collaborative learning, and learning theory.

OSU's SI program personnel estimate the impact of the program to be roughly one-third of a grade increase for students who complete SI. These grade improvements are consistent with a recent longitudinal analysis completed by OSU's Institutional Analytics and Reporting. Further, the program results in an estimated 12 percentage point reduction of DFWU rates for participating students. In 2018-2019, the difference in DFWU rates equates to more than \$264,000 in student tuition.

### **Student Employment and Career Readiness: First Destination Survey (FDS)**

The Career Development Center provides resources for students to transform into career-ready

graduates. Students can learn how to identify potential careers and develop transferable skills through student engagement, internship and professional development opportunities. In response to COVID-19, the Career Development Center quickly moved much of its support and resources online, including presentations, career counseling, virtual career fairs, a mentorship program and internship programs.

As previously reported, a collaborative university-wide approach was established to gather first destination data for the undergraduate class of 2020. Institutional Analytics and Reporting completed the first version of an interactive dashboard in fall 2019 to provide a centrally available tool for colleges that can be used to strategically plan for the work opportunities that may exist for graduates in particular fields. The Career Development Center has created a detailed process plan with guidelines and expectations for collecting and reporting undergraduate FDS data for spring 2020 graduates.

### **Academic Counseling Programs**

The Educational Opportunities Program, TRIO/SSS and the College Assistance Migrant Program support historically marginalized populations including students of color, students who are first-generation, students with high financial need, students with migrant working family backgrounds, and undocumented or DACA-mented students. These programs provide academic and “college counseling,” cohort-based coursework, and connections and networks that help students find community. The data show that students who participate in these programs complete 45 or more credit hours after their first year at a greater rate than students who do not (67% vs. 60%); they are more likely to persist to their second year (89% vs. 78%) and third year (82% vs. 69%); and they have a higher five-year graduation rate (61% vs 52%).

## **NEW PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES**

### **New Living-Learning Communities**

As noted above, the Black Student Access & Success Initiative and the Native & Indigenous Access & Success Initiative have collaborated with the Educational Opportunities Program, Diversity & Cultural Engagement, University Housing & Dining Services and the ethnic studies program to create the new Nia Black Scholar Living-Learning Community and munk-skukum Indigenous Living-Learning Community. Both communities, which are scheduled to open in fall 2020 and open to all students, contribute to SP4.0 by fostering a culture of belonging and providing resources to improve access and success for underrepresented students. The Nia LLC aims to create a stronger sense of community among Black and African American students, cultivate student leadership and involvement, and explore the history of Black and African American people in Oregon and beyond. The munk-skukum LLC offers a residential space for students to find community, explore cultural identity and learn about the lands on which they will be residing. The LLCs offer all students who are interested resources and academic support through the Educational Opportunities Program and access to cultural center programming from the Lonnie B. Harris Black Cultural Center and the Native American Longhouse Eena Haws.

### **Indigenization Project**

Oregon State has seen a recent decline of an already low representation of students from Native communities, and our students who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native have the lowest six-year graduation rate of any demographic group (37.5%). There is much more OSU must do to partner with Native families and tribal communities to bring more students from Indigenous backgrounds to the university, support students to their degree completion, celebrate their heritage and honor the places on which OSU is located throughout Oregon. A project proposal is under review that seeks to focus, coordinate and elevate existing efforts across the university that will leverage OSU's improving

relations among Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to confront and challenge the legacies of settler colonialism and create a better future for the students and communities which we serve.

### **Healthy Campus Coalition (HCC)**

In fall 2018, Vice Provost for Student Affairs Dan Larson and Dean of the College of Public Health and Human Sciences Javier Nieto charged two co-chairs from the Division of Student Affairs and the college to advance health and well-being throughout the university community, inclusive of students, faculty and staff. The Healthy Campus Coalition (HCC) is grounded in an amalgam of leading national models, including the Robert Wood Johnson I Culture of Health, Collective Impact, and ACHA's Healthy Campus framework and is composed of approximately 40 stakeholders from multiple departments across Oregon State. Transcending traditional decentralized, single-departmental efforts, the coalition utilizes a cross-functional and community health approach to address the systems, settings and environments that shape health and well-being of all OSU community members.

The HCC has been organized into three primary working groups – Faculty/Staff Wellness, Student Mental Health (expansion of existing work group) and Wellness Foundations, which includes nutrition, movement, sleep and access to essential services like food, housing and health care. These groups have been assessing current assets and gaps to direct future efforts.

### **Health Network Exploration**

In recent exploratory sessions between the Division of Student Affairs and Samaritan Health Services, there was a shared interest in working together to deliver a fully integrated, seamless, holistic health program for the Corvallis community. This possible collaboration could include traditional healthcare services, teaching, research and experiential learning opportunities for students, using a combination of what Samaritan and OSU are best suited to provide. This opportunity will continue to be evaluated and clarity on what this partnership could look like is expected in the coming months.

### **Kognito**

The Kognito online interactive training program better prepares faculty, staff and students to effectively support students in distress. The program helps participants recognize signs of distress; learn how to have positive, impactful conversations; and know when to refer students to appropriate resources. Although these trainings only became available in November 2019, 317 faculty/staff members and 2,361 students have completed the training. Evaluations indicate that 78% of faculty/staff rate the training as either “Very Good” or “Excellent,” suggesting that Kognito is achieving its intended impact.

### **Beavers Belong Support Network (BBSN)**

Counseling & Psychological Services developed the Beavers Belong Support Network (BBSN) to further promote a culture of care. The BBSN is a peer-led program that organizes weekly groups across campus where students can meet to talk about how they are doing — good, bad and otherwise. BBSN's tag line is “Because life happens.” Although the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed BBSN's implementation, groups are currently meeting over Zoom, and a full roll-out is anticipated for fall 2020. After this period of social isolation that our students are experiencing, programs like BBSN that promote connection will be more important than ever.

## **Division of Student Affairs Fundraising Plan: Launched Fall 2019**

The Division of Student Affairs Strategy for Fundraising is built on the knowledge that co-curricular programs and services have a positive impact on student success, and through investment of philanthropic resources, we are able to enhance the student experience through providing greater access to, and delivery of, programs and services. The newly launched strategy focuses on three fundraising categories. The first and most important fundraising priority is to increase access for students of color, first-generation students, and students with high financial need or underrepresented identities to programs and services that have been proven to impact student success. Secondly, fundraising efforts will contribute to enhancing the delivery of existing and proven high-impact programs and services, followed by funding new and innovative programs and services that promote a cause or institutional priority.

### **TRENDING/EMERGING ISSUES**

Much of our efforts described in this report are aimed at proactively addressing the global and national trends that impact student life, which span issues such as mental health and well-being; food, housing and financial insecurities; and rapidly changing demographics. Most recently, the global COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted institutions of higher education across the world, necessitating careful planning and response on multiple levels.

### **COVID-19 Student Care, Support and Engagement**

As university leaders have rapidly initiated pandemic planning and response protocols for OSU, more focused efforts have continued at all administrative and departmental levels to ensure students are supported and connected through this unprecedented time. These efforts are done knowing that the impacts of the pandemic felt by students will be disparate based on family, economic, individual health and demographic factors (i.e., social determinants of health). Impacts will likely persist for some time and may not be fully evident for years. Within the university landscape, the budgets of the auxiliary, student-fee funded and general-fee funded units will be greatly affected in the coming months and years as a result of the financial strain being experienced by students. Examples of adaptive and nimble support provided for students thus far are noted below.

**International Student Care:** Initial outreach focused on international student care and the associated impacts related to the outbreak in China, including travel restrictions and family members being affected. A number of educational panel sessions allowed international students to ask direct questions and identify areas of needed support, including health and wellness, academic and financial impacts, and assistance with travel, visas and other needs.

**Racial Bias and Health Equity:** OSU has taken an early and consistent stance against bias and discrimination associated with the pandemic. COVID-19 has affected groups very differently, highlighting the need for a health equity approach that ensures all members of the community have access to and are receiving the additional support needed to persist through the pandemic.

**Student-Focused Health Care:** Both Student Health Services and Counseling & Psychological Services have initiated telehealth and distance counseling modalities to support student care. Although the provision of telehealth services is normally limited by law to within Oregon, many other states (including California and Washington) are making COVID-related exceptions which allow our providers to serve students currently residing outside of Oregon. The transition to providing telehealth services has been successful and is expected to continue in some form well after the pandemic ends.

**Holistic Student Wellness:** The [OSU Experience](#) website houses a suite of health and well-being programs, as well as student engagement and other key services. Student-facing units across the university landscape have tailored educational programming, support and outreach for a remote learning experience. This site offers a one-stop-shop for students seeking educational, engagement and support resources.