Needs Assessment of the Multicultural Student Services Office at the University of Wisconsin - Stout

by

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A Research Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of Science Degree in Training and Development

Approved: (4) Semester Credits

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May, 2008
Abstract

The complex issue of minority students' retention and graduation rates at predominately Caucasian higher education institutions has been a focal point for many leaders. These rates have remained low for many decades, although there have been many studies conducted to revolutionize these achievement gaps. It is difficult for students of color to adjust to colleges that do not support their racial climate, orientation systems, support services, and multicultural curriculum. This study examines literature based on minority students in higher education and why it is important to assess their needs. The primary purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of essential services, activities, programs and events needed in the Multicultural Student Services office that would aid minority students in increasing their chances of being retained until graduating from the University of Wisconsin - Stout. Through using a survey instrument, both quantitative and qualitative methods, the researcher was able to gain perceptions of the minority
students. More specifically, the data gathered explained what services, activities, programs, and/or events minority students needed to be successful during their college career at UW-Stout. The data provided by students, illustrated ways to formulate the Multicultural Student Services office at UW-Stout into a more pleasurable place for minority students on campus to visit.
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Acknowledgments

I would first like to thank all the students who took the time to complete the MSS office needs assessment survey. Without their help, this research paper isn’t successful.

Thanks to Hollace Teuber, my research advisor, for helping me through this long field problem process. She has provided me with assistance through her in-depth knowledge and history of researching minority students. I sincerely appreciate what you’ve done to help me achieve this important accomplishment.

I want to acknowledge what Kat Lui has been to me as I’ve made my way through the Training and Development Program. You’ve been an outstanding support system to me since the beginning. I can’t begin to explain how much I’ve learned from you in just a year of working around you. With your guidance, I’ve learned to reach beyond boundaries and will continue to do so after I leave Stout.

I want to thank all the Multicultural Student Services staff who supported and assisted me during this study. Without the help of Meleina Sega, Deron Drummond, Lionel Jones, Susan Scholfield and Phillip Yang, I wouldn’t have been able to successfully complete a quality study for the MSS office.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends who’ve stood aside me through this point of my education. It’s hard to explain how much all your encouragement has meant to me accomplishing this goal of mine. This hasn’t been a short or easy road one but we’ve made it. I dedicate this work to all of you!
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Chapter One

Introduction

Introduction to the Study

Stout was founded in 1891 by James Huff Stout and was known as the Stout Manual Training School. In 1908 the Manual Training School became known as the Stout Institute. The institute was designed to "provide facilities in the way of buildings, equipment, and teachers, through which young people of both sexes may secure such instruction and training in industrial and related lines of educational effort as will enable them to become efficient industrial, social, and economic units within their environment" (UW-Stout, 2007). In 1911 ownership of the Institute transferred to the State of Wisconsin and in 1955 became known as the Stout State College. A primary goal of the early institution was to provide students with an active, innovative and technology applied education. The university has a reputation as an institution that provides its students with a practitioner based atmosphere through applied learning approaches that fully engage students in learning. The Stout State College endured until 1964 when the Board of Regents, determining the level of education had surpassed college standards changed the name of the college to Stout State University where the name remained until 1971 (UW-Stout, 2007). The name changed once again to the University of Wisconsin Stout, which survives to this day. Most recently, UW-Stout has been modernized and achieved designation as a Polytechnic University. The designation as a polytechnic means the university will provide professional, career-focused programs in the arts, social and related sciences, engineering, education, natural sciences and technology. UW-Stout is a comprehensive, career-focused polytechnic university where students, faculty and
staff use applied learning, scientific theory and research to solve real-world problems, grow the state’s economy and serve society (UW-Stout, 2006).

The goal of the university, according to the mission statement is to serve the many needs for the workforce by generating students that are very knowledgeable practitioners in their respective areas. However, UW-Stout has not had much success in retaining and graduating minority students over the past years. Reported in the retention and graduation rates of all new freshmen minorities at UW-Stout, the retention rates consistently dropped in 2002, 2003, and 2004. The retention rates were 70.7 %, 62.8%, and 58.9% respectfully after the students first year at UW-Stout (UW-System, 2006).

Student support services, especially those designed for minority and low income students, have been the principal institutional response to the problems minority students experience in predominantly white institutions (Green, 1989). The Multicultural Student Services (MSS) office at UW-Stout is responsible for implementing programs which serve minority students. Their primary function is to recruit, retain and assist in graduating minority students. To better serve the needs of minority students, the campus and to determine effects of services on retention and graduation rates at a predominately white institution the researcher finds it vital to conduct a needs assessment. The needs assessment technique used in the MSS office at UW-Stout will ask questions to determine two specific criteria:

- What services are used by minority students
- How satisfied those students are with each service

The researcher will also analyze the data gathered in an attempt to gain an understanding of new services that can be implemented through the MSS office to benefit
students. The assessment is needed to ascertain if this office serves as an effective on-campus resource for minority students. The assessment will allow the MSS office to enhance the services already established and develop new services based on what the users of the office state they need to perform at high academic levels.

**Statement of the Problem**

The significance of this study is to assess the needs of the Multicultural Student Services Office at the University of Wisconsin Stout. This study is out to gain an understanding of essential services, activities, programs and events are needed in the MSS office that would aid minority students in increasing their chances of graduating from UW-Stout. Campus data indicates that there has been inconsistency within retention and graduation rates at UW-Stout with minorities in the past. UW-Stout has a goal in their Plan 2008 document to achieve higher retention rates for minority students. The university would like to retain 75% of their minority students after the first year as oppose to the past several years of high 50% to low 60%. UW-Stout has also set a goal for graduation rates of minority students in the Plan 2008 document. This goal is to increase graduation rates to 40% after 6-years as oppose to 15.2%, 19.5% and 26.6% in past years. The MSS office provides many services, however those services do not appear to be making any statistical differences in retention and graduation rates. The gap between the current situation and the need to increase student retention and graduation rates needs to be identified. The study will allow the researcher to investigate what is present and what is needed in the MSS office in regards to services provided to minority students. The intent is to consequently assist minority students by providing well needed
services, activities, programs and events throughout the stages of their entire academic careers.

Purpose of the Study

This study is significant in many ways. The information gained will give insight to perceptions of minority students at UW-Stout. The MSS office will be able to determine what services, programs, events and activities are required to meet the needs of minority students at UW-Stout. The MSS office will be able to create services, programs, activities, events and the office environment around the needs of these students. The results of the needs assessment may provide insight which may assist with increasing the recruitment and retention through graduation of minority students. Furthermore, the findings of this study may develop strategies which may lead to success in retention and graduation of more minority students at UW-Stout. At the conclusion of this study, the researcher may be able to provide a blueprint to improve the services provided by the MSS office to better accommodate the needs of minority students.

Assumptions of the Study

This study includes several assumptions based on the ability of the researcher to collect, analyze, and successfully fulfill the needs of the MSS office. The following assumptions will have a direct impact to this study:

1. The researcher will be able to objectively identify areas that should be addressed in the MSS office through the survey instrument
2. The researcher assumes the results of this study will be reliable and valid due to consistent qualitative and quantitative survey data
3. The researcher assumes that identifying gaps will achieve a higher probability of being retained and graduating from UW-Stout

4. The researcher must take careful measures to ensure personal biases do not surface in the study

5. The researcher is a current stakeholder of the MSS office at UW-Stout

Definition of Terms

*Achievement gaps* - Exists when groups of students with relatively equal ability do not achieve in school at the same levels. In fact, one group often far exceeds the achievement levels of others. Achievement gaps may be based on race or ethnicity, income levels, language background, disability status, and gender (National Education Association, 2008)

*Advancement Opportunity Program (AOP)* - Is designed to provide financial assistance to designated minority and disadvantaged graduate students to improve their opportunities for retention and graduation (UW-Stout, 2008a).

*American Indian and Alaska Native* - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintain tribal affiliation or community attachment (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a).

*Asian* - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a).

*Black or African American* – Is a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. It includes people who indicate their race as "Black, African American, or Negro," or provide written entries such as African American, Afro American, Kenyan, Nigerian, or Haitian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a).
Emerging Leadership Institute for Training Ethnic Students (ELITES) – Is a training ground to teach, empower, and promote minority students to achieve and cultivate leadership skills (UW-Stout, 2008b).

Hispanics or Latinos - Persons who indicated that they are "other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino" include those whose origins are from Spain, the Spanish-speaking countries of Central or South America, the Dominican Republic or people identifying themselves generally as Spanish, Spanish-American, Hispanic, Hispano, Latino, and so on (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000b).

Lawton Undergraduate Multicultural Retention Grant Program (LUMRG) - Is designed to provide financial assistance to designated minority undergraduate students to improve their opportunities for retention and graduation (UW-Stout, 2008c).

Minority - A racial, religious, political, national, or other group thought to be different from the larger group of which it is part. (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2006)

Model - Provides the conceptual framework for looking at phenomena. It also can be viewed as plan or an organized way of thinking (Lee & Nelson 2006).

Needs Analysis – Is the breakdown of identified needs to determine root causes and identifying, but not selecting, the possible methods and means to close the gaps in results (Kaufman, 2003).

Needs Assessment - Is a formal analytical tool for problem identification that reveals needs in terms of gaps between current results and desired outcomes, identifies unique strengths and area of excellence, sets priorities among needs, and selects the needs to be changed (Lee & Nelson 2006).
Polytechnic University – They are comprehensive universities that offer professional, career-focused programs in the arts, social and related sciences, engineering, education, natural sciences and technology (UW-Stout, 2006).

Qualitative Research – Soft data, such as perception, values, attitudes, opinions, or ideas (Kaufman, 2003).

Quantitative Research – Hard data, such as indices, sale averages, or number of word processing programs used (Kaufman, 2003).

Survey - A sampling, or partial collection, of facts, figures, or opinions taken and used to approximate or indicate what a complete collection and analysis might reveal (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2006).


White or Caucasian – Is a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. It includes people who indicate their race as "White" or report entries such as Irish, German, Italian, Lebanese, Near Easterner, Arab, or Polish (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a).

Methodology Overview

The method used in this study will be a survey. The population used in this research study consists of all the 440 minority students on and off the UW-Stout campus. The students' population grade level range from freshmen to graduate level and above education. The attached survey was developed by the MSS staff and will be administered to minority students. The goal of the survey and the study is to understand what services are needed to help make their educational development more satisfying and rewarding.
The survey consists of eight quantitative questions with sub-points, one “check all that apply” question, and three qualitative questions asking about our services, activities, programs and office environment. The data will be analyzed through a collaborative effort working with the Office of Budget, Planning and Analysis on UW-Stout campus.

Limitations of the Study

In every study there are limitations to what the research can or cannot prove. This research study has its own limitations including:

- Subject response rate is an unknown factor
- Cultural attitude and belief systems could impact the subject matter
- Student perceptions cannot easily be quantified
- Interpreting qualitative data must ensure the integrity of the respondent’s statements
- The research was conducted in a limited three month period
- The timeline of the study was a limitation to the study. There was an academic break during the time of the research study
- The researcher may have extended the students time for completion of the survey too long as they went on spring break

Objectives:

The objectives to this study were to determine the following:

- Obtain literature covering the needs of minorities in higher education and why it is important to assess the needs of those students
- Obtain literature covering needs assessment techniques/models and why it is important to conduct a needs assessment
• Gain an understanding of the current condition of the MSS office based on the students perception of services, activities, programs and events produces in the MSS office at UW-Stout

• Gather information about minority students that reflect the services needed to become successful while attending UW-Stout

• Provide recommendation for improvements to current active services, activities, programs and events produced in the MSS office at UW-Stout
Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will briefly discuss literature focused on the dilemma of minority students’ retention and graduation rates in higher education. This chapter will also include works by author’s who offer various reasons as to why it is important to assess the needs of minority students. More importantly, research data will give an overview of the significance of assessing the MSS office at UW-Stout. The chapter details a variety of needs assessment models developed by specialists in the training and development field and other related fields used in the study for comparison and contrast. Within the needs assessment literature the researcher will explain why it is necessary to conduct a needs assessment in any organization.

There have been numerous studies conducted by individuals such as (Gregory, 1999), (Redd & Scott, 1991), and (Farris, 1997) in the area of minority retention and graduation rates in higher education. The lack of retained and graduated minorities at institutions where the majority is white isn’t uncommon throughout the nation. However, there haven’t been many major changes made by the universities to accommodate the needs of minority students. Although, there has been some investment in closing the gap over the past 30 years and access and persistence rates have increased for all groups, the gaps nonetheless remain stubbornly wide (Gregory, 1999). Some of these gaps include:

- The rate at which ethnic groups complete their bachelor’s degree versus whites
- Test scores of ethnic groups versus whites
- The access ethnics groups have towards opportunities versus whites
The achievement gap relating to the scope of this study is retention rates of minorities in higher education. This is the problem many colleges and universities encounter throughout the United States. There have been challenges by their higher education administrators to ensure student development and success while attending their university. The National Center for Education Statistics show that 45 percent of African American and Hispanic students graduated within five years of matriculation to a four-year institution, compared to 57 percent of white students (Gregory, 1999). Although the number of African American, Hispanic, and American Indian students entering and earning degrees from America’s colleges and universities has steadily increased over the past decade, these populations continue to be underrepresented at all levels of higher education (Gregory, 1999).

Closing the achievement gap in higher education for minorities is still in the revolutionary stages. Attending college has become an expectation of most high school graduates and their families (Farris, 1997). It is a presumption that the student will persist until the desired academic goal has been attained, whether that goal is a degree or completion of a specific program of study (Farris, 1997). Minority students have made dramatic strides in the aspect of education. However, minorities haven’t yet reached the level to where it has become standard for them to be retained at an institution of higher education.

In 1988, the University of Wisconsin System developed a comprehensive system-wide strategy to increase diversity with a focus on minority students. This strategic plan involved the entire university system in the plan known as Design for Diversity. This plan also included individuals throughout the university in implementing of various tasks. The
goal of this plan looked at closing the achievement gap through instituting extraordinary measures requiring each system campus to develop strategic outcomes for seven goals of the plan. Three of the goals were established to improve recruitment and retention of minority students, faculty, and staff. This plan also wanted to remove many of the barriers that kept minority students from attending college with one of the most important being financial assistance. Others goals included establishing effective partnerships with schools, businesses, government and finally educating all students on-campus to enable a multicultural society. There have been multiple plans of such but none seem to be the solution to the problems that exists with minorities in the University of Wisconsin System (Green, 1989). Although some things may have changed, there still is a heavy barrier in retention, graduation and recruitment rates.

Assessing the MSS Office

Recruitment, retention, and graduation rates are amongst the few achievement gaps that exist at UW-Stout. Caucasian students are graduating at higher rate than all groups of minority students. The following Table 1.1 illustrates the gap in graduation rates between minorities and Caucasian students at UW-Stout in 2003. The largest gap in student graduation rates were 18.9% and the smallest 15.9%.
Priority F- Plan 2008

2003 6-year Graduation Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>Minority</th>
<th>Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UW-Stout</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer 1</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer 2</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer 3</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In comparison the next Table 1.2 demonstrates the low enrollment rates for minority students at UW-Stout from 2003 to 2007. Asian American students have the highest enrollment headcount in the five year span, with 209 students registered. With the second most enrolled students on the UW-Stout enrollment table with more than a 100 less students than the Asian American student enrollment are African American students with a population enrollment of 103.
Table 1.2 Source: Adapted from Education Trust Database, by UW-STOUT PLAN 2008

Phase II: 2004-2008

Enrollments – Undergraduates and Graduate Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial/Ethnic Background</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2007 Headcount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>.4%</td>
<td>.4%</td>
<td>.6%</td>
<td>.7%</td>
<td>.8%</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic American</td>
<td>.8%</td>
<td>.8%</td>
<td>.8%</td>
<td>.9%</td>
<td>.9%</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Racial/Ethnic</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>458</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The importance of higher education cannot be measured only by the number of students enrolled and money spent but must be measured by the extent to which colleges and universities strengthen and enrich individual and the public at large (Farris 1997). Strengthening and providing support for minority students at UW-Stout means that there should be a strong focus their needs, especially in a predominantly Caucasian institution. Areas that affect minority students in retention until the completion of their graduation are due to the following reasons.

- The racial climate at the institution plays a huge role in whether the individual student will be retained at the university. A nurturing environment for students is almost certain to have a positive impact on retention and graduation rates. When
there aren't an abundance of minorities on the campus, there isn't a feeling of campus welcoming to those students (The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2006).

- Retention rates are higher in colleges where there is an orientation and retention system set in place for minority students of color. The goal of this is to help those students adapt to the culture of predominantly white campuses. Other institutions appear to improve graduation rates through strong student organizations that foster a sense of belonging (The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2006).

- The geographic location plays a drastic role in retention and graduation rates. It is more likely that a minority student will be more successful in an urban area rather than a rural surrounding (The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2006).

- The core of being surrounded by other minority students is also a relatively important thing that affects their success at a higher education institution. When the numbers are low there have been studies that support a correlation in low retention and graduation rates (The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2006).

- When an institution does not have a strong background in multicultural curriculum it is likely there will be low rates that follow. For instance, in the science fields, blacks typically do not have a strong interest and therefore probably wouldn't be very successful in an institution that is heavy in that area (The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2006).

Additionally, the Wolfgram-Teuber report of June 2007 specifically addresses the concerns of minority students at UW-Stout. The report indicates that "Overall, emerging themes were focused on the importance of the 1:1 personal relationship between the student and the faculty or staff member, outreach by faculty/staff to students, as well as sensitivity to diversity issues". Shown in Table 1.3 are what subjects in this report state that the following issues impeded their academic goals:

(Table 1.3) Source: Adapted from Wolfgram-Teuber

**UW-Stout Ethnic-Minority Student Affirmative Campus and Community Climate Study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of interaction in community</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional stress from ongoing anxiety and/or fear</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of personal relationship with faculty</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of faculty sensitivity to diversity</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insensitive comments by community businesses</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty who stereotype based on race</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of personal relationship with advisor</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfriendly staff/faculty</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unequal treatment of athletes by coaches/athletic staff</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty who “call out” students in class to represent group</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the review of literature regarding minority student issues in higher education and the findings of the student report at UW-Stout, it seems important to conduct a survey and needs assessment for the MSS office.

*Importance of a Needs Assessment*
Needs assessment is a process consisting of a set of activities and procedures that identifies the merit or worth of a program (Lee & Nelson, 2006). It is a formal analytical tool for problem identification that reveals needs in terms of gaps between current results and desired outcomes, identifies unique strengths and area of excellence, sets priorities among needs, and selects the needs to be changed (Lee & Nelson, 2006). This is typically called a needs analysis and is usually conducted to find answers regarding potential needs of a program or organization. A needs assessment is the foundation of finding what necessities are required of a program in regards to supporting the organizational long-term strategies. It is also used to make recommendations at micro and macro levels of the organization. A needs assessment is highly effective at the micro level for making changes in the organizations due to the fact that it builds participant commitment, generates management support, increases credibility for people who conduct the assessment and finally it provides data for process evaluation (Lee & Nelson, 2006).

It is vital to conduct a needs assessment in any sort of organization where there are visible gaps in performance. Organizations are typically time restricted to conduct a proper needs assessment. Many times there are solutions implemented when there were no implications that it was ever needed in the first place. However, when organization plan ahead of time and make careful and cautious decisions they typically gain a return on their investments. When conducting a needs assessment it is important that the researcher direct the study in the appropriate direction.

When conducting a needs assessment, the researcher should know if it’s the appropriate time for the assessment to be executed. Below are some of the reasons why
people should conduct a needs assessment and reasons why people should not (Mitrofanova, 2007):

Why should a needs assessment be conducted

- To learn more about what the needs of the group are
- To gain honest and objective description of the needs that people might tell you publicly
- To become aware of possible needs that weren't seen as important or needs that were never discovered
- To anticipate and remain responsive to changing demographics, attitudes and needs
- To document your needs as it may be required for superiors in an organization
- To get a group's support for action in a particular mission or vision
- To make sure all actions are aligned with needs expressed by the organization

Why shouldn't a needs assessment be conducted

- When there is no doubt what the most important needs are for the organization
- When there is urgency to act right now and without delay
- When a recent assessment has already been done, and it is clear the needs have not changed.
- When the organization cannot see the needs assessment as a way to promote productivity within the organization

At the end of every needs assessment, there should be confidence of reliability and validity within the results. We can determine that an assessment is reliable if it yields results that are accurate and stable. In order for a performance assessment to be reliable,
it should be administered and scored in a consistent way for all the users who take the assessment. In order to conclude that an assessment is valid, the researcher must decide whether the study measured what it was intended to measure. Some important aspects of validity are content coverage, generalizing the data in the majority favor and fairness (Chicago Board of Education, 2000).

The purpose of the needs assessment therefore, serves to identify those gaps and determines if a solution can be found through training. In this instance the assessment is part of a planning process focusing on identifying and solving performance problems or identified gaps.

Needs assessment, as previously described is a process. The first step in conducting any needs assessment involves a needs analysis. The needs analysis answers the questions who, what, when, and where but not how, that is, the target audience is the "who", the task or content is the "what" and the context or environment is the "where" (Clark, 1998). Ideally conducting a needs assessment and following with the appropriate analysis for this study must look to the specific focus area in order to conduct a meaningful assessment.

Importance of Assessing Minority Students at UW-Stout

As indicated previously, there are gaps in achievement of minority students at UW-Stout. It is important for the staff of the MSS office and campus administrators to know they are making sound judgments to provide effective services for minority students. Based on this review it seems reasonable that the needs of minority students should be taken into account and attended to in an effort to promote their success. This needs assessment will provide the decision makers with accurate information to make
confident decisions in what services, activities, programs, and/or events are needed to improve retention and graduation rates. If the MSS office needs assessment is successful, it should allow the MSS office to plan, budget and produce better for the office. At the end of the needs assessment, the MSS office should be able to diagnose minority student needs, decide if there are services needed in specific areas, and determine whether certain development areas are being boosted due to these services, activities, programs, and events.

Needs Assessment Methods

For the basis of measuring data collection techniques, the researcher chose to contrast the survey technique to focus groups and interviewing. There were many other techniques that could have been investigated by the researcher as shown in Key Needs Assessment Methods. However, interviews and focus groups were best fit for further investigation for usage in this study. Both the focus group and interview techniques have their own disadvantages. However, the researcher thought that each outweighed the disadvantages of the survey technique based on the population size. The survey technique was able to provide easy administration to a large group of students, provided on-the-go students to simply complete in a timely fashion, inexpensive, and collect of data in a short period of time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational documents</td>
<td>Provide relevant, quantifiable data</td>
<td>Do not build employee involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inexpensive</td>
<td>Not necessarily focused on HRD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fast</td>
<td>May not identify causes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May build management involvement</td>
<td>May not provide visibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaires/ Surveys</td>
<td>Can reach many people in a short time</td>
<td>Require time and skill to develop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build involvement</td>
<td>May generate low response rates or inaccurate responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relatively inexpensive</td>
<td>Provide no opportunity to clarify questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yield relevant, quantifiable data that are easy to summarize</td>
<td>May restrict freedom of response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allow for anonymity, which may encourage more honest responses</td>
<td>May lead to unrealistic expectations about HRD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group interviews with employees and managers (focus people)</td>
<td>Build involvement and support</td>
<td>Moderately time-consuming (but less so than individual interviews)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide relevant data</td>
<td>Moderately expensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide you with visibility</td>
<td>Difficult to conduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May elicit important topics you had not expected</td>
<td>May be difficult to analyze and quantify data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Permit on-the-spot sharing and synthesis of different views</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual interviews with employees and managers</td>
<td>Build involvement and support</td>
<td>Expensive in terms of time and travel costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allow for clarification</td>
<td>Require strong interviewing skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide relevant data</td>
<td>May be difficult to analyze and quantify results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Easier to conduct than group interviews</td>
<td>May make interviewees self-conscious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May uncover information that would not be brought up in a group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory committees</td>
<td>Build management involvement and sponsorship</td>
<td>Time-consuming and difficult to manage logistically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide visibility</td>
<td>Fail to build lower-level employee involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inexpensive</td>
<td>Poor source of quantifiable date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allow synthesis of opinions of key decision makers</td>
<td>May lead to groupthink or turf wars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can help identify resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of work situations</td>
<td>Builds employee involvement</td>
<td>Requires a highly skilled observer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provides excellent information when coaching an individual</td>
<td>Does not involve management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Builds your credibility</td>
<td>Time-consuming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generates relevant, quantifiable date</td>
<td>May change performance or be perceived as spying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>May be logistically difficult to implement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted from Managing a Small HRD Department, (McCoy, 1993, p.23)*
Surveys are very powerful tools for constructing need assessments and should be used when working with large populations. At the same time, when working with surveys, it is very difficult to develop questions that are valid and reliable. So when preparing to conduct a study of any kind, it is very important to compare data collection techniques. The objective in choosing the perfect technique type is finding what it is that matches your population the best. This will provide the researcher with maximum ability to make accurate recommendations from results of the study.

Compared to the methods of focus groups and interviewing, the structured the instrument of a survey offered less opportunity for sidetracking and irrelevant information than do group interaction process (Altschuld & Witkin, 1995). Factors that steered the researcher away from using the interview method were the time consumption dynamic, cost, schedules with students, and the analyzing stage would have been more difficult to summarize. False analyzing of the data would have resulted in reliability issues for this study. Although focus groups presented a more favorable match to the researcher than interviewing, there were still many existing disadvantages that directed the researcher to using the survey method. The first disadvantage was the fact that the researcher lacked the experience in facilitation of focus groups. To be effective, focus groups require good facilitation. A facilitator should avoid making decisions about a group’s work and encourage an atmosphere of openness, accept responses in a non-judgmental manner, and mutual respect (Altschuld & Witkin, 1995). Therefore, based on its advantages and disadvantages, the survey technique provided the best results for the research study. It showed to be the favorable technique because it provided the researcher with an easy way to analyze and distribute the survey out to the population.
Summary

In the past 30 years there has been a large gap in minority students retention and graduation rates compared to those of white. Furthermore, the studies have been conducted at many institutions, such as the Plan for Diversity in the University of Wisconsin System. The studies have been endless but haven’t been able to increase the curve of graduates in minorities. The MSS office at UW-Stout hosts many services, events, activities, and programs so that minority students at a predominantly white university will feel more comfortable and welcomed while going to college. However, those services, events, activities and programs haven’t proven to further advance retention and graduation rates of minority students. In this chapter the researcher then discussed the importance of understanding what is needed by minority students to want to stay at a university such as UW-Stout. Thereafter, the researcher went on to point out the things deterring students from engaging themselves in furthering their education. The chapter mentioned the common methods used to conduct needs assessments and a table that identifies the purpose, advantages, disadvantages and key tools in a strategic needs assessment.
Chapter Three
Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher will discuss the method used for conducting the MSS office needs assessment. Some of the sections addressed in this chapter include the subject selection and description, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis and limitation to the methodology.

As mentioned in chapter one, the purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of essential services needed to ensure and increase graduation rates for minority students. The first and foremost limitation to this study is that the researcher is a stakeholder of the organization. The researcher is a minority student at UW-Stout and is also employed in the MSS office. To make sure there wasn’t any bias in the study the research was accompanied by other individuals who are experts in research studies. This was also used to make certain the research instrument developed was reliable and valid. At the beginning of this research study, the researcher hoped the results would generate enough information to further develop new and improve old productions off the MSS office at UW-Stout. The goal was to allow student’s needs to become met through the offering of effective services, activities, programs and events by their request. At once the result are in from the needs assessment, the researcher will be upfront with the office director about the perceptions of students. As a result of attempting to identify needs for minority students the researcher conducted a needs assessment. This assessment was based on students perceptions of the services offered in the MSS office.
Subject Selection and Description

The population consisted of 439 minority students who are active students at UW-Stout for the spring 2008 academic semester. The students are self-disclosed members of the four American ethnic groups: African American, Asian American, Latino American and Indian American. There were 48 percent males in the population and 52 percent were female. The population consisted of 211 males and 228 females. Male or female, over 64 percent of the population are residents of Wisconsin and 29 percent were residents of Minnesota. In the breakdown of ethnic background there 119 students at 27 percent listed as other Asian American, 103 students at 23 percent listed as Black, 81 students at 18 percent listed as Asian, 74 students at 17 percent listed as Hispanic or Latino, and 62 students at 14 percent listed Native or Indian American. Of those students who were in the population, there were 365 undergraduate level students, 9 graduate level students and the other 66 students were undisclosed. This particular population was selected due to their usage of the MSS office. They are the representing population of students that either physically come in the office for services or they are off campus students who use the office via telephone, email, or the internet. The researcher assumes this population of students should know how to best rate the services, activities, event and programs produced by the MSS office because they are first-hand users and primary resources.

Instrumentation

The researcher chose to gather data using the survey method due to the ease in administering to the larger population of minority students at UW-Stout who uses the MSS office. Also, it was important to use the survey method as it provided anonymity for students. Anonymity in this study allowed the students to complete the survey to be
honest while responding to questions that may be more personal. The survey technique provided the researcher with information such as perceptions and opinions about services provided through the MSS office. It allowed the researcher to find the areas of concern provided by the students of the office. This method of collecting data permitted the researcher to gain an abundance of information while not using too much of the students' time. This study consisted of both quantitative and qualitative data collection through the method of surveying.

The needs assessment survey for gaining student perspectives on the MSS office productions of needs consisted of 68 services for students to rate. These services were grouped by major categories:

- Financial Assistance
- Academic Advisement
- Referral Resources
- Leadership Opportunities
- Networking with Other Multicultural Students
- Learn about Diversity
- Personal Support and
- Relax and Learn

When rating these productions, the survey asked students how often they used the services. In an adjacent column the students were asked to rate how satisfied they were with the services. If the service didn’t apply to the student, then they were asked to select “N” which represented that it didn’t apply.
The design of the questions was laid out in two columns, with a rating scale for both usage and satisfaction. The rating scale consisted of five points. For the usage column the options were as follows:

1. Never
2. Seldom
3. Sometime
4. Often
5. Very Often

The options on the satisfaction column the options were as follows:

1. Very Dissatisfied
2. Dissatisfied
3. Neutral
4. Satisfied
5. Very Satisfied

The researcher will try to use the quantitative segment of the survey to try to capture judgments of minority students regarding their perception of services provided by the MSS office. The qualitative section of the survey consisted of a list of 9 services that were not available through the MSS office. Students were asked to select which service they would most like to see produced in the near future to meet the needs of UW-Stout multicultural students on campus. These services were developed through a benchmarking process that identified services provided to minority students by the following colleges in the UW-System: UW-River Falls, UW-Superior, UW-Eau Claire, and UW-Madison. They were schools that had a multicultural office or something
similar. For the exception of UW-Madison, all the mentioned UW-Systems schools are relatively similar in size. They were also chosen due to their lack of a high percentage of minority students. Also, added to this question was an option for students to add more services that didn’t make the list provided to them. The next three questions consisted of qualitative or open-ended questions. The content of the first qualitative question relates to the students providing services, activities, programs, and/or events that they feel would be useful in meeting needs of minority students on campus. The next question asked the students to provide reasons why they would not consider utilizing services on campus that already exist other than the ones provided through the MSS office. The final question was in the context of the MSS office. This question asked the students, what in their opinion would make the MSS office a more pleasurable place to study or hangout at.

In the design of this quantitative and qualitative survey, there were several stakeholders who had suggestions and recommendations that made the questions more valid and reliable. Stakeholders included staff of the MSS office and professors teaching at UW-Stout. The survey took nearly three weeks to develop due to the fact that it went through many content transformations and format styles. It is visible that students are constantly visiting the MSS office and typically when students visit they have a small amount of time to chat leisurely.

*Data Collection Procedures*

The survey was administered to students using two delivery systems:

1. Email
2. In-person
Surveys were sent out in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet as an attachment. Students’ were also offered an incentive to complete the survey in an effort to increase return rate. The incentive, substituting the survey for an advisor meeting did not impact the specific responses.

Students were given a two and a half week time period to respond to the MSS office needs assessment survey. The survey was provided for student’s to complete a couple days before UW-Stout spring break on March 12th, 2008 and was to be completed on March 28th, 2008.

The data was gathered through emails and students returning the survey to the MSS office in-person. When the surveys came back to the researcher, they were initially placed in a private envelope until March 28th, 2008 when they were taken out and analyzed by the researcher.

Data Analysis

After the deadline for students had passed, the researcher gathered all the quantitative information from students and concluded a mean for each sub-service provided on the survey in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. These allowed the researcher to compare the services that are or aren’t used as much by minority students and also how satisfied or unsatisfied students were with the services produced by the MSS office. The researcher generated a total number of 1’s, 2’s, 3’s, 4’s and 5’s that were submitted by students in both the usage, satisfaction and never used columns. Each number had different meanings based on the rating scale and therefore were separately calculated to gain a sense of where students were scoring their answers. Being able to identify with students what services are not being used allowed the MSS office to decide whether or
not particular services were worth continuing as the office goes through its reconstruction in the near future. As a result of placing the responses in a frequency chart, the researcher then developed another chart that showed the total percentage of the student population who used a specific service and then the number of students who has never used a specific service. The same was done with satisfaction of the service. It showed the total percentages of the student population who were unsatisfied and those who were satisfied. There was no sorting of the quantitative data based on gender, ethnicity or grade level at UW-Stout.

The next area that required quantifying data was in the question asking the students which of the predetermined services they would like to see produced by the MSS office to meet the needs of minority students. The Microsoft Excel sum function was used to total all services that students wanted to see implemented in the MSS office.

The qualitative data was grouped into similar categories based on student responses using the highlighting function. The emerging themes were captured based on every student response.

Limitations

Although every effort was exercised to control for limitations, this research study was conducted within the confines of fixed parameters. The most identifiable limitation to this study was found within the content used in the survey instrument. There were some students who did not understand how to rate certain services listed on the survey due to lack of experience or poorly written services provided by the researcher. Many students had a hard time understanding the concept of not rating the satisfaction of each service if they have used it. This error by students was seen multiple times by the
researcher. Students would provide a rating of "1", which meant they've never used the service and then provide some rating of satisfaction. When the students gave a rating of "1" for usage, the response to satisfaction should have therefore been "N", which told the researcher that satisfaction could not be rated because it was non-applicable. Time constraint was a limitation to this study. The second semester presented many breaks away from school for all students. The researcher had to work along the academic school year timeline that wasn't the best for conducting a research study.
Chapter Four

Results

Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of the MSS office needs assessment research study. The study consisted of gaining an understanding of the essential services, activities, programs and events needed in the MSS office to aid minority students in increasing their chances of being retained and graduating from UW-Stout. As a result, there was a needs assessment conducted in regards to services presently provided and the services that students thought would help in retention and graduation. The needs assessment was conducted in the form of a survey. The survey was administered online through email and also in-person. This survey consisted of both qualitative and quantitative questions. Students were given a two and a half week time period to respond to the MSS office needs assessment survey.

The undergraduate level students who participated in this study are part of the Lawton Undergraduate Multicultural Retention Grant (LUMRG) Program and the graduate level students were a part of the Advanced Opportunity Program (AOP) at UW-Stout, which are minority grants. In lieu of attending a regularly scheduled meeting with an MSS office advisor, grantees could opt to complete the survey. In analyzing the results of the survey, the researcher used both Microsoft Word and Excel. In presenting these findings the researchers has laid out the results to each question of the survey in this chapter.
Objectives:

As stated in chapter one the objectives to this study were to inquiry as to the following:

- What services are used by minority students
- How satisfied those students are with each service

The following describes the processes used to gain information necessary to reliably address each inquiry:

- Obtain literature covering the needs of minorities in higher education and why it is important to assess the needs of those students
- Obtain literature covering needs assessment techniques/models and why it is important to conduct a needs assessment
- Gain an understanding of the current condition of the MSS office based on the students perception of services, activities, programs and events produces in the MSS office at UW-Stout
- Gather information about minority students that reflect the services needed to become successful while attending UW-Stout
- Provide recommendation for improvements to current active services, activities, programs and events produced in the MSS office at UW-Stout

Item Analysis

After the data was returned, the researcher made some conclusions based on what students rated in their respective surveys. The current perceptions of students were captured in the survey results. Of the 440 minority students at UW-Stout who received the survey, responses were received by 87 students for analysis. This is slightly under a 20 percent return rate. It is also noteworthy that according to the MSS office staff, this
was the highest return rate for a survey in recent years. Because the survey was distributed just prior to spring break, the researcher feels the timing may have allowed minority students who stayed on campus the opportunity to complete the survey with patience.

Consistent with the data, based on averages it showed that over 85% of the services the MSS office provided were at least satisfying to the students. On the other hand, there were lower averages consistent with student responses in regards to how often they used the services provided in the MSS office. This means that the MSS office might be going in the direction in the services they provide to students. However, the most troubling concern based on a quick glance of the survey results are that many students for whatever reasons are not using the services provided.

Results of the Study

More specifically, when the quantitative data was analyzed it showed which sub-services was the highest to lowest in usage and also the highest to lowest in satisfaction. As mentioned in chapter 3, the data was analyzed in Microsoft Excel using the average function. The following bullets shown below are the results of the sub-services provided by the MSS office from highest to lowest in usage and satisfaction:
Financial Assistance

Highest scored usage: AOP & LUMRG

Lowest scored usage: Seeking Employment

Highest scored satisfaction: AOP & LUMRG

Lowest scored Satisfaction: Foundation Scholarship Assistance
Academic Advisement

Highest scored usage: Other Academic Advisement

Lowest scored usage: Major/Minor Changes

Highest scored satisfaction: Other Academic Advisement

Lowest scored Satisfaction: Major/Minor Changes
Referral Resources

Highest scored usage: Assist w/ resources on-campus

Lowest scored usage: Assist w/ resources off-campus

Highest scored satisfaction: Assist w/ resources on-campus

Lowest scored Satisfaction: Assist w/ resources off-campus
Leadership Opportunities

Highest scored usage: Student Organization Involvement

Lowest scored usage: Pre-College Counselor

Highest scored satisfaction: AMSLC

Lowest scored Satisfaction: Student Leadership Conference/Symposium
Networking With Other Multicultural Students

Highest scored usage: Welcome Back Picnic

Lowest scored usage: Be a Fan of Diversity

Highest scored satisfaction: Welcome Back Picnic

Lowest scored Satisfaction: Recognition Banquet
Learn About Diversity

Highest scored usage: Campus Events

Lowest scored usage: Diversity Journals

Highest scored satisfaction: Campus Events

Lowest scored Satisfaction: Online Diversity Resources
Personal Support

Highest scored usage: Campus Related Concerns

Lowest scored usage: Family Concerns

Highest scored satisfaction: Family Concerns

Lowest scored Satisfaction: Other Personal Related Concerns
Relax and Learn

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Usage</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>4.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>4.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Highest scored usage: Friendly Environment

Lowest scored usage: Comfortable Environment

Highest scored satisfaction: Friendly Environment

Lowest scored Satisfaction: Comfortable Environment
Other Services

The "Other services" Data

The top three services students would like to see produced by the MSS office: "Online Newsletter", "Service Learning", and a "Blog" in their respective rankings: 48.28%, 39.08%, and 37.93%.

The researcher went on to analyze the data by grouping all averages of sub-services and performing an average analysis of that group. This gave the researcher an understanding of which major service was lacking in usage and satisfaction by students. Table 1.4 demonstrates the results of this analysis.
Table 1.4 Comprehensive Averages of the MSS Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Average of Averages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Financial Assistance</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Academic Advisement</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Referral Resources</td>
<td>2.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Leadership Opportunities</td>
<td>2.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Networking With Other Multicultural Students</td>
<td>3.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Learn About Diversity</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Personal Support</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Relax and Learn</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- "Academic Success" results show the lowest in usage (2.11);
- "Relax and learn" results show the highest in usage (3.59);
- "Learning about Diversity" results show the lowest in satisfaction (3.92);
- "Networking with Other Multicultural Students" results show the highest in satisfaction (4.29).

The information from the Average of Averages Table 1.4 above communicate which of the following major services were overall lowest to highest in usage and satisfaction. Students are not using the "Academic Advisement" service as much as all the other services. It represented the lowest groups of services provided by the MSS office. The rating (2.11) represents that student’s only "Seldom" use the "Academic Advisement" services. The "Relax and Learn" was the highest used group of services rated by students who uses the MSS office. Based on the survey, the rating of (3.59)
classified that students were between “Sometime” and “Often” in the “Relax and Learn” services. Students perceptions were slightly under the “Satisfied” rating based on the survey results of “Learning about Diversity” services the MSS office provides. Although this service was the lowest of all services in terms of satisfaction, the students were fairly satisfied with what the services offered. This had a rating of (3.92). On the other end of the spectrum, students were fairly satisfied with the “Networking with Other Multicultural Students” services. This had a rating of (4.29), which expresses that students were slightly more than satisfied with services provided in this area.

The data was then put into percentages of “Total Usage in percentage”. In Table 1.5, the highest percentage of used services communicated by students was in “Relax and Learn” section. There were 87 percent of the students that stated they used the office to “Relax and Learn”. Consistent on the high end of the spectrum, the “AOP & LUMRG” rated 83.9 percent and the “Welcome Back Picnic” was rated 79.3 percent of people who used this service. The data was also place into “Total Satisfaction in Percentage”. Shown in Table 1.5, the service that was rated highest by people who took the survey was “AOP & LUMRG”. The results stated that 77 percent of people who took the survey were satisfied with this service. The service that rated second in satisfaction was the “Friendly Environment” of the MSS office. The results stated that 71.3 percent of people were satisfied with this service. Table 1.5 shows the usage and satisfaction in percentages as provided by minority students at UW-Stout.
(Table 1.5) Total Usage and Satisfaction in Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Usage and Satisfaction in Percentage</th>
<th>Total Usage in %</th>
<th>Total Satisfaction in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Never Used</td>
<td>% Used</td>
<td>% Unsatisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Financial Assistance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Total Usage in %</th>
<th>Total Satisfaction in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AOP &amp; LUMRG</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>83.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Scholarship Assistance</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>58.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Scholarship Opportunities</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>60.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Aid Advising</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>59.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAFSA Assistance</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Preparation</td>
<td>51.7%</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking Employment</td>
<td>55.2%</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Academic Advisement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Total Usage in %</th>
<th>Total Satisfaction in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registration Assistance</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major/Minor Changes</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add/Drop Changes</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Academic Advising</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Success Planning</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
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</table>

3. Referral Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Total Usage in %</th>
<th>Total Satisfaction in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assist w/ resources on-campus</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist w/ resources off-campus</td>
<td>51.7%</td>
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</tr>
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4. Leadership Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Total Usage in %</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALC</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Org Inv</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-College Counselor</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stu Leadership Conf/Symposium</td>
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5. Networking W/ Other Multicultural Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Total Usage in %</th>
<th>Total Satisfaction in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome Back Picnic</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>79.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition Banquet</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Student Organization Events</td>
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<td>72.4%</td>
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<td>Be a Fan of Diversity</td>
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6. Learn About Diversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Total Usage in %</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Diversity Resources</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
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<td>Diversity Journals</td>
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7. Personal Support

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<td>13.8%</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
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<td>6.9%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
</tr>
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8. Relax and Learn

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>9.2%</th>
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<th>10.3%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>65.5%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>87.4%</td>
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<td>18.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quiet Environment</td>
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<td>71.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friendly Environment</td>
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<td>87.4%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>65.5%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
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</table>

The qualitative data was then addressed. These were the open-ended questions of the survey. The questions pertained to gaining information from students that would assist the MSS office in meeting their needs as minority students on campus. The following are questions asked on the needs assessment survey followed by popular themes recorded by students.

What type of services would you like to see the MSS Office produce in order to meet the needs of UW-Stout Multicultural Students on campus?

- Offering academic support services
- Offering targeted programs (Reading Group, Honors Group, ELITES, etc.)
- Offering Social Events/Entertainment
- Having working collaboration between the four organizations

What type of events, programs or activities would you like to see the MSS Office produce in order to meet the needs of UW-Stout Multicultural Students on campus?
• Social, cultural, and diversity events (sports, games, potluck, picnic, ethnic heritage month, etc.)
• Activity events (upperclassmen, pizza night, roller skating/bowling night, etc.)
• Campus Awareness Programs (Stout cultural fair, cultural day, etc.)

What would be your reason(s) for not utilizing services on campus that already exist? For example, the Math lab, and Tutoring Program

• Lack of knowledge of services offered/location
• Do not have time or schedule conflicts with services hours
• Felt uncomfortable of the environment/unwelcoming
• Not need of services

The following question was asked to students pertaining to the MSS office on-campus. The researcher asked this question to identify what it is that would make the MSS office a more pleasurable environment for students to visit.

In your opinion, what would make the MSS Office a more pleasurable place to study, hangout, etc.?

• More spaces (bigger room, more seating, more quiet study area, etc.)
• More and stable staff to work with students
• Needs more advertising of MSS’s programs and services
• Office atmosphere (warm color of room, friendly faces, etc).
• Computer labs and equipment upgrades
• MSS office to be a more centralized location on campus

The researcher assumes that minority students at UW-Stout will become more successful if they can shape the MSS office into a place where they can visit with other
minority students. This will then provide students with an environment that they perceive to be comfortable, friendly, safe, and quite. Consequently, this will allow minority students to become more competent in the academics at UW-Stout. This has been supported by chapter 2 literature of minority students at higher education institutions that are predominately white. It states that minority students are more successful in their academics when they are in a comfortable environment and around other minority students.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the findings of the study. These findings were determined by analyzing the survey responses and manipulating the data into charts. In general, the quantitative data showed that students rated the services provided in the MSS office fairly low in usage but considerably high in satisfaction. In the qualitative data, it was a common trend for students to mention they needed more cultural activities throughout the school year for minorities to have more time networking together.

The data shows that the MSS office provides an array of useful services for minority students. The original goal of this study was to identify services, activities, events and programs that minority students needed to be successful while attending UW-Stout. Furthermore, this study was originally intended to make additions, subtractions, and improvements to the productions already provided in the office. However, what was learned by the data indicated that there was no clear division of services that students used more than others. There was absolutely no way to completely remove certain productions made in the MSS office in regards to services, programs, activities, and events.
More specifically, students have a wide range of services to choose from within the MSS office. Minority students in this study emphasized that they were more comfortable using services provided in the MSS office rather than somewhere on campus. This was shown by the fairly high satisfaction ratings of all the services.
Chapter Five
Discussion

Introduction

This chapter has been divided into three main sections. The first section of this chapter provides a summary of the study. The second discusses limitations to the researcher found in the study. Third, this chapter raises conclusions to the study. In the final section of the study, the researcher makes recommendations to the MSS office.

The purpose of this study was to assess the needs of the Multicultural Student Services Office at the University of Wisconsin Stout. The major goal of this study was to gain an understanding of essential services, activities, programs and events are needed in the MSS office that would aid minority students in increasing their chances of being retained and then graduating from UW-Stout.

Literature was given based on the present state of minority student’s retention and graduation rates in higher education. The literature also specifically discussed why it was important to assess the needs of minority students at UW-Stout. Finally, the literature detailed a variety of needs assessment models used for identifying needs within an organization.

The researcher chose to gather data using the survey method due to the ease in administering to the larger population of minority students at UW-Stout who uses the MSS office. The survey method provided anonymity for students. The survey technique provided the researcher with information such as perceptions and opinions about services provided through the MSS office.
Limitations

Although every effort was exercised to control limitations, this research study was conducted within the confines of fixed parameters. The most identifiable limitation to this study was found within the content used in the survey instrument. There were several students who did not understand how to rate certain services listed on the survey due to their lack of experience with MSS office or poorly written services provided by the researcher. Many students had a hard time understanding the concept of not rating the satisfaction of each service if they haven’t used the service. This error was made multiple times by students as seen by the researcher. Students would provide a rating of (1) in the “Usage” column, which meant they’ve never used the service and then provide some rating of satisfaction. When the students gave a rating of (1) for usage, the response to satisfaction should have therefore been “N”, which told the researcher that satisfaction could not be rated because it was non-applicable. Time constraint was a limitation to this study. The second semester of the academic year presented many breaks away from school for all students. The researcher was forced to work along with the academic school year timeline and that wasn’t the best for conducting a research study.

Conclusions

The research shows that many students are satisfied with the services provided by the MSS office. However, the research indicates that usage of these services is on the low end based on the results of students using the MSS office. Evidence of this is shown in the “Campus Events” section of the survey. This service was a major concern to students using the MSS office. Students rated the service (2.87) out of a total rating of (5) in usage. This states that many students only go to campus events sometimes. However,
students are satisfied with the service provided within the “Campus Events” shown by the rating provided from students of (4.09) out of (5). This is prevalent in many services provided by the MSS office as perceived by students who took the survey.

More specifically, the research concludes that there are stronger usage and satisfaction ratings in particular area than others. One of the major outliers on the low end of usage was found in the “Academic Advising” section of services. This section included registration assistance, major/minor changes, add/drop changes, other academic advising and academic success planning. Students are using these services on a seldom basis. However, based on the survey they are very satisfied. Another current major service that showed a lack in usage and strong satisfaction was “Learning about Diversity” section. This section included, “MSS Welcome Back Picnic”, “MSS Spring Banquet”, “Student Organization Events”, and “Be a Fan of Diversity”. Again, they results showed low usage and high satisfaction for many of those services. It seems that the MSS office needs to find ways to get students to use the services provided to them.

One of the objectives of this study was to gather information about minority students that reflect the services needed to become successful while attending UW-Stout. Based on trends in the qualitative data, the researcher found that students are in need of the following services, activities, programs and events:

- Social, cultural, and diversity events (potluck, picnic, ethnic heritage month, etc.)
- Activity events (upperclassmen, pizza night, roller skating/bowling night, etc.)
- Campus Awareness Programs (Stout cultural fair, cultural day, etc.)
- Offering academic support services
- Offering targeted programs (Reading Group, Honors Group, ELITES, etc.)
• Having working collaboration between the four organizations

*Recommendation for Improvements*

The overall response from students was that they need to be surrounded by more minority students in social events. The following is what a few UW-Stout students stated in the qualitative section of the survey:

• "More of the interactive, yet educational programs for minority students"
• "More diversity events held on campus"
• "Social gatherings that allow minority students to interact with each other"

This summarized the general trend in perception of minority students. This was supported in chapter 2 review of the literature. Minority students in higher education need to be surrounded by other minority students to enable a high level of success of retention and graduation. Many minority students supported the efforts of the MSS office. However, with any organization there are continuing needs evolving and there are needs for improvement.

General issues identified for the MSS office and surrounding campus departments based on the results of the MSS student survey indicate two very distinct areas. The first area concerns the Multicultural Student Services office fulfilling the needs of minority students directly by:

• Provide more advertising through producing an MSS newsletter every month or online blog to provide consistent up-to-date information about events and/or services to minority students.
• Continue to support the monetary effort of students – AOP and LUMRG
• Place more emphasis on student leadership programs such as AMSLC and other community based program that exists to provide leadership development of minority students.

• More stability in the MSS office staff was highly identified as a problem with minority students who’ve used the MSS office in the past.

• Develop an orientation system for incoming minority students. Help them gain a sense of belonging at UW-Stout. Allow them to adapt to the culture of predominantly white campus while in the presence of other minority students.

• Second, students indicated very clearly that the MSS office should not be solely viewed as an office responsible for the diversity on campus. Diversity must be developed by each campus unit. When the MSS has to bear the sole responsibility for diversity, it takes away time and energy the staff can direct to helping minority students become retained and graduate. Some areas of campus responsibility include:
  
  • Increase diversity within the university staff/faculty. Students are inspired by teachers who can act as a role model, relate to and tie in their culture heritage. Furthermore, these teachers can help by acknowledging cultural barriers.

  • The MSS office should consider providing more culturally diverse activities for minority students. These events should have a variety/combination of education and entertainment – such as workshops, presentations, more cultural events.

  • Develop effective strategies for recruiting a larger population of minority students.
• Culturally educate the campus population about diversity. This includes the minority group themselves. It is important to understand backgrounds of ethnicity.
• MSS office and other campus departments should collaborate more to help minority students gain comfort in using many on & off campus resources. Comfort was a major concern with minority students based on the results of this survey. Therefore educating other departments on how to relate more with minorities is vital.

Overall recommendations based on each survey characteristic would include:

Financial Aid Recommendations:
• Create workshops to assists students and families with completing FAFSA forms and documentation required.
• Maintain control and awarding AOP & LUMRG grants. If possible, expand on this resource for students by creating workshops to ensure eligibility.
• Provide workshops on Foundation Scholarship. Including due dates, recommendations, process for application and GPA reminders of due dates through email or newsletter and letters of recommendations.
• Connect students with financial aid office to make it priority to provide students with ways to seek employment.
• Develop a checklist for all students with emphasis on new and transfer that orientate students on processes in regards to financial assistance.

Academic Advising Recommendations:
• MSS advisor with Advisors and program directors should reach out to students and discuss program specifics and career interest.
• Enhancing the features of Academic Success Planning to include a measurable outcome for grade improvement, retention efforts this should include success strategies for minority students in the MSS office.

• Develop a checklist for all students with emphasis on new and transfer that orientate students on processes in regards to advising.

• Hold in service for students and meet on a regular basis.

Referral Recommendations:

• Implement and put in place a mechanism to identify the specific needs for minority students.

• Provide students with a resource directory that lists on campus resources: Employment, medical, financial, housing, extracurricular, transportation etc.

• Create a one-stop information bureau-center in the MSS for minority students and their families.

• Collaborate with other resources on/off campus to help notify students of their services provided.

Leadership Recommendations:

• As the Pre-College Program expands, the MSS office should place students in leadership positions.

• Recruit and promote student participation in attending and presenting at AMSLC.

• Provide students with a consistent leadership opportunity such as campus presentations, developing minority mentors, minority tutors. Include project planning, (picnic, banquet, preview days).
Networking Recommendations:

- Continue and enhance the networking opportunities of minority students to support recruitment, retention and graduation efforts.
- Expand and establish the present Networking opportunities provided in the MSS office.
- Collaborate with Foundation to develop and align with the MAIN

Learning About Diversity Recommendations:

- Separate the MSS office and minority student affairs from diversity on campus
- Collaborate with the campus community to ensure that race and ethnicity are included
- Provide Online Diversity Resources and Diversity Journals that are current with the trends of race and ethnicity.
- Have a full staff so minority students can get help when they need it

Personal Support Recommendations:

- Make the MSS an advocate for minority students and their issues
- Have people who understand the minority students’ needs available in the office
- Continue the open door policy with students in the MSS office.
- Refer students to on campus resources as needed.
- Show some leadership in changing the campus climate

Relax and Learn Recommendations:

- Continue the established environment within the MSS office. This is the safe space for minority students
- Based on averages of the student survey, there were a great appreciation in regards to relax and learn in a safe environment.

- Have tutors, mentors, helpers available for minority students.

Second, students indicated very clearly that the MSS office should not be solely viewed as an office responsible for the diversity on campus. Diversity must be developed by each campus unit. When the MSS office has to bear the sole responsibility for diversity, it takes away time and energy the staff can direct to helping minority students become retained and graduate. Some areas of campus responsibility include:

- Increase diversity within the university staff/faculty. Students are inspired by teachers who can act as a role model, relate to and tie in their culture heritage. Furthermore, these teachers can help by acknowledging cultural barriers.

- The MSS office should consider providing more culturally diverse activities for minority students. These events should have a variety/combination of education and entertainment – such as workshops, presentations, more cultural events.

- Develop effective strategies for recruiting a larger population of minority students.

- Culturally educate the campus population about diversity. This includes the minority group themselves. It is important to understand backgrounds of ethnicity.

- MSS office and other campus departments should collaborate more to help minority students gain comfort in using many on & off campus resources. Comfort was a major concern with minority students based on the results of this survey. Therefore educating other departments on how to relate more with minorities is vital.
Finally, suggested areas to increase and continue services for minority students would include some or all of the following:

1. The MSS office should consider providing more culturally diverse activities for minority students. These events should have a variety/combination of education and entertainment – such as workshops, presentations, more cultural events.

2. Provide more advertising through producing an MSS newsletter every month or online blog to provide consistent up-to-date information about events and/or services to minority students.

3. Continue to support the monetary effort of students – AOP and LUMRG

4. Place more emphasis on student leadership programs such as AMSLC and other community based program that exists to provide leadership development of minority students.

5. Develop effective strategies for recruiting a larger population of minority students.

6. Culturally educate the campus population about diversity. This includes the minority group themselves. It is important to understand backgrounds of ethnicity.

7. MSS office and other campus departments should collaborate more to help minority students gain comfort in using many on & off campus resources. Comfort was a major concern with minority students based on the results of this survey. Therefore educating other departments on how to relate more with minorities is vital.

8. More stability in the MSS office staff was highly identified as a problem with minority students who’ve used the MSS office in the past.
9. Increase diversity within the university staff/faculty. Students are inspired by teachers who can act as a role model, relate to and tie in their culture heritage. Furthermore, these teachers can help by acknowledging cultural barriers.

10. Develop an orientation system for incoming minority students. Help them gain a sense of belonging at UW-Stout. Allow them to adapt to the culture of predominantly white camp while in the presence of other minority students.

Summary

As the four major historically underrepresented minority groups continue to make greater strides advancing into higher education they will have to remain persistent as systems of higher education learn to adapt to the cultural influx. Until retention and graduation rates improve, there will be many barriers present for minority students as they attempt to adapt. The MSS office at UW-Stout employs positive action by trying to address the needs of minority students. Understanding the factors that affect student retention rates which includes student services as a unit and acceptance of responsibility by the university as a whole are the next steps in developing successful minority student retention and success at any institution. This is neither a short-term goal nor simple process, however it is a necessity that institutions of higher learning become accepting of the cultural differences and specific tools historically underrepresented minority students need to be successful. It is a long-term commitment and entire institution buy-in to increase retention and graduation rates of minority students at a university. Being prepared to change the campus climate and providing the services to be responsive to student needs are the first step in closing the achievement gaps which exist in our higher educational systems.
References


Multicultural Student Services (MSS) Survey

This survey has been developed to assess the needs of minority students at UW-Stout. Complete the survey by selecting your answers based on a five-point rating scale. Usage: “1-Never” to “5-Very Often”. Satisfaction: “1-Very Dissatisfied” to “5-Very Satisfied”. Circle “N” if you cannot rate satisfaction because you've never used the service before. Please complete the survey by Friday, March 28th.

**How satisfied and often do you use the services in the MSS?**

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<th>Service</th>
<th>Usage 1-5</th>
<th>Satisfaction 1-5</th>
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<td>AOP &amp; LUMRG Foundation Scholarship Assistance</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Academic Success Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Referral Resources</td>
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<td>4. Leadership Opportunities</td>
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<td>Recognition Banquet</td>
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<td>Student Organization Events</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be a Fan of Diversity</td>
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6. Learn About Diversity

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7. Personal Support

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8. Relax and Learn

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9. What type of services would you like to see the MSS Office produce in order to meet the needs of UW-Stout multicultural students on campus?

- Men's Group
- Reading Group
- Student of Color Honors Group
- ELL Lab
- Advisory Council
- MSS Blog
- Later Office Hours
- MSS Online Newsletter
- Service Learning

Other:

10. What type of events, programs or activities would you like to see the MSS Office produce in order to meet the needs of UW-Stout multicultural students on campus?
11. What would be your reason(s) for not utilizing services on campus that already exist? (For example the math lab, writing lab, and tutoring program).

12. In your opinion, what would make the MSS Office a more pleasurable place to study, hangout, etc.?