

Transitioning and rebranding the School of Nursing's student services practices to a more traditional student affairs based office

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Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically impacted the lives and performance of college students across the country. We have seen a high increase in mental fatigue and the need to support these students in a number of areas, which has led many higher education administrators to reevaluate their level of preparedness to support students' mental health and well-being. This is especially true for student affairs offices that are embedded within academic units, such as the School of Nursing. The School of Nursing has felt the impact of the pandemic as it has effected both student progression, and resulted in a decrease in enrollment. We have seen a record number of undergraduate students not successfully passing their nursing courses, and many graduate students have been forced to stop-out of their program due to the increasing demands of working in health care during the pandemic. This has inevitably lead administration to examine how we are approaching our students, and to transition our work from a services model to a more affairs-based approach.

Primary Stakeholders:

- School of Nursing Graduate Students
- School of Nursing Undergraduate Students
- School of Nursing Administration
- School of Nursing Faculty
- University/Campus-wide Partners
- Prospective/Future Nursing Students
- Graduate Interns

Key Steps/Activities:

First, a Task Force was created consisting of the Assistant Dean for Student Engagement and Planning, the Associate Director for Student Engagement, and the Department Administrator for Administration and Student Affairs. The task force then identified an obtainable timeline and necessary steps to implement the transition. These include a divisional retreat to be held during July 2022 to discuss new goals, develop a new mission/vision for the division, and create new branding and marketing materials for the new Division of Student Affairs.

Effectiveness Measures:

During the planned divisional retreat all departments under the new Division of Student Affairs will be expected to create goals that are aligned with the division's new mission and vision, and to implement these goals during the Fall 2022 semester. Benchmarks will be set for the first semester of the new division, and we will conduct a strategic planning meeting in December 2022 to evaluate each department's goals and operation under the new division. We will then utilize the information gathered at this meeting to make any necessary changes and improvements for Spring 2023.

Communication/Engagement:

Internally, we will be conducting a divisional retreat in July 2022 to meet with all staff under the current Division of Student Services. At this time we will discuss the purpose and ideas behind the transition to a Division of Student Affairs. We will seek input from all staff members in the creation of a new mission/vision for the division, new goals and objectives, and ideas for new branding and marketing. These changes will then be implemented onto our website, along with email and social media campaigns targeting all stakeholders to inform them of the new transition and its benefits.

Proposed Timeline:

The objective is to have the new Division of Student Affairs operational and visible by the start of the Fall 2022 semester. By July we will have the new mission, vision, goals, and objectives of the division finalized, along with new branding designed and approved.

Current Status/Future Directions:

Currently, the Task Force is planning the divisional retreat for July 2022 for all staff members within the current Division of Student Services. The Task Force has identified the date and location for the retreat, and has already submitted new branding concepts to the university trademarking office for approval. The Task Force has also researched other nursing schools' student affairs/services divisions to competitively position the Rutgers School of Nursing among other top nursing programs in the country.