

# STUDENT RETENTION AND SUCCESS

## REVIEW ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### FINAL REPORT

JULY 2016

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# Background

This document outlines the background, purpose, description of services and process for the Student Retention and Success, Review Assessment and Recommendations, for Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario. The Consultant, Mr. David McMurray agreed to provide professional services at the request of Dr. Leo Groarke, President and Vice Chancellor. Trent University aspires to be Canada's outstanding small university, known for its commitment to liberal undergraduate education and the centrality of the student. Foremost to the Trent vision is academic excellence in an intimate and supportive campus community setting. This includes small interactive classes led by outstanding faculty where student-faculty interaction is intensive and is complemented by the presence of comprehensive programming, advising, student services and support to enhance student success. Some of the characteristics that make Trent special are a strong commitment to teaching, research, and to students in their pursuit of educational, career and life goals.

Commitment to high quality programs and services to support student success is a necessary institutional priority as is a holistic learning and development focus of higher education. The purposeful delivery of quality services, personal support, and meaningful developmental programs is essential. President and Vice Chancellor, Dr. Leo Groarke has articulated a strong commitment to enhance strategic enrolment management (SEM) complemented by intentionally focused student retention strategies and actions.

## PURPOSE

The Student Retention and Success, Review Assessment and Recommendations aim is to review and assess current student success related efforts and recommend action oriented student retention efforts to ensure an exceptional, successfully completed, student learning experience. Recommendations that demonstratively improve student retention from matriculation to graduation are highlighted.

Student Services Assessment – January, 2016

# DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW ASSESSMENT & RECOMMENDATIONS

Joining the Consultant for the on-site review exercise was Dr. Gillian Balfour, a faculty member from the department of Sociology, and Tara Harrington, University Secretariat. Both were appointed by Dr. Leo Groarke. In response to the aim of the exercise, the Consultant provides this customized Final Report documenting the review assessment process, findings, with recommendations to enhance student retention and success.

## CONFIRMATION OF REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The Consultant communicated with Dr. Leo Groarke in late summer and early fall of 2015 to confirm the purpose of the review assessment and activities, and to fully understand the background, current conditions, concerns, and expectations of the review.

## INVESTIGATIVE PROCESS

Multiple materials were examined by the Consultant as part of the review. This included:

- a. Review of all related documents, reports, plans, policies, communications provided and identified by Dr. Leo Groarke or designate, and/or requested by the Consultant including but not limited to: SEM recommendations/reports; academic policies that impact student retention (i.e. course pre-requisites/repetitions, grading options, probation, required to withdraw, exit interviews etc.); student success support and/or programming descriptions (i.e. supplemental instruction, study skills, early/intrusive advising/intervention, writing/math assistance, accessible learning, mental health, safety, behavioural intervention; financial assistance; career development and services etc.); student success/retention related data; recent NSSE results; all serving to identify the characteristics of the culture of student success and current outcomes.
- b. Review of organizational design and resources associated with student retention and success units, related services, support and programs.
- c. Review of current information on the demographic profile of Trent University students. Student engagement in co-curricular activities were a key aspect of this.
- d. Review of assessment data, information, key performance indicators, quantitative survey results and qualitative feedback documenting student satisfaction, experience, and engagement.

- e. Interview of selected stakeholders (Appendix A) identified by Dr. Leo Groarke, and/or requested by the Consultant to explore opinions with respect to services, support, programs, and learning and development opportunities available for students. Integrated and engaged academic and student development initiatives were pursued and highlighted in these investigative interviews. Interview questions (Appendix B) were structured and circulated to interviewees in advance. Interviews and discussions with students played a key role in this aspect of the review.

## **ANALYSIS, RESULTS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Student Retention and Success, Review Assessment and Recommendations, Final Report articulates the findings of the review, results of the interviews, and presents action oriented recommendations to enhance student retention and success.

## **TIMELINE**

The review of documentation began in December 2015. The two day on-site meetings/interviews occurred on February 29 and March 1, 2016. A subsequent site visit at the Trent Durham campus, and a review progress debriefing with Dr. Groarke, Dr. Balfour, and Tara Harrington on the Trent Peterborough campus took place on April 8, 2016. The Final Report is to be delivered to Dr. Leo Groarke no later than July 31, 2016.

## CONSULTANT BRIEF BIO

**David McMurray** is Vice President, Student Affairs at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, ON. An accomplished and recognized student affairs professional, David has successfully implemented strategies in a wide variety of teaching and learning, student affairs, services and program venues achieving high standards of excellence, innovation and recognition. David's expertise is focused on a holistic higher education approach of integrated and engaged learning, a distinctive educational identity linking academic disciplines, high impact teaching practices, and quality student learning experiences in a common mission stretching beyond the classroom in a way that supports an exceptional student experience. Integrated and engaged learning promotes high impact curricular and co-curricular practices, deep learning and personal development of the whole student resulting in meaningful student learning, personal development, enriched student engagement, and student success.

David has served in the country's most senior capacities in the field of student affairs and services, particularly as president of the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS); president of the Student Affairs and Services Association (SASA); and Chair of the Ontario Committee on Student Affairs (OCSA). He is the recipient of the CACUSS Award of Honour, CACUSS Award for Service, SASA Award of Recognition and the SASA Award for Service.

Nominated by Universities Canada, David received Her Majesty the Queen's golden jubilee medal for excellence in higher education, administration and student services. He has been engaged as an external review consultant by multiple Canadian colleges and universities.

# INTRODUCTION

## INSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY AND THE QUALITY OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

### **Institutional Mission**

Correctly positioned and passionately communicated, an institutional mission and strategic plan should cascade throughout the institution linking all academic disciplines, support services, and functions, committing to priorities and guiding activities in the classroom, laboratories, residences, library, student life centre, and community at large. Most effectively used it becomes a Magna Carta equivalent for the university and community, its relevance and direction becoming incrementally important the more it is used and referenced.

An important empirical finding is that the individual, distinctive mission of a campus, directly impacts policies & practices related to student engagement and success (Kezar & Kinzie, 2006). At Documenting Effective Education Practices (DEEP) schools the mission is clear and alive. Faculty, administration, staff and students describe their mission in similar ways and use it to explain their behaviour and talk about what the institution is, the direction it is heading and how their work contributes to its goals (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005).

DEEP schools are those drawn from a study of 20 diverse four year colleges and universities that have higher-than-predicted graduation rates and have, through the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), demonstrated that they have effective practices for fostering success among students with differing abilities and aspirations.

### **Integrated Student Learning**

Intentionally integrating the formal and informal context of the curriculum and the student's cocurricular endeavours achieves a more fully integrated approach to higher education. This proactive approach to students' academic and personal needs fosters student learning, engagement and success. High impact teaching pedagogies that consider student development and how learning occurs result in significantly higher levels of faculty and student engagement, academic achievement and ultimately student success. The delivery of an educational experience that contributes to students' intellectual capacity, personal fulfillment and developmental learning may be Trent University's most distinctive opportunity espoused by its mission, and enacted by its delivery.

Pursuing institutional goals (academic excellence, scholarship, teaching and learning, the delivery of high quality services) in a way that integrates student development to promote holistic transformation emphasizes a student's entire learning experience. Multiple synergies in learning

outcomes occur. Numerous operational efficiencies can result from the alignment of complementary service units, eliminating duplication and/or separation. By breaking down silos and moving beyond the basic delivery of services Trent can achieve a more integrated learning and personal development ideology, positioning itself well in the post-secondary education sector.

The cognitive acquisition of knowledge and the development of the person are very often viewed as separate entities. But educational quality can be served by a reconsidered view of integrated learning. An integrated approach, a “whole curriculum” firmly secured in Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM) could start with: a promise to prospective students; affirmed and explained at acceptance confirmation and summer transition; launched at Orientation with a complementary focus on academic preparation and social integration; then continued through the first year experience as students learn how to learn, develop personal skills and competencies, and build emotional confidence and meaningful relationships.

The 1st Year Experience is critical to set the stage for a student’s transition through their undergraduate years. Beyond the first year, students’ ways of knowing become more independent as they gain knowledge and experience to the point where they think more as scholars and as globally informed citizens.

Learning occurs at any time, in places both in and beyond the classroom. Making the most of acquired knowledge through practice and reflection prepares students not only for occupational application, but more importantly for active citizenship. This can be accomplished with pedagogy that involves active learning techniques, problem-based learning, case analysis, seminars and tutorials combined with co-operative work-integrated learning, community service learning, international exchange, residential learning communities, writing intensive courses, self-study and capstone projects, internships, undergraduate research projects, and student leadership development opportunities.

### **Student Engagement**

Engagement in the context of education refers to the time, energy and resources students devote to activities which enhance their learning (Stefani, 2008). It is broadly defined as active learning and investing in one's personal development, and it brings opportunity to the student experience that fosters commitment, pride, spirit and long term loyalty and is entirely consistent with the tenets of self-directed learning.

Numerous institutional factors influence the ability of students to engage with their institution in a manner which is meaningful to them. The social environment, culture, accessibility of faculty, staff and programs, and carefully designed curricula may all influence a student's level of

engagement. It is critical for academics, researchers and staff to understand what factors are influential on their campus and to purposefully influence those factors which will support pedagogy which encourages engagement.

For many institutions, increasing the level of student engagement represents a proactive strategy to encourage student persistence and improve graduation rates. Engaged students have shown to achieve their academic goals, graduate at higher levels of proficiency, and become active and supportive alumni.

### **The University and Its Colleges**

In building a more integrated learning and personal development ideology, Trent must consider the relationship between its comprehensive institutional identity and the independence of the Colleges. Debate over their often conflicting roles continues. The Consultant suggests that Trent could maximize the quality of the education it offers and its reputation by recognizing the Colleges for their distinct and explicit identities at the same time that it harmonizes and unites them as one. Continued conflict between the two identities will prolong the weaknesses of not forging them together.

### **Student Success**

Trent University was founded on the ideal of interactive learning that is personal, purposeful, and transformative. That is a distinctive higher education holistic learning and development positioning statement and ultimate defining identity of the institution itself and what it promises to students. The question to ask in this review is: Is it being delivered in meaningful ways that promote student success?

In advance of on-site interviews, an interview question-prompt guideline was circulated to all interviewees. These question-prompts were assembled in key themes to guide an institutional “Student Success” action plan. The themes included: Institutional; Strategic Enrolment Management; Teaching and Learning; Student Engagement and Support; Career Development and Services; and Research and Assessment.

The on-site interview discussions were characterized by great pride in the institution and a sense of renewal with news of significant growth in student applications, and for the first time in many years the announcement that there would be no budget reductions in 2016-17.

# FINDINGS, EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES, and RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite these assurances, there was uncertainty, concern, and/or a complete shortage of evidence based information as to why students leave Trent without completing their degrees. Retention focused programs and services aimed at distinctive student populations have been introduced with some preliminary success. But a collective culture and commitment to “Student Success” and the resources needed to achieve and sustain an exceptional student experience at Trent appears to be less than it could be.

Multiple gaps and shortcomings were raised in the interviews. Opportunities that could support student persistence emerged from the discussions. Some comments invite further inquiry and create the potential for other opportunities. This qualitative feedback, in company with known best student retention practices can point the way toward a new culture of “Student Success” at Trent.

## **INSTITUTIONAL**

### **Retention and Attrition at Trent**

The Arthur Stephen Recruitment Review clarified the strategic and tactical approach that best suits Trent in its effort to be successful in recruiting and admitting students. The recommendations of that Review have been implemented and Trent has fared very well over the last several years, significantly increasing the number of student applications to the institution, particularly first choice applications. Stephen’s recommendation that the university integrate marketing and communications with student recruitment and admissions has successfully improved confidence in Trent’s approach to recruitment and admissions. Most notably, the university has enjoyed the highest overall percentage increase in student applications in the province for 2016-17.

Notwithstanding this success, as the Stephen Recruitment Review pointed out, retention has been a major factor inhibiting total enrolment growth at Trent. The university’s attrition rates over the last ten years are among the highest in the province. First to second year attrition is close to twenty percent with a cumulative impact that has seriously affected the university’s financial resources. Beyond 1st year, student attrition from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> year is also a major concern.

While this situation is well recognized within the Trent community, there is no consensus on the best way to ensure that students’ progress successfully to graduation. Part of the problem stems

from an overall lack of understanding as to why many students leave Trent after the first year, and in the years before they graduate with an undergraduate degree. Interviewees consistently said they did not know why Trent students leave before graduating. Anecdotal reasons given included: the campus is too remote; financial challenges; lack of housing; mental health issues; not the right personal fit; academic program choice; and difficulty understanding and navigating course/program regulations and requirements. But there was no actual data available to confirm any of these reasons for leaving.

### **Aiming for Student Success**

Whatever the reasons for Trent's attrition rates, the university could enhance the continued progression and graduation results of students by moving from a responsive "Retention" oriented approach, to a higher level campus wide and comprehensive definition and strategic plan for "Student Success." Defining "Student Success" and communicating it, is an important part of such a plan, for this can establish a clear understanding of what success is and how it can best be achieved. Components of this definition that complement a holistic approach to higher education might include things like: knowledge acquisition and academic achievement; a sense of self-responsibility, self-reliance, perseverance; critical and reflective thinking; social development; personal values and beliefs; health and wellness, and community engagement. Making "Student Success" everyone's job -- administration, faculty, staff, students, and alumni -- with an institutional identity that is enacted and not merely espoused, would build a comprehensive institutional commitment that would have assigned goals and objectives carefully planned and executed to support students from start to finish, in and beyond the classroom.

With Trent's newly designed Responsibility Centred Management budget model, the realization of the importance of student persistence to graduation will emerge immediately on the balance sheet, exemplifying the need to make "Student Success" everyone's job, not a remedial after thought.

In view of fiscal issues, institutional governance has been primarily focused on fiscal responsibility. In the future, more time on strategic planning and decision making, reputation, and identity matters would be welcome. Knowing and understanding the university's distinctive advantage, what differentiates Trent from other institutions in the sector and how that is being maximized to attract and retain students is a prerequisite for productive discussions of institutional stability and sustainability.

## **A Multi-Campus University**

Trent is a multi-campus university. Its Durham campus enrolment in Oshawa is approximately 950 students, mostly commuters, and is forecasted to increase to 2,500 by 2020. Durham students are more diverse than those who attend the Peterborough campus. Unique programs are being developed so that Durham does not compete with the Peterborough portfolio of programs, creating its own distinctive learning and development niche in higher education.

As in Peterborough, attrition has been recognized as a concern at Trent Durham. Recently this has been usefully reviewed in terms of student satisfaction, experience, and engagement. The result has been some student retention and success focused programs (i.e. early alert, peer advising, personal counselling, and career services) but the enrolment levels at this time make it difficult to generate the resources needed to maximize student support. As enrolment rises additional priorities include: increased academic advising, career development and services support; less penalty focused transcript notation changes; support for the creation of a general degree; and student residential accommodation that would attract more students from outside the Durham Region.

The issues created by waiting for enrolment growth to invest in “Student Success” at Trent Durham may be alleviated with the measured intervention of a multi-campus institutional approach to support and services. Recommendations to enhance student success related initiatives should always be considered through a multi-campus lens.

In addition to its two campuses, Trent is a university with Colleges. One of them – Traill – is a college with a distinct Peterborough campus. From Trent’s beginnings, a critical institutional conversation has revolved around the need to create a comprehensive Institutional identity which meshes well with the independent and distributed identity of the Colleges. Debate over these two centers of identity continues. The Consultant reaffirms that the value of recognizing the Colleges for their distinct and explicit characteristics while uniting them as one Trent. Done well, this would harmonize the collective strengths of the colleges at the same time that it maximizes the quality of a Trent education and its reputation. Continued conflict between the two will not serve the Colleges or Trent.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The importance of the student’s entire learning experience from start to finish, both in and beyond the classroom, could be more intentional by moving from the current “Retention” focused responsive approach, to a defined, more proactive and purposeful

commitment to the comprehensive notion of an institutional culture committed to “Student Success.”

2. There is a lack of evidence based data as to why many students leave Trent after the first year, and in the years following their pursuit of an undergraduate degree. A rigorous assessment strategy needs to be designed to produce evidence based data for the evaluation of “Student Success” efforts and informed decision making.
3. Critical to Trent University is the construct of the comprehensive institutional identity complemented by the distinctive characteristics of the Colleges. The notion of recognizing the Colleges for their distinct and explicit characteristics while uniting them as one Trent University should be the strategic vision that supports a culture of “Student Success” and separates Trent University as a leader in the post-secondary education sector.
4. At the Trent Durham campus in Oshawa, the resources needed to maximize “Student Success” are very limited. As enrolment rises, in addition to the support that Student Affairs professionals within the Trent University multi-campus model can provide, additional resources should be committed to:
  - a) A hybrid/cross trained model of academic advising, career development and services.
  - b) Student wellness, mental health and over-all personal well-being.
  - c) Create a first impression commitment to “Student Success” by re-locating the front door security function, and replacing it with an information services, resource and referral focused “Welcome Desk.” Student support needs beyond transactional needs would be referred by the welcome desk staff to the Student Affairs Support Centre (SASC) located immediately in the adjacent hallway, for academic advising, career development planning, career services, and personal wellness focused student needs. Students requiring more complex academic discipline advising could be referred further by the SASC staff to faculty and/or other professional advising staff located in the facility.

## **STRATEGIC ENROLMENT MANAGEMENT (SEM)**

### **SEM and Retention**

An elevated SEM leadership role and the initiation of a Retention Committee were established in response to a previous Recruitment and Admissions external review. One of the first efforts emanating from the Retention Committee, recognizing that entering grade averages from high school have a direct relationship on progression, was to design program efforts to address this

issue. They included “Rebound” – a peer to peer outreach program for 1<sup>st</sup> Generation students, and “Launch” – a two day orientation and training seminar followed by a one semester peer guide assigned to students with conditional offers below 70%. A bridging program for any students admitted with averages below 70% is being considered in the fall of 2016. These are excellent programs aimed largely at transitional students who may need additional support.

What is missing is a clearer collective vision – and a corresponding institutional approach to recruitment and admissions – that embraces a broader, enduring commitment to “Student Success.” The institutional investment in each and every student needs to be for the long term, from their first year through to graduation and to alumni for life.

Several interviewees suggested that the separation of the SEM committee and the Retention committee was problematic. The SEM committee chaired by the President and Vice Chancellor was viewed as a higher institutional effort, and the Retention committee chaired by the AVP, Student Affairs as more of a subsidiary effort geared primarily to student affairs and their efforts to support students who may traditionally need more support to be successful.

In this context it is worth noting that the current emphasis on recruitment and admission does not reflect institutional priorities so much as a step by step approach to improving SEM at Trent. With the arrival of a new President, this started with a review and restructuring of recruitment because Trent’s success attracting students was in steep decline. This was step one in an attempt to turn SEM around. Now that step one is for the most part complete, step two is the current review of retention, which aims to address the other side of SEM.

Moving forward, Trent should seize this review as an opportunity to create an institutional culture of “Student Success” by connecting recruitment, admissions, communications and retention more closely. This can be achieved by articulating a holistic learning and development campus culture for success at Trent which is supported by explicit systems and programs directed at the first year experience and by continuing programs throughout a student’s entire educational journey.

In keeping with this, SEM institutional leadership and representation should include all facets of strategic enrolment management which go beyond recruitment and admissions, embracing a comprehensive commitment to “Student Success.” The Retention Committee is currently focused on remedial and reactive efforts which are important and should continue, but more intentional/proactive student success oriented themes should be discussed, delivered, and communicated as an integrated and comprehensive SEM plan that focuses on the students’ entire journey.

These themes will flow naturally from the way in which Trent defines “Student Success” -- which could include things like knowledge acquisition and academic achievement; a sense of responsibility, self-reliance and reflection; social development; values and beliefs; personal health and wellness, and community engagement. Conversations with Student Affairs leaders highlighted themes focused on the institutional identity of Trent which is felt to be very collaborative with a strong focus on holistic education.

A key component of a move in this direction needs to be clear communications on this approach. The Retention Committee was a recommendation coming from SEM, as was the enhancement of Marketing and Communications. “My Trent” is an effort to integrate and centre all communications efforts through the web-site. The problem is students habitually do not search for information -- rather they are used to information coming to them. It will be important to communicate to them the way that success is achieved at Trent.

### **First Year Experience**

An institutionally led assessment and strategic review of the First Year Experience (FYE) has not been done at Trent, although the Teaching and Learning unit has conducted a meaningful first year student survey to ascertain issues related to their learning experience. A high level investigation of the FYE is a focus that could produce critical information related to student success and guide efforts to encourage and develop skills and competencies for success throughout the student’s tenure.

The FYE is a good place to initiate a success approach to student development. In doing so, it is important to recognize that students in various programs of choice often do not arrive knowing what they want to do and as a result may transfer to another program, another university, or college. With this in mind, improved efforts to integrate career development with recruitment and admissions can more proactively allow students to remain in selected academic programs, and/or for transfer to other Trent University programs for outcomes related to career or academic planning.

Academic advisors suggested transcript notations to recognize circumstances that relate not to academic inability, but personal situations that arise such as financial pressures, mental health, and family troubles that penalize the student record. Especially in first year, failure notations that do not take these circumstances into consideration can lead to academic standing conditions that negatively impact the student’s ability to recover and result in withdrawal.

Here the university might review how it deals with such cases and how they might be dealt in a way that doesn’t prevent First Year students from continuing when they experience these kinds

of issues. One possibility would be to allow them to declare courses “NA” (“non-accountable” and not part of a student’s grade point) in these circumstances. Possibly, these kinds of cases could be treated like appeals to petitions committees.

## **Academic Advising**

The mandate of Academic Advising at Trent is

“...an on-going partnership between advisor and advisee that is dedicated to student learning, development, and success. Through the advising experience, students develop educational plans for achieving their personal and academic goals and develop the skills and commitment to become engaged, self-directed learners and competent decision makers.”

Academic Advising at Trent is a distributed model located in the Colleges. Students admitted to a particular college are as a result assigned to a specific advising centre, although any student may see an advisor during drop in hours or if they request to do so by appointment. Students are not required to meet with an advisor unless their admission is probationary; their case is under review through petition; or they are facing suspension.

Academic advising outreach to students is delivered proactively through orientation, workshops, email, open houses and recruitment events. But the reality appears to be that students encounter challenges long after these efforts have taken place. This means that advising is often done in the problem solving rather than the planning mode. There is currently an approximate three week waiting period for a student to see an advisor. Bookings for appointments continue to rise. Advisors tend to focus most on students at risk, and often refer more complex associated matters to other student support services.

Between the four academic advisors currently in place, approximately 200 students are seen each week. Students report challenges navigating their degree requirements. Web based communication efforts have been improved, and drop-in-hours are well attended, in addition to the traditional 30 minute advising appointments. Resiliency is promoted to students by the advisors, to help them help themselves and provide the support appropriate for their needs.

There is currently no support for a peer advising model because of concerns over supervision, confidentiality, and competence. Exploring peer advising methods that are successful at other universities would be worthwhile. The cost effectiveness and comfort students have approaching each other can complement a multi-level advising model that provides varying levels of advice and expertise.

Faculty advising was reported to be inconsistent across different academic programs with faculty engaged in some departments, and administrative support staff in others. These units tend to focus on the academic requirements of their unit, but not always on university wide requirements (notably joint majors). Some years ago students were assigned directly to faculty for advising but this was largely unsuccessful, students indicating that they were intimidated to go to their faculty advisor.

Universities often focus their discussions of academic advising too much on who is doing it, and where it is located (i.e. centrally or distributed by academic unit). It is more important to focus on the advising needs that students require. An analysis of student needs can then inform how advising is structured and delivered. Transactional student needs often occupy valuable advisor time that would be better spent helping students with more complex transitional and transformational academic planning and student success advice that advisors are trained on and well equipped to provide.

Students' value one-on-one advising where supportive and trusting relationships can be nurtured and sustained. The current academic advising capacity is seriously struggling to meet this demand. Besides considering personnel capacity enhancements where possible, care should be taken to strategically consider more proactive advising at admission time, when registration occurs and courses are being selected during the summer, at fall orientation, an early alert mechanism in the fall semester, as well as on-going peer to peer learning approaches such as supplemental instruction (SI).

Trent is known for its flexibility with regards to joint majors, interdisciplinary programs and cross listed courses. While of benefit to students, understanding university level and department level requirements can be difficult. Advisors spend significant time with students who are trying to interpret academic requirements. Often these encounters lead to a misunderstanding of requirements that leads to graduation issues that cause students frustration, anger and result in their departure. One suggestion was a rubric for departments that would require a consistent number of 3000 level and 4000 level credits, as well as increased collaboration amongst academic departments and academic advisors on the undergraduate studies committee (USC) and the undergraduate academic policy committee (UAPC).

All of the matters associated with academic advising are important. Regardless of the ultimate model chosen for Trent, there are key guiding principles that should be followed in operationalizing the most effect approach within available resources. An effective model for undergraduate academic advising will:

1. Be clear, understandable, and navigable for students and advisors

2. Meet the diverse needs of student cohorts (e.g., domestic high school, international, transfer, mature, first generation, etc.)
3. Ensure students have access to appropriate academic advising at every stage of their studies (i.e. prior to enrolment, in first year, program transfers, upper year progression, post-graduation career development etc.)
4. Align the expertise of professional, faculty and peer advisors with advising functions
5. Appropriately balance self-advising with advising by faculty and staff
6. Provide a feedback mechanism for student progress to inform curriculum design and program administration
7. Enable advisors to provide service that is accessible, responsive, and timely
8. Strike an appropriate balance between uniform processes and structures and those designed to accommodate the particular needs of campuses, faculties and/or programs
9. Be supported by appropriate technologies which facilitate proactive advising, recordkeeping, information-sharing, privacy, analysis of trends in student performance, and student self-service as they become available; and
10. Form part of a university-wide interconnected and intentional system of holistic student support.

### **Early Alert Programs**

Early alert programs improve struggling students' chances for success by identifying and connecting these students with campus support services at the earliest possible moment. The window of opportunity in the first year passes quickly and struggling students rarely self-identify or seek out support services. Proactive measures should be taken to identify students at risk well before problems arise by using indicators of academic and social challenges that identify high risk. The students are identified with intrusive and sometimes compulsory advising to ensure they are connected with the support they need. Examples include:

1. Application personal statements crafted with questions to identify students with background characteristics that are known to correspond to elevated levels of attrition risk
2. Mandatory first year student online survey targeting students with instant help and support that corresponds to their needs and an automatic advising appointment
3. Class attendance tracking instead of waiting for mid-term grades to identify academically at risk students who are not in class

There are many early alert advising practices to consider. Given the currently distributed academic advising model in the Colleges, an integrated early alert advising program could easily be designed in company with Residence Life.

### **Program Transition**

Student success depends to a significant on good transition: from high school (or college) to university, from first year to later years, between programs when this is desirable, and from graduation to life beyond the university. This is an important aspect of life at Trent that needs to be considered in creating programs for student success.

In the interviews, there was considerable discussion surrounding academic admission averages and student success. Students direct from high school with entering grades hovering below the 70% level (Launch program) are offered more support or are admitted on a probationary basis. The practice of offering programs for students who enter at lower admission levels (as well as students trending to, or on probation) are proven to be beneficial from both a student success perspective and the return on investment for the institution. Two programs currently in place are “Fresh Start” and “Rebound.” They reportedly achieve the above objectives. Coming in the fall of 2016 is the new bridging program called “Wicked Problems.” It will be an interdisciplinary program focused on problem solving by building academic skills.

These strategic efforts should be supported at Trent. They can improve student success and ensure the associated financial impact of student persistence to graduation. To be successful, Student Academic Success programs of this kind usually include intensive, on-going and strategic academic advising with intentionally targeted academic skills development, and support to help students succeed in the first year. Learning how to learn is the key foundation for continued academic success. These specially designed programs can have a peer mentoring component connecting first year students with upper year students who provide holistic support and build confidence with the objective of being successful overall at university.

Trent prides itself in the ability of students to combine and change their programs. Students change their programs for any number of reasons and the ability to do so can have a measurable impact on retention. Currently, the barriers created by inconsistent, confusing, or obsolete academic requirements and regulations appear to restrict this transition. They should be investigated to create more seamless opportunities for continued study. Increased collaboration of academic departments about the effects of internal program changes, and the added involvement of academic advisors in the process, could create improved transparency and transition.

Other issues of transition arise with alternate offers. Though incoming students may assume they may transfer into their preferred choice at some point in their tenure, this is frequently not the case and may result in a withdrawal. Clear messaging regarding an alternate offer and the options to transfer at a later day (with associated requirements) is recommended. Mandated advising appointments for alternate offer applicants would be well advised.

Exit interviews used to be required at Trent, but the opportunity for an advisor, or even a staff member or student to meet with students considering withdrawal has been replaced with an online withdrawal form. As a result, little evidence based data is available on why students withdraw, and no opportunity exists to try and retain students who would be better off staying (possibly by transitioning to another program). In the future, an exit format that engages the student more personally is highly recommended.

### **General Degree/No Major**

To facilitate persistence to graduation with students who are, for whatever reason, unable to complete their chosen major, multi-campus consideration should be given to the possibility of a General degree with no major. This is an option available at most universities. It would provide a pathway to graduation for mature students, returning and/or transfer students, as well as those unable to complete an honours program to graduate. The opportunity to introduce a General degree/no major is at hand, with an explicit recommendation for such a degree coming from a recent review of retention at the Trent Durham campus.

### **Experiential Learning and Career Development**

The work of Student Affairs is focused on supporting the academic mission with recent efforts on the need to integrate curricular and co-curricular learning and development. Creating opportunities for experiential learning is of prime importance in partnership with key academic colleagues.

Integrated career development, in and beyond the classroom is of high importance to students and parents as they consider the high investment of post-secondary education. Career planning and services in its current form at Trent is severely under resourced despite the articulated institutional mission focused on graduates to contribute to a better world. An academic program/career pathways project would be wise to consider that would have to be very distinct to Trent because of the multiple academic program changes that are possible.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Seize the opportunity to create an authentic institutional culture of “Student Success” by expanding the current SEM steering committee chaired by the President/Vice Chancellor to include and connect recruitment, admissions, communications, retention, situational analysis, strategies, goals, tactics, research analytics and assessment. All efforts to focus on the student’s entire educational journey from application to alumni.
2. Led by the Provost and Vice President Academic, convene an assessment and critical review of the 1<sup>st</sup> Year Experience. This examination will explore the quality of the current first year student experience and provide guidance on the enhancement of meaningful student success skills and competencies for academic achievement and personal development.
3. Improve efforts to integrate career development with recruitment and admissions to provide a more proactive approach to choosing and remaining in selected academic programs, and/or transferring to other Trent University programs for outcomes related to career planning.
4. Promote career development and planning from an integrated curricular and cocurricular view, both in and beyond the classroom.
5. Enhance Career development human resources and services and align them with academic advising according to best practice guiding principles.
6. Commit to an academic program/career pathways project to create complementary learning and development opportunities for student engagement and success.
7. Support the enhancement of Academic Advising that adheres to best practice guiding principles:
  - a) Be clear, understandable, and navigable for students and advisors
  - b) Meet the diverse needs of student cohorts (i.e. domestic high school, international, transfer, mature, first generation)
  - c) Ensure students have access to appropriate academic advising at every stage of their studies (i.e. prior to enrolment, in first year, program transfers, upper year progression, post-graduation career development)
  - d) Align the expertise of professional, faculty and peer advisors with advising functions
  - e) Appropriately balance self-advising with advising by faculty and staff
  - f) Provide a feedback mechanism for student progress to inform curriculum design and program administration
  - g) Enable advisors to provide service that is accessible, responsive, and timely

- h) Strike an appropriate balance between uniform processes and structures and those designed to accommodate the particular needs of campuses, faculties and/or programs
  - i) Be supported by appropriate technologies which facilitate proactive advising, recordkeeping, information-sharing, privacy, analysis of trends in student performance, and student self-service as they become available; and
  - j) Form part of a university-wide interconnected and intentional system of holistic student support.
8. Student Academic Success programs offering enhanced support for students accepted at lower admission levels and/or with conditions should be continued and measured closely for both student success outcomes and return on investment financial purposes.
  9. The barriers of inconsistent, confusing, or obsolete academic requirements and regulations appear to restrict progression and should be investigated to create more seamless opportunities for continued study. Increased collaboration of academic departments about the effects of internal program changes, with the added involvement of academic advisors in the process, would help to create improved transparency and transition.
  10. Clear messaging regarding the alternate offer and any options to transfer at a later day with associated requirements is recommended. Mandated advising appointments for alternate offer applicants would be well advised.
  11. Little evidence based data is available on why students withdraw, and no opportunity exists to try to retain the student. An exit format that engages the student more personally beyond an on-line survey is highly recommended.
  12. To facilitate persistence to graduation for students who for what-ever reason are unable to complete their chosen major, multi-campus consideration could be given to recognizing a General degree with no major.
  13. Consider a rubric for departments that would require a consistent number of 3000 level and 4000 level credit to ease the current struggle interpreting academic program requirements.
  14. Consider academic transcript notations to identify circumstances that relate not to academic inability, but recognize legitimate personal situations that arise such as financial pressures, mental health, and other personal unforeseen challenges that penalize the student record.

# **TEACHING and LEARNING**

## **Student Success**

There are a number of significant initiatives, practices and programs to support student progression. But there is not a comprehensive institutional culture/ethos/ideology where all members of the campus community think about and practice efforts to support student success.

Academic administration duties and retention related efforts do not often overlap. Senior leaders would welcome an institutional higher level intentional approach to student success that would include a rigorous assessment evidence based data collection exercise.

## **Experiential Learning**

It is important to better assess experiential learning at Trent. Conducting an audit and analysis of all experiential learning opportunities could clarify the current situation and provide a foundation of opportunities that the university can build upon and/or begin. In doing so, it will be important to study the ability of the local campus communities in Peterborough and Oshawa to support the level of experiential learning opportunities possible.

## **Teaching and Learning at Trent**

The quality of teaching at Trent appears by most counts to be excellent. Students were very complimentary in their remarks on the quality of teaching at Trent, particularly in the upper years.

Over the years some faculty have made strong efforts to enhance teaching at Trent by introducing recognized high impact teaching and learning practices, seminars and tutorials, blended learning and flipped classrooms. According to faculty, larger class sizes and budget limitations have hampered some of these efforts. Experiential curricular development is happening in the humanities and social work.

Assigning the most highly accomplished teachers to first year classes is to be preferred. Current practices aim resources at sessional instructors.

There has not been much discussion about forms of assessment that differ from traditional midterms and final examinations. Faculty expressed concerns about course content integrity and the workload that can be associated with more contemporary assessment strategies that align with student learning preferences such as group work, poster presentations, orals, visible learning model formats, and others.

Currently, there is one academically based Residential Learning Community (RLC) in Nursing. There are plans to expand this approach next year with RLC's in business administration and indigenous studies. The residential College system is an ideal setting for the further development of academically based RLC's. With faculty interest, these living-learning centres could have a significant impact on improved grades and academic success.

Leaders in teaching and learning indicated that there is a dis-connect between faculty teaching and student learning assistance. An integrated and engaged learning approach to enhanced high impact pedagogy with a broad acknowledgement of student learning styles and learning support services would bind these teaching and learning dimensions more purposefully.

An active learning teaching space with supportive technology is available on campus: in Otonabee College; a meeting concept room in the Bata Library; and the new Student Centre will have an active classroom, a wonderful opportunity to include learning and student development in a key destination space for students.

### **Integrated and Engaged Learning (IEL)**

An institutional, holistic teaching and learning approach that would complement a Trent culture of "Student Success" would be one that is more explicitly integrated and engaging. Integrated and engaged learning (IEL) is the innovative and intentional integration of the academic/curricular agenda with the co-curricular facets of student learning and development. It aims to harness the role of these two learning and development dimensions to enhance student engagement and success.

IEL links all academic disciplines, support services, functions and volunteer opportunities in a common mission stretching beyond the classroom to a myriad of programs, activities and services that support the student learning and development experience. IEL is a holistic approach to learning and development, encompassing the curricular and co-curricular learning and development dimensions where students reside. High impact, active based teaching and learning curricular practices are connected with meaningful co-curricular experiential learning. IEL promotes deep learning, and when focused on the whole student, the level of engagement is extraordinary, all contributing to student success.

The curricular side of IEL provides the perspective of an academic program and a student's academic pursuits. Co-curricular provides a connected element that is primarily experiential, taking place often outside of the classroom. Making meaning of the relationship between knowledge acquisition and application, engages students more in classroom settings.

Cocurricular experiences are an important dimension in the student lifecycle that complement a well-balanced and rewarding student learning and development experience.

IEL combines learning and development with skills and competency based student success programs integrated into the curriculum in voluntary settings. Taught by student affairs professionals and student peer leaders, venues include supplemental learning communities, residential learning communities, writing and mathematics/numerical tutoring, career development, diversity and equity awareness, student athlete development, and student leadership.

IEL begins immediately in the first year of study, establishing the right habits that transform learning and development throughout the undergraduate experience. Students are scholars, and devote time to their student experience before, during, and after class that enriches their engagement, enhances academic achievement, builds confidence, encourages further learning opportunities, and creates strong alumni.

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

The widely successful Supplemental Instruction (SI) peer based academic success model used with great success at other universities should be considered at Trent. SI is an academic student success program that supports high-risk courses rather than high-risk students. SI traditionally targets courses with a high rate of D and/or F grades and withdrawals.

SI is available to all students enrolled in selected courses and is not a replacement for lectures, tutorials/labs, readings or studying. The SI sessions are facilitated by trained undergraduate students known as "SI Leaders" who have successfully taken the course before and who reattend lectures, connect with students and act as role models. SI Leaders offer weekly sessions where students can meet other students from their classes in small groups to learn new strategies to approach difficult course concepts and assignments, prepare for tests or exams and engage in regular review, study or practice sessions. At its core, the SI model helps students integrate what to learn with how to learn. On average students who regularly participate in SI earn final course grades that are 1.0 to 2.5 grade points higher than non-participants.

SI has been successfully implemented around the world as an effective retention/student success strategy in a variety of higher education contexts. It was developed by Dr. Deanna Martin at the University of Missouri in Kansas City in 1973. The Canadian National Center for Supplemental Instruction (SI) is located at the University of Guelph. More than 25 colleges and universities in Canada offer the SI program.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conducting an audit and analysis of all experiential learning opportunities at Trent would substantiate the current state and provide a foundation of what to build upon, and/or begin. It will be important to study the ability of the local campus communities to support the level of experiential learning opportunities possible.
2. Academic administration duties and retention related efforts do not often overlap. Senior leaders would welcome an institutional higher level intentional approach to student success that would include a rigorous assessment evidence based data collection exercise.
3. Faculty development support in alternate forms of assessment that ensure academic integrity while recognizing student learning preferences should be strongly considered.
4. An integrated and engaged learning approach to enhanced high impact pedagogy with a broad acknowledgement of student learning styles and support would bind these learning dimensions more purposefully.
5. The residential College system is ideal for the further development of academically based Residential Learning Communities (RLC's). Led by interested faculty and co-ordinated by Residence Life, these living-learning centres have a significant impact on student academic success.

## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

### Student Success

Student leaders were asked to define "Student Success." Their responses included: the acquisition of academic knowledge, program fluidity of studies, transferrable skills, workforce preparation, student life engagement, wellness/happiness and feeling of pride in the institution. Students placed a high priority on being engaged in campus activities and learning from cocurricular volunteer and leadership experiences.

These opportunities were said to be available at Trent overall, highlighted particularly in the Colleges where a close community setting can further enhance student engagement. This sentiment from student leaders supports the notion that the University should recognize the Colleges for their distinct characteristics while uniting them as one Trent.

### Durham: Campus Collegium

Student leaders raised concerns that students at the Durham campus do not connect well with their instructors given the heavy emphasis on part time sessional instruction, and that there is not enough done to connect these primarily commuter based students to stay on campus. In this

case, the campus collegium way of re-developing campus space to better suit and attract students to engage on campus would lead to an enhanced sense of community, promoting peer networking support, persistence, and student success.

The campus collegium is distinctly designed space with physical amenities for life style comfort, study, conversation, and meaningful programming. Several years ago as the institution planned for growth, the University of British Columbia at Okanagan equipped campus collegium space in the new Student Centre design for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students, and for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year students, to accomplish these goals. The concept has successfully encouraged students to seek out these spaces as primary destinations for student engagement. Several universities across the country have followed this initiative, including the Laurier, Brantford campus, which has a high commuter student population. Trent Durham could easily transform current square footage to accomplish this important facet of student life and engagement.

### **The Student Perspective**

When students were asked why students leave Trent, they indicated the primary reasons as: financial, mental health, academic program choice, personal fit, and a more navigable career focused college path. Few indicated academic rigor as the downfall for continued persistence. This anecdotal response from students themselves confirms the need for an evidence based assessment of student attrition.

In recent years, faculty members have become more aware of issues with mental health and student wellness, and have reached out more and more to student affairs for student support. The same level of awareness is not always present in the case of student disabilities and their accommodation requirements. More faculty awareness of the institutional accommodations policy, particularly as it is currently being reviewed across the sector for human rights is recommended.

Personal counseling capacity at Trent is reported to be (1:2000) well below higher education professional standards (1:1500), with waiting times for appointments a concern. Advanced mental health awareness and anti-stigma education has created a significant increase in the demand for support. To complement the additional counseling position that is being considered, a Student Wellness Initiative (SWI) led by Students Affairs could critically assess on-going needs, and enhance the circle of care student wellness model that has emerged, adding to the effectiveness and efficiency of services and support to students.

Student leaders indicated that there are many things for students to get involved with at Trent, but students don't always seem to be aware of them. Students would like to see the CoCurricular Record (CCR) better communicated and expanded to include more experiences that meet

recognized experiential learning criteria. Importantly, student leaders were complimentary of the positive working relationship amongst student government and university administration, an excellent culture to expand the portfolio and impact of the CCR together.

Student leaders indicated that fall Orientation is done well socially, with the role of the Orientation student leaders being critical and their training essential. Planning for Orientation content tries to focus on academic sessions, but attendance is of concern – possibly the result of competing social events. Improvements suggested in the first year transition included: engaging academic preparation; better connecting with transfer students; the opportunity to meet students in your academic program as well as those living in your College; and stronger efforts to connect with students living off campus.

High priority student support programs suggested by student leaders that should be sustained, enhanced, or developed include: access to academic advising; writing success skills; academic skills centre drop in hours; academic advising degree navigating; health & wellness support and programming; personal counseling; community building and connections to Colleges/student union/clubs; accessible learning; career development and services as a progressive and transformational approach beginning in the first year; the allocation of resources to enhance teaching (i.e. expertise, work-loads).

Input from students suggested that the student population in the Colleges is representative of different cultures, faiths, sexuality, gender, age, socio-economic background and experience. This composition includes mature and transfer students, first generation, and students living both on and off campus. Since 2014, the Colleges have been focusing on creating more diverse and inclusive student programming, and have been intentional on their hiring practices to ensure equity and inclusiveness. Continued emphasis on diversity and equity is highly recommended. More efforts to make Trent inclusive and diverse could be made, particularly for international students and indigenous students.

Comments concerning the lack of diversity at Trent in the case of visible minorities, indigenous peoples, and people from different social classes were expressed frequently. Given the significant increase in student applications for 2016-17, it is anticipated that an increasing number of students will come from the GTA and be representative of the diverse, multi-cultural demographic common to this region. Trent needs to be prepared to respond and to support the needs of an increasing multi-cultural student body with diversity and equity measures in education, engagement, and support.

Student leaders commented on the presence of student jobs on campus but felt there certainly could be more. Financial pressures are extensive, and on-site student employment contributes to student engagement.

## International Students

Some concerns were expressed about the relationship between international students and campus culture. Internationalization is being dealt with in another review, so this review did not include extensive input or a great deal of discussion on the international student strategy at Trent and associated efforts to ensure an extraordinary international student learning and development experience.

Most universities are engaged in international student recruitment and admissions. In an increasingly global world this has many benefits but it is important to deliver on the promise of an exceptional international student experience. Universities that are successful in this regard pay particular attention to enhanced services and supports for international students where the cultural shift and transition is most challenging.

In supporting international students, there are recognized best practices that should be a part of an overall internationalization strategy. These include:

- a) Pre-arrival connections and communications. Many institutions overload international students when they first arrive with a plethora of detail, when in fact this is the time when the acquisition of important information and decision making should be kept to a minimum. International students can experience immediate culture shock and are often exhausted when they first arrive on campus. Proactive pre-arrival contact is far more effective for communicating logistics and basic information, while helping to build relationships with key contact persons students will meet when they actually arrive. Pre-arrival webinars are an effective venue for sharing this kind of information. Sharing meaningful information with students while they are still home increases the likelihood that the information will be shared with their families.
- b) Peer mentor programs are an effective way of supporting international student success as long as mentorship training is comprehensive, and goes beyond socially focused support to include academic related issues. Peer mentors should connect with international students before arrival advising on such things as packing for the Canadian weather, and housing options/information etc.
- c) Orientation for international students is critically important in many respects to ensure the transition to university is seamless, informative, and reassuring. Many institutions, while striving to offer the ideal international student orientation, make the mistake of overwhelming students when they are likely exhausted from travel, are suffering culture shock or homesickness. Immediate arrival efforts should focus on basic needs that include such necessities as an organized welcome session,

- immigration/visa documentation housing, food, banking, basic supplies, computer/lap top, cell phone etc.
- d) In addition to this initial contact, a multi-day program tailored to international student needs and interests is important in order to build confidence, make connections, start to establish relationships, and to feel more comfortable within new surroundings. Integrating a specialized program for international students with the domestic student orientation schedule overall is a complementary approach that needs close attention to ensure an intentional balance of academic and social content is delivered. To ensure that students have not been disadvantaged with orientation overload, refresher initiatives in the first month are well received and further endorse the need to ensure a successful start.
  - e) Academic adjustment to new norms, program rigor, language barriers, and time management are universal challenges faced by new international students. Due to differences in cultural norms International students struggle to understand some issues of academic integrity. While no more likely to cheat than domestic students, they often misunderstand North American expectations related to plagiarism and intellectual property. Academic integrity programming for international students should be progressively delivered with a developmental rather than punitive philosophy, and allow students an opportunity to practice and receive feedback without fear of negative consequences. Program content should include topics such as academic integrity policy, referencing standards, and acceptable collaboration. A refresher session to reinforce first principles should be provided within the first two weeks of classes, and should not only remind students of the key academic integrity policy associated components, but should specifically address course syllabi and assignments received in their first classes. Actual examples can be shared, and questions answered. A final academic integrity message towards the end of the first month should be planned to share case examples of academic misconduct, how these incidents were discovered, reported and disciplined.
  - f) Career resources customized for international students are important particularly with increasing numbers of international students wishing to work and remain in Canada after graduation. Typically, career services don't always address international student needs, skills and competencies. For instance, résumé writing workshops may overlook language barriers and gaps in writing skills. Career fairs and networking events may ignore cultural norms around small talk, lack of confidence approaching employers, and a reluctance to self-promote when speaking with employers.
  - g) The importance of effective communication cannot be underestimated when it comes to ensuring international students are well adjusted, transitioning comfortably

and exposed to all that is available to them to be successful. Identifying social media and technology preferences for different international student groups will ensure that Student Services personnel connect with students where they are most comfortable. A dedicated international student website can be an effective and efficient communication platform.

- h) Mental illness and personal problems are systemic in society at large, but the university student population is particularly susceptible to high levels of anxiety, stress, and peer relationship issues. International students are not exempt, and are faced with adjusting to a new educational system, language barriers, basic life style changes, and food. These and other kinds of circumstances impact mental health and often result in international students experiencing higher levels of anxiety and depression than domestic students. International students may not always feel comfortable seeking help, regardless of whether services and support are available, so the institution must get out in front of this phenomenon by proactively raising the issues with students through peer to peer communication, raising awareness, and advertising available services. Without these approaches, there is a high risk of attrition early in the tenure of the international student.
- i) To catch the mental health issues students' face early, student affairs professionals and faculty need to be closely connected. Building strong support relationships and communication channels with protocols and procedures that get to the source of the challenges students face are critical. It is important to understand that each student case is often unique, complex, and even isolated to the conditions associated with international students overall.

### **Study Space**

Common from the student point of view at many universities is the need to create additional and appropriate study space on campus with multiple electrical plugs for powering up lap tops and tablets. Perhaps the most meaningful of these efforts to enhance student study engagement is the purposeful connection with university libraries that can have a strong influence on serving as the choice destination for study, not because of the historical association with books and other information resources, but because of integrated learning commons space design and learning assistance that promotes student engagement and support in writing, research, presentation skills whether one on one, or in distinctly assembled learning communities.

As the Library is renovating and promoting the learning commons model, there is a wonderful opportunity to provide additional student study and learning support – in effect creating another “hub” for student support. One staffing possibility is providing one or two additional academic advisors on-site, ideally cross-trained to provide academic skills advice and career planning

consultation. Another is to centre the library as the springboard for a pilot student counseling program, which could be provided in the late afternoons/early evenings – extending the times that student support is available beyond regular business hours. The point with this is to go where the students are, and certainly the library is a central location for this as a destination-n of choice for students.

The new Student Centre planned for 2017-18 will be a tremendous destination place and should include space and functions that promote student engagement and success. The new campus recreation facility is very popular, particularly the fitness centre, as a destination for physical activity and stress relief. The addition of new sports fields will provide more opportunities in this regard.

Residence administration is currently considering moving from a residence life paraprofessional programming approach to a curricular based model focused on intentional learning and development outcomes. In the curricular model, delivered by full time professional staff, student needs are assessed to determine priorities. Goals are then developed, followed by specific lesson plans that include experiential engagement with intentional interactions that are outcomes based. In considering the residential curriculum model, the advancement of Residential Learning Communities (RLC) would contribute significantly to student engagement and academic success. Currently, there is student demand for on-campus residency on the Peterborough campus. RLCs can be a distinctive SEM strategy to both meet the demand and promote student learning, development and success.

Very positive comments were made about the 1<sup>st</sup> Peoples House of Learning with a strong Aboriginal Education Council (AEC) leadership team in place complemented by student services and support for indigenous students from full time staff and student mentors. Attention is paid directly to student success. Indigenous studies and aboriginal affairs planning should be reflected in the new academic plan.

### **Communication with Students**

There seems to be a number of volunteer opportunities for students (i.e. College cabinet, clubs, relay for life) but the level of student awareness of the possibilities could be improved.

According to students, there is a current gap in campus communications. They say knowledge of what is going on is lacking because the My Trent portal is not used effectively by students. The events calendar is there, but not accessed well. Better communications through on-line technology and social media would be welcomed by students.

## **The Colleges**

During the on-site interviews, there was considerable reference made to the College versus the institutional identity at Trent. As it is non-typical in the sector, students do not seem to understand the Trent College system until well after they arrive. It was said, "...two thirds of the students don't know about the Colleges before they arrive, but they love it when they do!" Notwithstanding, the Colleges are often promoted as the residential experience rather than the College experience at large – and only 60% of first year students are accommodated in College residence which limits the impact more students could experience in a living-learning setting.

To strengthen the holistic learning and development environment and enhance the integration of curricular/co-curricular opportunities, Faculty Fellows once a vibrant part of the College livinglearning should be re-considered. Academic advising has been aligned within the Colleges, but Career development and planning has not (and is currently under developed and under resourced). Perhaps these staff could be cross trained to accommodate an academic/career dimension of support. A longitudinal learning and development focus that connects academic achievement and career planning would contribute to student persistence and success.

The College heads had important insights into why students are successful or not. They cited such student challenges as: time management; anxiety associated with academic rigor, expectations of others, personal adjustment, employment opportunity, and a lack of resiliency skills and competencies. A lack of perseverance was commonly said to be a key part of the struggles some students have. Students not associated with a community of support seem to struggle the most. This is where there is an extended opportunity for the Colleges. Trent has the capacity to respond to this challenge by embracing a strong College model collectively supported by an authentic institutional ethos of community and support for both academic excellence and personal engagement and success.

## **Students and the Alumni Association**

The student learning and development experience carries on through "Life After Trent" a program developed and delivered over the past two years by the Alumni Association in cooperation with the Colleges and the Career Centre. The concept is noteworthy with alumni/student mentoring, networking sessions, career service support, and engaging programs that provide alumni with an easy way to stay or re-connect with the university, and for current students to learn how meaningful a Trent graduate can be in their lives. In the early stages participation has been low, but is expected to grow as more and more alumni become aware of the program.

To further promote the alumni experience and engage the current student population, a Student Alumni Association (SAA) should be formed where students come together to lead programs, and special events that connect students at large to their lifetime experience as future Trent alumni. Including these SAA members in recruitment and admissions sessions would send the right message: that the institution is committed to you for life.

An effective SAA also communicates to the student body the value of alumni contributions to enhance their educational experience. “Tag Day” is an effective program to do this in each semester where a series of promotional posters and pieces are displayed throughout the campus to communicate contributions and promote awareness of the support that enhances the student experience. Another popular role for an SAA is with the parents of current students to better communicate and to understand the challenges students face and the kind of supportive roles parents can play to contribute to student success.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Campus collegium, distinctly designed and programmed space to support commuter student lifestyles and engagement, should be investigated and considered, particularly for the Trent Durham campus.
2. Faculty indicated they were not always aware of accommodation requirements for students with disabilities. The Trent Accommodations Policy is currently under review given Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) suggestions. This would be an appropriate opportunity to better inform faculty of required accessible learning requirements.
3. Personal counseling capacity is reported to be well below higher education professional standards with waiting times for student appointments a concern. Additional professional counseling staff is recommended to meet the higher education professional standard ratio of 1:1500.
4. Advanced mental health awareness and anti-stigma education has created a significant increase in the demand for student support and success. Trent has responded well to this demand with a circle of care, integrated model of service and support. A formal Student Wellness Initiative (SWI) to affirm student needs, assess clarity, cohesiveness, and capacity would complement actions to date. And, the current physical space is an operational challenge, but much improved, visually impactful signage to ease the strain of identifying and differentiating the unique circle of care team of services is a relatively inexpensive benefit that should be done.
5. A full review of the Co-curricular Record (CCR) and recognized opportunities for experiential learning of meaningful opportunities, associated learning outcomes, and

whether students can effectively articulate these outcomes is highly recommended. A more integrated curricular/co-curricular integration should be examined with the potential opportunity for credit based recognition.

6. Improvements recommended for Orientation and the first year transition include: engaging academic preparation; better connecting with transfer students; the opportunity to meet students in one's academic program as well as those living in your College; and stronger efforts to connect with students living off campus. All of these issues could be addressed through a review of the 1<sup>st</sup> Year Experience.
7. Recommendations from student leaders that should be considered include: proactive access to academic advising degree navigating; writing success skills; expanded academic skills centre drop in hours; increase personal counseling capacity; community building College connections to Trent (i.e. Colleges/student union/clubs); expand career development & services; continued enhancement of teaching.
8. The Colleges in particular have tried to create more diverse and inclusive student programming and hiring practices. Notwithstanding, an emphasis on diversity which considers multi-cultural barriers, issues of sexual identity and social class, and indigenous initiatives is highly recommended.
9. To deliver on the promise of an exceptional international student experience, Trent should prioritize recognized best practices for enhanced services and supports for international students where the cultural shift and transition is most challenging.
10. Given the continued financial pressures on students, an examination of current student employment opportunities and the ability to expand student jobs is most desirable. Learning outcomes associated with these work opportunities that identify skills and competencies would be beneficial to the advancement of experiential learning.
11. To advance integrated learning commons space design and learning assistance that promotes student engagement and support, there is a special opportunity as the Library is renovating to provide: improved student study and learning support with the provision of library support staff; and academic advisors on-site who are ideally cross-trained to provide academic skills advice and career planning consultation.
12. In considering the Residential Curriculum Model, academically integrated Residence Learning Communities (RLC) that complement student engagement and academic success should be expanded. There is current student demand for on-campus residency on the Peterborough campus, a demand that is also expected to arise on the Durham campus as recruitment continues to extend beyond local borders. RLCs can be a distinctive SEM strategy to meet enrolment occupancy demand, and to promote student learning, development, and success.
13. While there are a number of volunteer opportunities for students, student leaders indicated that the level of student awareness of these choices, as well as events and

activities could be improved through better use of the My Trent portal. The events calendar exists, but better communications through on-line technology and social media is recommended.

14. The 1<sup>st</sup> Peoples House of Learning has a strong AEC leadership team in place complemented by student services and support for indigenous students from full time staff and student mentors. Attention is paid directly to student success. Indigenous studies and aboriginal affairs planning should be reflected in the new academic plan.
15. The College heads had important insights into why students are successful or not such as: time management; academic rigor anxiety; expectations from others; personal adjustment; employment opportunity; and a lack of resiliency. Students not associated with a community of support seem to struggle the most, and this is where an extended opportunity for the Colleges is exemplified. Trent has the capacity to respond to this challenge by embracing a strong College model collectively supported by an authentic institutional ethos of community and support for both academic excellence and personal engagement. The institutional commitment and notion of “Student Success” would address this overall institutional strategy.
16. The student learning and development experience carries on through “Life After Trent” a program developed and delivered over the past two years by the Alumni Association in co-operation with the Colleges and the Career Centre. To further promote the alumni experience and engage the current student population, and parents, a Student Alumni Association (SAA) should be formed where students lead programs, and special events that connect students at large to their lifetime experience as future Trent alumni. Including the SAA in recruitment and admissions sessions would send the right peer to peer message of care that the institution is committed to graduates for life.

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT & SERVICES

### **Career Development at Trent**

When asked why they are attending post-secondary education, the expressed priority of students was “securing a good job.” With this in mind, Trent needs to consider an enhanced focus on career development and services that are both integrated into the curriculum, and offered outside the classroom from a planning and advisory capacity. The current staff commitment in career development, advising, and employment services is extremely under resourced.

Careers and Academic Skills were merged together in Champlain College in 2007-08. While this integration was theoretically advantageous from a holistic student advising perspective, there were challenges. The location which was not highly accessible and limited staffing support meant

students would have to wait up to six weeks for an appointment. Operating on an appointment basis meant students needed to identify the need for help, a remedial effort at best.

A more intentional, proactive and planning based approach where early efforts and initiatives begin in the first year and are maintained and extended throughout the student's tenure can have a significantly positive impact on student success. But this approach requires an investment in human resources.

In 2015 in an attempt to create student services "hubs" and to further integrate advising and student support, Academic Skills and Advising were re-located to the Colleges and report to the College Directors. Student Affairs and Careers merged to create a new Director of Student Transitions and Careers portfolio that also includes a Coordinator of Experiential Education to oversee university/community focused learning, and oversight of the Co-curricular Record.

These thoughtful and strategic initiatives are sure to improve the planning of meaningful programming, and the co-ordination of advising and career services. But it appears that the limited human resources associated with career planning are too lean to deliver the level of support required throughout the entire student learning and development journey.

A fuller commitment would include a more strategic integration of curricular and co-curricular experiential learning including:

1. Linking campus involvement opportunities to employer demanded skills and competencies
2. Peer career advisors helping students navigate the range of campus involvement activities and link these to student goals and aspirations
3. Design and incorporate learning outcomes, and the development of skills and competencies into the job descriptions and performance assessments of student employees
4. Experience maps/guides highlighting the skills developed through co-curricular experiences that are complementary to the academic program of choice
5. Experiential leadership that moves through developmental learning phases that are personal, team oriented, community focused, and culminating with a capstone experience.

A comprehensive closer internal examination of career development services and experiential learning opportunities is highly recommended.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The staff commitment in career development, advising, and employment services is extremely under resourced. Trent should consider an enhanced focus on career development and services that are both integrated into the curriculum, and offered through a personal and/or on-line advisor. A more intentional, proactive, and planning based approach is suggested where early efforts begin in the first year, are maintained, and extended throughout the student's tenure have a significant impact on student success.
2. In 2015 in an attempt to create student services "hubs" and to further integrate advising and student support, Academic Skills and Advising were re-located to the Colleges and report to the College Directors. Student Affairs and Careers merged to create a new Director of Student Transitions and Careers portfolio that also includes a Coordinator of Experiential Education to oversee university/community focused learning, and oversight of the Co-curricular Record. These efforts should be examined again to ensure clarity, and to complement the need to expand career development and services that are integrated into and beyond the curriculum.
3. A closer internal review, external analysis and assessment of career development, services, and experiential learning opportunities is highly recommended.

## RESEARCH AND ASSESSMENT

### Institutional Research

There is currently no formal investigation through the office of Institutional Research of why students leave Trent. This is consistent with other commentary received during the on-site interviews that there is no real data available on why students leave. There are numbers calculated on the progression of students from year to year, but no data on attrition related information.

Researching and assessing student success more fully is highly recommended to not only better understand why students stay or leave, but to take strategic action and to support resource allocation decision making towards higher student success results.

Trent has participated regularly in NSSE and CUSC with positive data results overall, though there seems to have been little strategic follow-up from the results to advance student success or influence change. This is a task that could be assigned formally to a research and assessment sub group of the SEM committee.

The demand for greater accountability by concerned stake holders, the movement towards evidence based practice, and the ease and affordability of technology to assist with data gathering and analysis, are driving a focus on the measurement of learning outcomes, and the operational efficiency and effectiveness of student affairs and services. This is a positive direction to pursue.

### **Different Kinds of Data**

Research and assessment in student affairs and services should support the setting of priorities, allocation of resources and continued enhancement of student learning and development. Canadian universities have for some time participated in student satisfaction surveys. While certainly useful, satisfaction is a self-reported lagging indicator akin to taking the temperature of the student body after the fever has broken. Empirical evidence suggests student engagement is a better predictor of learning and personal development (Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006) and if measured and managed, reinforces a more proactive approach to student success.

The Centre for Teaching and Learning has begun survey research on the first year experience, an initiative that would support a more full-fledged study and analysis of the 1st Year Experience. It brought forward the idea that first year student final exams be replaced with alternative, more transitional evaluation methods that would inform students of their performance earlier, before problems occur. But the idea was not well received by faculty who were not well informed about alternative assessment formats.

At Trent, there has been some level of student satisfaction surveying by student affairs. Discussions are continuing on learning outcomes based assessment related to the type and quality of services and delivery. A commitment by student affairs to the identification of program, service, and student learning outcomes would not only increase accountability, but would provide valuable data for evidence-based assessment and decision-making. Developing student learning outcomes could be especially effective in building partnerships by soliciting the involvement of interested faculty.

A research and assessment mandate assigned to an existing central institutional research position, co-reporting to the AVP, Student Affairs, would be uniquely positioned to coordinate and manage the development of research and measurement strategies across the student affairs portfolio, explicitly focused on the student experience. This role would develop an assessment strategy that might include tools such as questionnaires, web surveys, formal written inventories, faculty/staff/student mentorship observation, year-end reports, interviews, focus groups and case studies. The methodology would be driven by the university's interest in the desired outcomes being measured.

Research and assessment of student affairs programs is critical to ensure that scarce resources are being employed effectively and where they will have the greatest impact. Without outcomes data it will be challenging to claim that student affairs efforts are actively contributing to the institutional mission, and goals, and providing learners with a more meaningful and transformative educational experience.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. A rigorous SEM assessment plan of quantitative and qualitative measures should be designed and executed on an annual basis, producing an evidence base data portfolio to support and influence strategies, tactics, associated services for continuous improvement, planning, and institutional decision making that impacts student success.
2. Anecdotal reasons given for why students leave Trent include: financial, mental health, academic program choice, personal fit, and a more navigable career focused college path. An evidence based investigation and analysis is needed to better understand conditions that effect student persistence, and support decision making to respond to it in more strategic and outcomes based ways.
3. Student Success program and service outcomes should be developed to examine what a program or unit is to do, achieve or accomplish for its own improvement and in support of established goals.
4. Student learning outcomes should be proactively developed that articulate the institutional expectations of what students will be able to know, think and be able to do as a result of a purposeful event, activity, program, placement, and/or learning experience.
5. Measuring outputs such as how many students took part in programs, and how satisfied they were, is not enough. It needs to be discovered and documented what students learn and can articulate. Assessment practices such as questionnaires, surveys, focus groups, interviews, one minute testimonials, mentor/advisor observations, portfolio records, and community based case studies, should be included in the suite of tools that SEM uses for quality improvement and reporting.
6. Research and assessment should be part of the SEM culture to support the setting of priorities, to base initiatives on evidence, for allocation of resources and the continued enhancement of student learning outcomes.
7. SEM should assign an assessment and research specialist to coordinate and manage the development of research and assessment strategies across the portfolio from recruitment to graduation. This role might be an excellent holistic collaboration with the opportunity to integrate faculty and scholarly practice into the SEM team portfolio.

## IMPLEMENTATION

It should be everyone's job at Trent to deliver on the promise of an exceptional student experience. That job is comprehensive and complex with priorities that include: ensuring that teaching and learning is high impact, integrated and engaged; operational services and support for students are effective and efficient; preserving what is currently being done well, and planning for new value-added services while demonstrating discipline to not simply add on, but to re-position innovatively to achieve the desired outcomes articulated by the institution.

The plan for change that this review is intended to support will need to respect the history of accomplishments to date, and preserve what has been working well. But going forward the plan must also step up to engage and support what Trent would like to sustain and become. What will the student affairs role be in this transformation? How will it change? What will it look like to continue to support students, but also to evolve to become more active in the learning environment?

The challenge going forward will be to strike a proper balance between the historical approach of close personalized student care and support, to a learning based ethos where there is certainly a visible level of support present, but where students begin to accept more responsibility for decision making, becoming more self-sufficient to handle the challenges of life, graduating with the know-how and wherewithal to be resilient, a good citizen, and to achieve independence and self-awareness.

As Trent University strives to achieve its vision, it will be advantageous to articulate more publically the many facets of its integrative and transformative educational experience that combines academic excellence and experiential learning where students reside in and out of the classroom. An integrated and engaged education is a distinctive identity, cascading through the institution linking all academic disciplines, support services and functions in a common mission stretching beyond the classroom into the myriad of programs, activities and services that support the student learning and development experience.

Success must be built upon a culture of assessment to enrich holistic education. Curricular program degree level expectations support the cyclical review of all academic programs. Student learning outcomes should be aligned with co-curricular endeavours. A wide assortment of quantitative and qualitative assessment vehicles can be used to provide evidence based data to validate efforts, and to support resource allocation decision making...all leading to the kind of exceptional student experience that Trent University wants to aspire to and achieve...and resulting in a superior level of student success that delivers on the moral promise of a high quality education and experience while meeting the institution's overall fiscal responsibilities.



## REFERENCES

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## APPENDIX A INTERVIEWEES

<b>First and Last Name</b>	<b>Position/ Title</b>
Tracy Al-idrissi	University Registrar
Mike Allcott	Director, Trent International Program
Rachel Arseneault	Student
Gillian Balfour	Faculty, Member of Retention Review Committee
Cathy Bruce	Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Melanie Buddle	Academic Advisor
	Executive Director, Marketing & Communications, Recruitment & Admissions
Marilyn Burns	Academic Advisor
Craig Cameron	Academic Advisor
Brendan Campbell	Indigenous Students Commissioner , Trent Central Student Association
Christy Carlson	Academic Advisor
Bruce Cater	Dean of Arts & Science - Social Sciences
Cory Coletta	College Residence Life Coordinator (East Bank)
Jessica Collinson	Student
Asgiga Corriveau	Women's Commissioner, Trent Central Student Association
Jen Coulter	Director, Housing
Bryan Davies	Chair, Board of Governors
Robin Dines	Chair, Endowment Lands Committee, Board of Governors
Kiley Dunlop	Student, Otonabee College
Lucie Edwards	Chair, Nominating and Governance Committee, Board of Governors
Stewart Engelberg	Director, Student Wellness Centre
Justin Fisher	Director, Student Services Trent Durham
Christine Freeman-Roth	Academic Advisor
Tina Frigden	Academic Advisor
Lindy Garneau	College Head
Ashley Gerrits	College Head
Leo Groarke	President and Vice Chancellor
Robyne Hanley	Educational Developer
Tara Harrington	Associate University Secretary - Senate
Lee Hayes	Director, Alumni Association
Holger Hintelmann	Dean of Arts & Science - Sciences
Adam Hopkins	Director, First Peoples House of Learning
Moira Howes	Dean of Arts & Science - Humanities
Steven Jones	Institutional Analyst

## APPENDIX A INTERVIEWEES CONTD.

Krista Kermer	Student Retention Programs Coordinator
Sako Khederlarian	Orientation and Transitions Coordinator
Steven Kylie	Chair, Finance and Property Committee, Board of Governors
Kris Lew	Institutional Research Analyst
Keeley Moloney	Student, Champlain College
Lindsay	College Head
Stephanie Muehlethaler	Head of Colleges
Jacqueline Muldoon	Provost and Vice-President Academic
Joe Muldoon	Head, Trent University Durham
Shawn Murphy	President, Trent Durham Students Association
Pippa O'Brein	Vice-President, University and College Affairs Trent Central Student Association
Nona Robinson	Associate Vice - President Students
Melanie Sedge	College Head
Lauren Silvestro	Residence Life Education Coordinator
Alaine Spiwak	President, Trent Central Student Association
Emily Stitt	Student, Lady Eaton College
Rod Taylor	Chair, Executive Committee, Board of Governors
Waleska Vernon	Director, Student Transitions and Careers
Taylor Williams	Student, Peter Gzowski College
Kirsten Woodend	Dean Trent/Fleming School of Nursing
Susan Wurtele	Faculty

## APPENDIX B INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### A) INSTITUTIONAL

1. Can the institutional vision and mission enact rather than espouse the institution's commitment to student learning, development, and success? Is this the current case?
2. How does or could the institution's strategic mandate agreement, and academic plan explicitly articulate the core outcome of student success?
3. Is student success a stated leadership priority?
4. How would you define student success?
5. If you were asked how your work impacts student success, how would you respond?

### B) TEACHING AND LEARNING

1. What are the most recent academic program, and curriculum development initiatives to enhance student interest and persistence?
2. What barriers exist that may be addressed to ease student transition from one academic program to another?
3. What high impact teaching and learning practices are in place to promote student engagement, learning and development?
4. Are the best teachers teaching in first year?
5. Are assessment practices of student academic performance being considered that satisfy course content integrity while recognizing student learning strengths (essay, posters, group work, research, performance), as well as progressive assessment practices versus mid-terms and finals?
6. Are learning expectations and outcomes clearly articulated in and beyond the classroom?
7. What efforts to enhance student resiliency are in practice?
8. Is academic integrity training engrained in course syllabi or delivered beyond the classroom?
9. Are student success strategies, skills, and competencies integrated into the curriculum, or offered primarily outside the classroom?
10. Is experiential learning emphasized and available to all students across the curriculum?
11. Is there a commitment to accessible learning? If so, what are the key components?
12. What learning communities (residential, faculty, program, societies) are in place at Trent?
13. Is undergraduate research a focus?

## APPENDIX B INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

14. What Curricular/Co-curricular connections exist? Credit or non-credit?
15. Is there an institutional wide effort to articulate student support and success in course syllabi?
16. What learning services are available to support student success? (i.e. writing, math, study skills, supplemental instruction, tutoring, presentation/communications, research methods etc.)

### C) STRATEGIC ENROLMENT MANAGEMENT

1. If the student learning and development journey were to include matters associated with transactional, transitional, and transformational efforts that promote student success, how would you contribute to the conversation?
2. What recruitment and admissions strategies, goals, and tactics are in place to communicate a rigorous commitment to the student experience?
3. What proactive practices are being delivered to support a successful summer information, awareness, and preparatory transition?
4. How does fall Orientation serve to support a meaningful introduction to learning and personal transition? What are the key components to this important first impression and introductory function?
5. What early intervention/alert/intrusive advising efforts are in practice?
6. Has the university engaged in a thorough review and assessment of the 1<sup>st</sup> Year Experience? If so, what has it revealed as the most significant and critical factors that influence student success?
7. What is the current approach to academic advising? Is advising proactive/early based, student centred and need based? Student advisor assigned, central, distributed, faculty, and/or peer based? Are students well informed of and satisfied with academic advising?
8. How is overall student advising integrated to serve students given academic, health and wellness, financial, career needs?
9. Do the academic probation and/or forced to withdrawal parameters allow the opportunity for recovery?
10. Is there an active parent/guardian program in practice?

### D) STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

1. Is holistic education a formal commitment? If so how is this identity communicated and delivered?

## APPENDIX B INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

2. Is there a Co-Curricular Record and/or E portfolio program in place?
3. What are the highest priority student development and support services offered?
4. What distinct student cohort and student-at-risk efforts are in practice to support student success? (i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> generation; indigenous, international, adult)
5. How has the institution embraced diversity, equity and a culture of inclusivity?
6. Is there an active student leadership development program in place?
7. Does the university provide and promote on campus student employment opportunities? If so, are learning experiences and outcomes embedded in these jobs?
8. Is there a financial literacy and support effort in place for students?
9. Can you describe any collaborative/cross divisional teams or multiple department initiatives that collectively pay attention to the quality of student life in and beyond the classroom?
10. Has student study space been maximized and appropriately equipped on campus?
11. Are there significant opportunities for volunteerism?
12. What is the university's overall communication strategy to inform students? Is it multifaceted? (i.e. print, website, social media, video)
13. Is the working relationship between the university administration and student government collaborative and effective?
14. How are students engaged in decision making that impacts the quality of the student experience?
15. Are students typically engaged in the local community? How?

### E) CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICES

1. Has there been consideration of a major mapping/learning experience guideline/structured pathway strategy to support the student learning and career development journey?
2. Does the university actively engage students in career development and planning beyond the standard practice of providing career services?
3. Are there curricular examples you can share of integrated learning and career development?

## APPENDIX B INTERVIEW QUESTIONS CONTD.

4. Are career related programs and interventions driven by core learning outcomes, skills and competencies? Can students articulate these outcomes?
5. What special initiatives are exercised to maximize relations with employers?
6. What impact does career development and services have on graduate and/or professional school student decision making and preparation?
7. Is there a career mentoring program in place that connects students with alumni?
8. Does the university provide career development and services to alumni?

### F) RESEARCH & ASSESSMENT

1. What qualitative and quantitative research is being done to assess student success?
2. How are analytics used to support student success focused decision making?
3. Are high priority student support services data driven and assessed for resource decision making purposes?
4. What are the primary reasons why students do not finish their degree programs and graduate? Are exit surveys conducted? (i.e. academic, personal, social, financial, fit)
5. Does the university survey its graduates to seek information on their employability, civic engagement?