This Month's Topic: CHC Student Focus Groups Findings Fall 2019

This volume offers the campus community an overview on the Crafton Hills College student focus groups findings. This *Did You Know* will explain the methodology surrounding the implementation of these focus groups, the findings and recommendations provided by the Research and Planning (RP) Group, student feedback, and implications of future work being done surrounding these findings.

Methodology

Crafton partnered with the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (RP Group) to conduct six focus groups in Fall 2019, with the goal of learning about factors contributing to student' enrollment. Student populations with historically low course success rates were the target audience, these included African American and Hispanic populations. Potential participants were grouped by units completed in order to understand the experiences of students at different stages of their educational journeys. The college also identified prospective students who applied and began the registration process but did not enroll in any courses. In the end, there were six focus groups with a total of 32 participants. In conjunction with the Enrollment Strategies Committee, OIERP staff, and researchers from the RP Group, questions were developed to direct the focus groups for current and prospective students.

Recommendations

Based on the focus group findings, the RP Group offered the following eight recommendations for Crafton to consider that have the potential to improve the experiences and outcomes of both currently enrolled and prospective students. Please note recommendations were provided based on feedback provided by multiple participants; although one quote per recommendation is provided, they reflect key themes that emerged from the focus group discussions.

Recommendation 1: Create networking opportunities for students based on shared cultural experiences and interests in order to increase a greater sense of inclusion and diversity.

💬 *"[In] a lot of classes [I take], I am the only [person of color] in the class. [And] it seemed like when it comes time for group [work] or something like that … I'm left by myself."*

Recommendation 2: Examine the financial implications of practices and processes inside and outside of the classroom to identify possible cost barriers for students.

💬 *"We have to use something called My Math Lab and you have to pay for a code just to people to do your homework, which that really annoys me… I just feel like to be able to do homework, I shouldn't have to pay $100, $115 to be able to have access to that. So, that sucks."*

Recommendation 3: Align services and resources with course schedules in order to provide students with access to these services when needed.

💬 *"I was going to school at night and I feel they should at least have some resources that they normally have during the day available at night, whether it's one or two counselors available. Whether it's one person available that you can just speak with at the transfer center. At five, very much everything's closed. It used to be for people who work during the day, but all your resources are closed at night. So it's hard to get up here during the day.."*

Recommendation 4: Examine ways to upgrade/modernize payment machines to improve access and usage at the college.

💬 *"I have to get here probably 45 minutes before my class begins in order to find parking. And … I would suggest the campus to upgrade … where you pay for parking. I'm not one to carry cash with me at all times. It's rare when I carry cash, I've already gotten my first parking ticket for not having cash on me and not being able to buy [a pass]. I would like for them to actually upgrade their machines and get one that takes actually like a card so I can just swipe it."*

Recommendation 5: Explore additional professional development opportunities for faculty to increase engagement and proactive supports for students, including specific training in Canvas to increase faculty's adoption and full utilization.

💬 *"One thing that I feel really should be required is teachers should have to be on Canvas, because I'm in … eight courses right now and only five of them are [on Canvas]."*

Recommendation 6: Examine the lighting situation across the campus to ensure adequate lighting is in place during the evening hours in order to increase a sense of safety and security for students.

💬 *"I'm a male, but I still felt it's a little bit too dark here to be up here, like alone."*

Recommendation 7: Simplify the registration process such that students can more easily access and complete the CHC application.

💬 *"[The online registration] was a little hard to navigate for me. I tried it with the mobile app, and then I tried with the laptop computer…I'm not sure, but it's almost like [the instructions were] missing a step. … And I believe there are separate passwords for your email, and you needed your email. You were frozen in water without it. And so I would always think, "Oh no, I've got to access my email in order to get to the register." And I found [the process] not to be intuitive—it was not user-friendly."*

Recommendation 8: Provide prospective students with some general career and educational guidance upfront to help them make more informed decisions about how CHC can meet their academic goals.

💬 *"I feel like maybe [the college] could help me or other people more by guiding you through what your … personality is like and what you would be good at…"*

For a comprehensive overview regarding the focus groups, please see the final report provided through the RP Group.

Implications for CHC Students

As a result of feedback provided by CHC students and prospective students, the Enrollment Strategies Committee has begun work by prioritizing recommendations to better focus their efforts. In the committee's most recent meeting, an action plan[1] was developed to address Recommendations 1, 5, and 7 which reflect the need for the creation of networking opportunities based on shared cultural experiences to increase a sense of inclusion and diversity on campus, professional development opportunities for faculty, and simplifying the registration process, respectively. Regarding Recommendation 1, the RP senior researcher suggested the college investigate the possibility of starting "Affinity Groups" as a way to provide students with these networking opportunities based on cultural experiences to help with diversity and inclusion efforts (see Bakersfield College's Affinity Groups for an example of work surrounding these resource groups).

We want to end by taking the time to give *special thanks* to all the participants that shared their experiences to help continue to make Crafton better!

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[1] An electronic copy of the action plan is currently being developed. Contact the OIERP by March 16, 2020 for an update.
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