

Office of Student Success and Empowerment

2018-19 Annual Report

Submitted by Amy Aldous Bergerson, Director

1 July, 2019



Office of Student Success and Empowerment

2018-19 Academic Year

An important focus of Dr. Ruth Watkins' presidency at the University of Utah is providing an Exceptional Educational Experience (E3) for every University of Utah student. The Office of Student Success and Empowerment (OSSE) is key to this effort. As the lead office in a number of retention efforts, OSSE supports students' transitions to the U, promotes their persistence to degree completion, and provides avenues for students' empowerment along the way. These efforts support thriving in students by assisting them in developing connections with the University, understanding the resources and opportunities available to them, and encouraging them to engage deeply in their University of Utah experience. The following offices, programs, and initiatives are key to meeting these goals:

Transition

Office of Orientation and Transition: New Student Orientation is key to students' transitions to the University. This office reports to OSSE to support the overall transition of both first-time, transfer, and returning students. The Office of Orientation and Transition (OOT) also supports programming for Sophomore Rise, a retention effort for second-year students. OOT will submit its annual report separately following the completion of 2019 summer orientation programs.

Student Success Advocates: SSAs work with new students to assist them in navigating the complexities of college life. Students develop study, stress management, time management, and other skills through their work with SSAs, all of which support their initial and on-going success.

New University Scholars: NUS is a transition program for students with high financial need. This scholarship program, which requires students to participate in a Learning Community experience, includes monthly dinners, leadership development, and a curriculum designed to enhance students' success in their first two years at the University.

Retention

Student Success Advocates: SSAs' ongoing work with students supports them throughout the student journey. Providing students with information about how to engage deeply in their college experience is one way SSAs assist students. They also support their development of relationships across campus, and provide a caring, holistic approach that support students' sense of belonging at the University.

Civitas: The OSSE is the unit responsible for administrative nudges to students based on Civitas persistence predictions. Messaging coordinated and sent by the OSSE include planned nudges, event-based nudges, and nudges that are indicated by specific data points in the Civitas toolkit. The OSSE works closely with the I2 Team to ensure that

these nudges are sent by the most relevant parties and provide students with just-in-time information that can increase their persistence at the University.

Sophomore Rise: Sophomores across the US face challenges in their second year. They typically no longer receive specialized institutional support, and many are still determining why they are in college and where they hope to go after this experience. Sophomore Rise is intended to support students in developing their sense of purpose and determining how they will support that during their time at the University of Utah. OSSE supports programming for Sophomore Week, including the Sophomore Dinner, as well as the facilitation of both an online and face-to-face course and regular sophomore workshops. Funding requests for Sophomore Rise are made by the Associate VP for Academic Affairs/Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

E3: OSSE is the home of the research related to the Exceptional Educational Experience. Through this research, we are able to guide institutional efforts to improve students' experiences and their persistence at the University. Data collection efforts include focus groups, individual interviews, and surveys that aim to gain the perspective of students from across campus. Results are shared with the E3 Steering Committee and President Watkins where actions are determined. Funding requests for E3 are made by the Associate VP for Academic Affairs/Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

Neuro-Diverse Peer Mentoring Program: The peer mentoring program for neuro-diverse students will provide support to a specialized group of students who face particular challenges at the University of Utah. The OSSE will be the home for the peer mentoring program, and the SSA with specialized experience in supporting students with disabilities will assist in coordinating this program.

Homeless Student Task Force/Basic Needs Center: Housing challenges are an increasing problem for college students across the country and the University of Utah is no exception. The OSSE is the home to an emergency fund for students who are experiencing homelessness or displacement. Student Success Advocates are the frontline campus support for students in this situation. Students complete an intake form and work with an SSA to determine and prioritize their immediate needs. SSAs work closely with the Office of Financial Aid to determine students' eligibility for emergency funds. Regardless of whether students qualify for funding SSAs, offer support in meeting the immediate needs of students, and then smoothly hand the students off to the Dean of Students Care Team for long-term support and follow-up.

Empowerment

Student Success Advocates: One of the key missions of the SSAs is to support students in a way that allows them to learn to advocate for themselves. While long-term relationships with students are a goal, it is also important that students begin to see themselves as empowered actors who can make things happen in their time at the University.

Leadership Studies Minor: The Leadership Studies Minor supports the development of leaders across campus through an interdisciplinary approach to leadership. This academic minor provides students with the opportunity to think critically about what leadership is, how they enact it in ways that are consistent with their personal values, and offers opportunities to practice leadership in a setting where reflection enhances the on-the-ground field experience learning.

While the OSSE houses a number of programs and initiatives, the reports below focus on the Student Success Advocates, New University Scholars, and Homeless Student Task Force/Basic Needs Center. Each report includes data illustrating highlights from the 2018-19 year and a discussion of goals for the 2019-20 year.

Student Success Advocates

The four goals of Undergraduate Studies as articulated in the Utah Pledge are to support students by providing them with learning communities, mentors and advisors, a plan to finish, and deeply engaged learning experiences. These goals directly support the larger University of Utah commitment to promoting student success to transform lives. Key to both of these efforts is the work of the Student Success Advocates (SSAs). Student Success Advocates meet students where they are, engage with them to develop a holistic understanding of their experiences as students, and provide individualized support for students' success. *SSAs embody the University's commitment to student success* through their understanding of a range of campus resources and information, their connections to other individuals whose roles include supporting students, and their on-going, in-depth relationships with students. Recently one student told his SSA, "It is easy to survive. It is hard to be successful." *Our job is to make it easier for students to succeed at the University of Utah.* Through these efforts, we contribute to increased retention and graduation rates, as well as students' satisfaction with their University experience, all of which are essential to the University's bright future.

Our Mission

The mission of the Student Success Advocates is to support students in making the most of their University of Utah experience. As caring, knowledgeable professionals, SSAs engage and empower undergraduate students in exploring and clarifying their interests and goals, overcoming personal and academic challenges, and connecting to campus resources and opportunities. Our holistic, individualized, mobile approach allows us to meet students right where they are.

Our Staff

Director

Amy Aldous Bergerson

Associate Director for Education, Support, and Assessment

Melanie Lee

Student Success Advocates

Jeilani Athman	Jon Bernal
Christina Cherry	Christine Contestable
Annie Friedman	Tramaine Jones
Lisa Lewis	April Ollivier
Siosifa Tonga	

Administrative Assistant

Juan Rios

Outreach Ambassadors

Pisti Gamvroulas (Lead Ambassador and Intern)		
Muna Adhikari	Sancha Becerril	Anneke Davis
Kadelyn Egan	Dominic Hurtado	Bethany Moos
Joseph Shiek		

As with other years, the SSAs have experienced change and transition. In July 2019, we added Siosifa Tonga and Annie Friedman to our team. Sifa fills a regular SSA role, and Annie's focus is on supporting online and Return to the U students. We look forward to adding our Disability Specialist SSA and College of Nursing SSA in the summer of 2019. Our 2019-20 team will include 10 SSAs, one Associate Director, five to six Outreach Ambassadors, and the Director and Administrative Assistant.

Our Contributions to and Exceptional Educational Experience

Early results from the E3 research year indicate 10 findings that shape the day-to-day lives of University of Utah students. Students tell us that they desire: connections across courses and extra/co-curricular experiences, clear understanding of how college courses and experiences relate their future endeavors, faculty to understand their essential role in the student experience, anchoring connections that change their campus experiences, strong awareness of on-campus events and resources, accurate portrayals of the University when they are in the college decision-making process, financial support beyond the first year, better communication around the constantly changing physical environment, to not feel like there are "second class" citizens on campus, and smoother processes such as admissions, financial aid, and course registration. Below, we describe how the Student Success Advocates assist students in navigating these issues and contribute to exceptional experiences for students. These descriptions are reflective of the **23,632 total interactions** SSAs had with University of Utah students in the 2018-19 fiscal year. Embedded in the descriptions below are highlights from the 2018-19 year.

Connecting across courses and connecting college to the future

One of the Student Success Advocates' primary functions is assisting students in defining what success at the University of Utah means to them and then connecting students to the resources necessary to achieve their vision of success. Inherent in these conversations is assisting students in making the kinds of connections they expressed a desire for in the E3 research.

SSAs help students make these connections through referrals to the Career and Professional Development Center; in fact, referrals to the CPDC are our second most frequent referrals. Additionally, SSAs' holistic approaches to these conversations assist students in thinking about how their academic lives are woven into the other facets of their lives, modeling the kinds of integration students spoke about in the E3 focus groups. Finally, SSAs discuss with students integrative engagement such as undergraduate research (172 referrals), internships, community engagement and capstone projects (3519 times these were discussed) that support integration of ideas and activities across students' University of Utah experiences.

Faculty

Student Success Advocates recognize that faculty are key to University of Utah students' success. Given this, SSAs spend significant amounts of time talking to students about faculty and their classroom experiences. Sometimes this is a matter of rehearsing a conversation a student needs to have with a faculty member. Other times, it involves reaching out to faculty members on students' behalf. In addition to assisting student with navigating faculty relationships, SSAs also facilitate faculty efforts to provide supportive classroom environments for students. Two new efforts reflect this commitment:

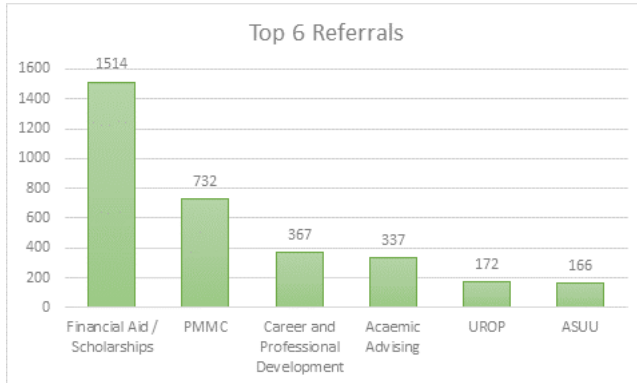
E-LEAP PARTNERSHIP: SSAs are now embedded in all E-LEAP sections. This means that SSAs regularly attend E-LEAP classes, are invited to talk with students regularly, and are often allowed to view the Canvas pages for the course. In this effort, 293 students are directly connected with an SSA, which resulted in 67 in-person meetings. Both faculty and SSAs are enthusiastic about this model, noting that as trust develops between SSA, faculty, and students, interactions between become more meaningful. In the 2019-20 academic year, we will continue to partner with E-LEAP, and will also add the Health Sciences LEAP and Refuges LEAP to our partnership.

FACULTY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE: We established this committee to determine how we can more effectively work with faculty. The goals are to: 1) create a menu of workshops we can present in classes that provide students with time and stress management skills, study tips, and emphasize the importance of building a strong relationship with faculty, and 2) help increase faculty awareness of the SSA program and all it offers students. Our committee has already created one workshop and is working on another to support faculty in their work of meeting students' needs.

Anchoring connections

Student Success Advocates are all about connections. Our job is to connect students to the people, resources, and programs that support their success goals. Referrals are one way we connect students to campus resources. Our top six referrals are: Financial Aid and Scholarships (1514), Personal Money Management Center (732), Career and Professional Development Center (367), Academic Advising (337), OUR (172), and ASUU (166). Figure 1 shows our top referrals.

Figure 1: Top Referrals



We continue to focus on building relationships with individuals within these offices and departments, so we always send students to an individual rather than an office. This year, as a result of feedback collected in our focus group assessment, in which students suggested SSAs could connect them with other students who have similar interests, we added a feature called Meet-Up Mondays with the support of a generous Parent Fund grant from the Office of Undergraduate Advancement. In the fall, we hosted two meet-ups. The first, which was sparsely attended, featured outdoor lawn games and lunch, with a causal focus. The second, hosted by the Department of Communication, was held in LNCO, and included representatives from the CPDC (see publicity below, created by Pisti Gamvroulas, Lead Intern). Over 50 students attended to learn more about internships for communications majors. In April, we partnered with the College of Social and Behavioral Science and the Hinckley institute to host a meet up focused on internships related to politics and policy. Over 50 students attended. We had some money remaining from our grant, which we will use to host two additional meet-ups in fall 2019.



The quotes below illustrate how SSAs assist students in developing anchoring connections:

“That’s certainly the thing that I learned working with them [SSA’s], and one of the reasons that I got so successful was that I stopped trying to handle everything on my own, when I started talking to like anyone and everyone I’ve met, and I’ve become close to almost every one of those resources.”

“I’m a lot more social, and outside of my own bubble, I’m like a lot more like loud and present in situations and a lot more comfortable in my own skin, as well as with situations.”

“I’m noticing, I think it’s really nice to be connected with other students... I would like to join any sort of group like that I could meet people.”

“[SSA] introduced me into student involvement and ASUU and CESA, (inaudible) part of that organization and then went to their meetings and got involved, and it was interesting and I met new friend.”

“I’ve gotten in touch with like all the right people to help me like work towards my degree.”

Financial support beyond the first year

Financing a college education is an area of major concern for University of Utah students. This academic year, SSAs have provided support to **2708 students** around this concern.

Additionally, under the leadership of Christine Contestable, the office has developed and maintains a comprehensive list of scholarship opportunities on and off campus. This resource allows SSAs to provide students with up-to-date and accurate information about what opportunities are available, who is eligible, the deadlines to apply. This list now serves as a complement to the comprehensive list of on-campus scholarships provided by the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships. We made **1514 referrals** to the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships for additional assistance. We also work closely with the Personal Money Management Center to assist students in financial planning while they are on campus and beyond, and referred **732 students** to this office for additional support.

Additionally, the following quote highlights some of the ways SSAs support students in accessing financial support:

“I’ve gotten in touch with like more people. Because like before I was kind of just like, this little isolate like trying to figure out what I’m doing... since meeting with [SSA], I feel like I’ve actually been more successful, I’ve like applied for scholarships, which I’d never done that before...I’ve talked to like the financial money management people, I’ve just talked to so many different offices.”

Navigating University processes and the physical environment

Students find many challenges in the physical environment and University of Utah processes. From limited parking to construction that impedes their ability to move around the campus, students told us in our focus groups that we need to communicate better about changes to our

physical environment that affect them. Students in the E3 focus groups also indicated that they sometimes struggle with University processes such as admissions, financial aid, course registration, and transfer. Student Success Advocates can assist students in navigating campus in a literal way, by providing them with up-to-date information about construction and other changes, and by sharing their own secrets about making their way around campus. This year, we asked SSAs to track their time in various aspects of their jobs, and in the course of this assessment we learned that they spend, on average, **2.5 hours a week in transit across campus**. As the number of students on campus increases, we will need to consider how this transit time impacts SSAs' ability to work with students in meaningful ways, and develop ideas about how to reduce transit time in the future. Student Success Advocates also assist students in navigating University processes, or referring them to offices that can help. Academic Advisors comprise one of our main campus partners, and in the past year, SSAs made **337 referrals to Academic Advising, 311 referrals to Academic Departments/Colleges, and, as mentioned above, 1514 referrals to Financial Aid and Scholarships** as part of their assistance to students navigating University processes.

Below are some quotes from the Outreach Ambassador focus group that illustrate the importance of SSAs in students' navigation of the University:

"A lot of things in my life changed, not always directly because of [SSA], but definitely a lot of it was tied into the help they gave me with giving me resources of all different types."

"Like I could see you going 'yeah you should go talk to those people,' but like actually walking the student there, it like really makes a difference, you know, cause then I'm like, 'oh ok,' so when I set up my meeting with [Department Staff] I'm like not so nervous, like 'oh my god, who am I going to go in and meet?'"

"I even came back to them this year because I got to a point where I was like completely lost on what I was supposed to be doing, and so when I returned they were able to just talk to me about that."

"They can give me leads when I have like nothing else, when I'm completely lost to the point that I don't know where to turn to...they're like a great person to ask, because they know a bit of everything, whether they can tell it to you directly or refer you to someone who might know better."

Second class citizens

In the E3 focus groups, students told us that many of them feel like they are less important to the University of Utah than other students. Identity (race/ethnicity, gender, age) can impact this, but major, being a commuter student, or not being an athlete also contribute to this. Student Success Advocates can help mediate this feeling in students by providing one-on-one, holistic attention to the details of students' lives to assist them in determining what they need to be successful on campus. The following quotes indicate how SSAs help students feel like they matter on the University of Utah campus:

"I've noticed everyone would like to be heard, I think as a human, all of us just like to be heard often, it doesn't matter what you have to say, if you can speak and get it out... so the fact that you guys listen to students' struggles and how you can help them and stuff, that's phenomenal."

"...I've always heard, "Oh there's no such thing as a stupid question," but sometimes you feel that it's such a dumb question and that you shouldn't be asking it, but with an SSA I feel like they won't judge you and that they'll try their very best to help you out."

"Getting to share what's on my mind or what I've been through, 'cause some semesters are harder than others...just getting to share what you're going through."

"Those texts like just treating you like you're a person, you know like, we all need that, like you don't know what's going on in the student's life, and it's just nice to have like another person that's like yeah, "Go you!"

Often, when we talk about the work we do with colleagues from other institutions they ask if the SSAs are focused primarily on students who are academically "at risk". It is unusual to have a resource like SSAs available to all students. Our data indicate that SSAs do serve all students on campus; in fact, the students we serve are a mirror image of the students attending the University. The dashboard below, from fall 2018 illustrates the types of students served by SSAs.

SSA: STUDENT ANALYSIS

These figures include all degree-seeking undergraduates, split by those served by SSAs sometime during the specified term.
 Pro Tip: hover over the charts for plain-english interpretations.



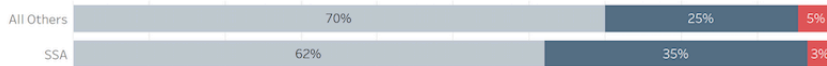
Select a term to explore:
 Fall 18

Total students: All Others **19,430**
 SSA **3,358**

MALE FEMALE



WHITE/UNKNOWN STUDENTS OF COLOR INT'L



The data suggest that, in relation to all other undergraduates, students who interact with SSAs tend to be more racially/ethnically diverse. Groups tend to be similarly distributed among gender lines.

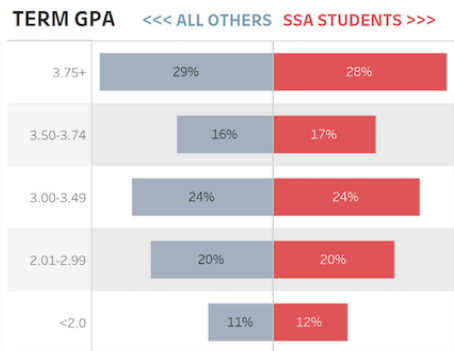
Students who interact with SSAs tend to do so very early on in their U experience, the data showing a plurality of those students interacting during their freshmen year. Please note these academic levels are a function of credits, not years attended.

With regards to term GPA, a greater portion of students interacting with SSAs are struggling academically, with nearly half having a term GPA under 3.0.

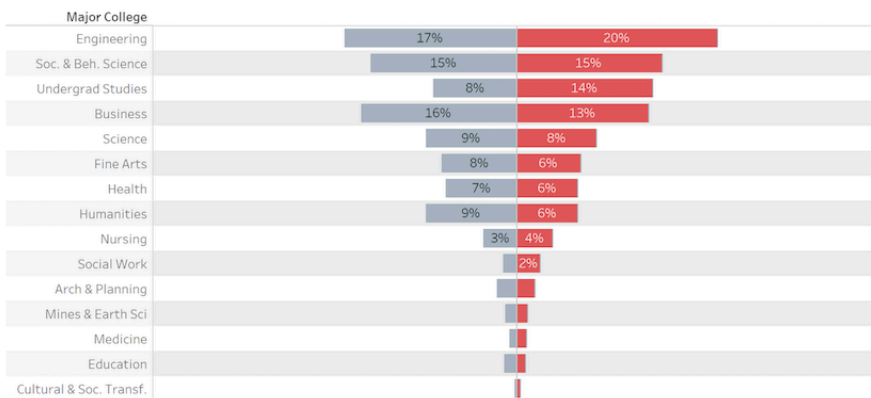
ACADEMIC LEVEL



TERM GPA



MAJOR COLLEGE



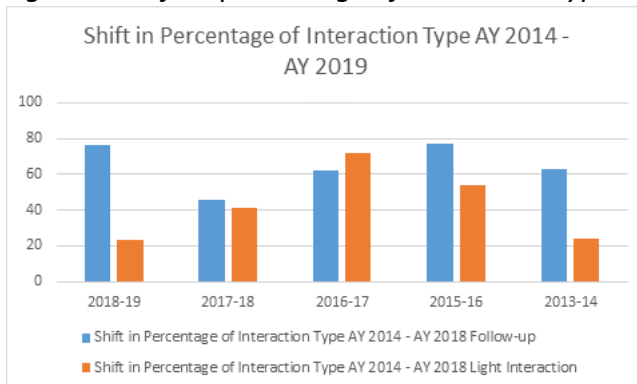
The data suggest that, in relation to all other undergrads, students who interact with SSAs tend to be over-represented in Undergraduate Studies and under-represented in Business, Soc/Beh Sci, and Humanities. Some of this representation, however, is clearly a function of academic level selection effects (see academic level distribution above).

Additional Highlights from SSA Data Interaction Data

During academic year 2018-19, SSAs have had **23,632 interactions** with University of Utah students. Of these interactions, 77% are significant, meaning the SSA had a conversation with a student that was deep enough to collect contact information. Light interactions, (23% of the total), are those in which SSAs talk briefly to students, mainly introducing themselves and their

work. SSAs focus on significant interactions because collecting students' contact information allows them to follow up with students around specific topics. In 2018-19, 76% of significant interactions were follow-ups. The percentage of follow-up interactions has increased from 69% in 2013-14. These changes are a direct result of encouragement from the University to focus on developing long-term, personalized relationships. Figure 2 illustrates our highest percentage of follow-up interactions in the history of the program.

Figure 2: Shift in percentage of interaction type



Of the total interactions above, nearly 2200 were in class visits, which is a primary means for making introductions to students. Student Success Advocates were also active in tabling at a number of campus events, including Major Expo, Welcome Week, International Student Orientation, Transfer and New Student Orientations.

Outreach Ambassadors

The evolution of our undergraduate Outreach Ambassadors (OA) program has supported SSAs' focus on significant interactions with students. In the 2018-19 academic year, our OA program included five Ambassadors and a Lead Ambassador. Outreach Ambassadors participated in a number of outreach events across campus including tabling, one-on-one introductions, and class and student organization visits. Of particular assistance to the SSAs are Ambassador Referrals, through which Ambassadors assist students in completing an online interest form to reach out to an SSA. Thus far, in 2018-19 Outreach Ambassadors have **made 71 referrals to SSAs**. These referrals resulted in a total of **7 appointments with SSAs**. A new addition to the Outreach Ambassadors efforts is the implementation of a mobile Quick Answer Desk, which they have developed with SSA Christina Cherry. Throughout the first months of the Quick Answer Desk, in locations such as the Marriott Library, University Union, and Peterson Heritage Center, a cross-campus collaboration with Academic Advising peer mentors and Career Ambassadors from the Career and Professional Development over **130 students and 8 staff members** have stopped to engage around general questions, time-management, scholarship resources, resume support, and study skills. Outreach Ambassadors were able to provide basic information in response to students' concerns, which included finances and motivation. We will continue to move toward the Quick Answer Desk as an Outreach Ambassador solo-endeavor over the next few months. This will include additional training around campus resources and an infusion of customer service, active listening, and appropriate referral

trainings with the OA team. In 2019-20, Christina Cherry will take on the primary role for supporting OAs as we refine the program with the above goals in mind.

Additionally, the OA program has begun a three-year study on the use and impact of student leadership competencies in their work. Each OA has completed pre- and mid-year evaluations related to how they hope to grow in their role as well as how skills and experiences from the OA role carry transferability into other aspects of their lives as student-leaders, academics, and members of the University of Utah community. SSAs pair with OAs around goal development, reflection, and meaning-making, related to these competencies. Of the 17 competencies we measured, OAs reported the greatest amount of growth in *reflection and appreciation, non-verbal communication, facilitation, and functioning independently*. As we plan for the upcoming year, we will consider how we can ensure that OAs grow and develop as a result of working with our office, and will incorporate a more intentional approach to assisting in this growth for additional competencies.

Finally, in fall, 2018, the OAs conducted three focus groups to support OSSE assessment efforts. Pisti Gamvroulas, Bethany Moos, Dominic Hurtado, Anneke Davis and Kadelyn Egan were instrumental in analyzing and presenting the data from these focus groups to the OSSE team. Student quotes from the focus groups are included in our data throughout this report.

Campus Partnerships

In addition to ensuring that all University of Utah students have access to SSA expertise and support, SSAs have become valued community partners for a number of different initiatives and programs on campus. Student Success and Empowerment Initiative team members serve on the Welcome Week Committee, the College Recruitment Committee, Academic Appeals Committee, Appreciative Advising Committee, Online Student Success Committee, the Homeless Student Task Force, and have served as committee members for several campus searches during the 2018-19 academic year. They serve as advisors for student organizations and facilitate Sophomore Rise workshops. Across campus, SSAs have made **over 30 presentations** to offices and organizations, reaching **approximately 875 students and staff**. Workshops for campus partners such as Major Exploration, Beacon Scholars, and Greek life totaled 15, with a reach of over **350 students**.

Faculty are another key partner on campus. During the 2019-20 academic year, SSAs visited **over 60 separate classes**, which put them in front of nearly **2200 students**. As a result, we have created the Faculty Engagement Committee, which is charged with growing these important partnerships. The Faculty Engagement Committee's work is discussed in more detail in the goals section of this report.

Student Success Advocates have also been at the forefront of providing support for students on campus who are experiencing displacement or homelessness. Working in tandem with the Women's Resource Center, Housing and Residential Education, and University Student Apartments, the SSAs have assisted over **70 students** who did not have a safe or steady place to live in finding more stable housing, accessing financial aid and other resources, and developing

a plan to improve their stability. Notably, this is more than *four times* the number of students we assisted in the same time frame last year (16). Lisa Lewis and Christina Cherry served as SSA representatives on the Homeless Students Task Force (HSTF), but all SSAs have worked to support these high-need students. In the coming year, Sifa Tonga and April Ollivier will take on the responsibility for representing the team on the Homeless Student Task Force. More details related to the HSTF work are found in the HSTF section of this report.

Goals

While there is always room for growth and improvement, the 2019-20 goals detailed below for the SSA program focus on four primary areas: continuing to grow our numbers of interactions, increasing faculty partnerships, developing a series of workshops for classrooms or other small groups, and deepening our use of *Civitas*.

Increase Interactions

Our target growth for 2018-19 was 12%. At the time of our budget request, we were on track to exceed this goal, but we fell short in the last couple of months. In fact, our numbers are lower than they were last year. We are working to determine what caused this fall-off. However, the decline in the numbers was in light interactions, not significant ones. It is important to note that the percentage of significant interactions increased from 58% to 77%, which means that SSAs spent more time working directly with students. The number of significant interactions did increase. In 2019-20, we will again try to increase our interactions, with a goal of 10%. We feel confident we can reach this goal because we have improved our interaction tracker, and we will add two new SSAs in the fall. Two SSAs (Christina Cherry and Annie Friedman) will be out on maternity leave for significant amounts of time in the coming year. To support our planned growth, we are developing a new marketing approach, specifically having students tell the stories of what they gained from working with an SSA, which was suggested by students in our focus groups. Additionally, we will continue to utilize the Quick Answer Desk to promote the SSA program.

Increase Formal Faculty Partnerships

Our partnership between the E-LEAP faculty and SSAs has been very productive, both for SSAs and for the faculty involved in this partnership. Other LEAP faculty have approached us asking if they could be part of the partnership. This spring, we engaged in conversations with Marissa Diener to explore the expansion of the partnership. For 2019-20 we have added all E-LEAP section, the Health Sciences LEAP, and the Refuges LEAP. SSAs will be fully embedded in these classes in the coming year, and we will evaluate the impact of the partnership again in the spring to determine whether future growth is needed.

Faculty Engagement

Many students come to Student Success Advocates after being referred by faculty. Because we recognize that faculty are a valuable partner in supporting student success, we created a Faculty Engagement Committee, consisting of Christine Contestable, Jeilani Athman, Sifa Tonga, and April Ollivier. This group of SSAs is tasked with developing two strands of options for engaging faculty. First, along with the UGS marketing team, this group will develop a

communications plan to be used with faculty about the resources we offer to support students. This plan will include important information for faculty along with a timeline of the best times to reach out to faculty. Second, the group will develop a series of academic support workshops to offer in classes (or other small groups) that faculty can request through the SSA website. In addition to developing the workshops, this committee will train the other SSAs on presenting them. As of July 1, we have one workshop fully developed and a second workshop in progress. We will have the entire team trained on delivery of the workshops by September, 2019.

Increased use of Civitas

Student Success Advocates have recently been introduced to *Inspire for Advisors*, part of the *Civitas* platform for developing on-time interventions to ensure student success. Several team members are now using Civitas for mass emails to students around special interests such as events related to students' majors or career interests, academic success skills offered across campus, or other resources appropriate to the students they are working with. In the coming year, we will deepen our use of this tool to join Academic Advisors in providing just in time support to students by monitoring students who are in Advocates' caseloads for sudden decreases in their predicted persistence. We are excited to provide personalized support to these students, and to work in tandem with the Academic Advising Community.

New University Scholars

Our Mission

New University Scholars are exceptional, accomplished students with diverse backgrounds and life experiences. Admission to the New University Scholars program is by invitation only. These scholars are chosen through the holistic admissions process at the University of Utah, which places importance not only on high grade point averages and test scores but also on community involvement, service-related experience and a demonstrated commitment to improving the world around them.

Our Staff

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Amy Aldous Bergerson

Program Coordinator

Andrea Haag

Student Success Advocates

Melanie Lee

Jeilani Athman

Our Contributions to an Exceptional Educational Experience

New University Scholars is a learning community enhancement offered to a group of specially selected students. New University Scholars are required to enroll in a learning community, attend monthly dinners where they learn from Student Success Advocates, maintain enrollment in 15 credits per semester, and maintain a 3.0 GPA. In their second year, New University Scholars participate in leadership education and are required to engage in some type of leadership – broadly defined – on campus. They receive a \$2000 annual scholarship. New University Scholars addresses the following areas that students in E3 focus groups told us were

important to them: connections across courses and extra/co-curricular experiences, clear understanding of how college courses and experiences relate their future endeavors, anchoring connections that change their campus experiences, strong awareness of on-campus events and resources, and financial support beyond the first year. Below, we explain our activities, and present data to illustrate how we addressed each of these areas.

Connecting across courses and connecting college to the future

New University Scholars are required to participate in one of five partner learning communities: Beacon Scholars, BlockU, Diversity Scholars, Humanities Scholars, or LEAP. The learning communities partnering with NUS are committed to assisting students in integrating their courses and developing the ability to tell the story of their education in a way that will contribute to their future endeavors. The activities in which New U Scholars engage help to continue these conversations outside of the classroom. A few of these activities from the 2018-19 year illustrate how these connections are made. Students:

- Developed skills for managing time and stress as new University of Utah students
- Attended *Oslo*, a play offered at the Pioneer Memorial Theater, and then engaged in a discussion about conflict
- Engaged in discussions about leadership and their plans for making an impact at the University of Utah
- Completed a leadership inventory that helps students identify what a leader is
- Worked through a “trash your values” exercise in which they had to winnow down a long list of personal values to one, which reflected the core of their value system
- Learned how to translate their leadership experiences to other contexts so that they are prepared to talk about their leadership in job and graduate school applications. We asked students to gauge their confidence level in articulating their leadership philosophy at the beginning and again at the end of the year.

Figure 3 illustrates the growth these students experienced as a result of the NUS leadership curriculum:

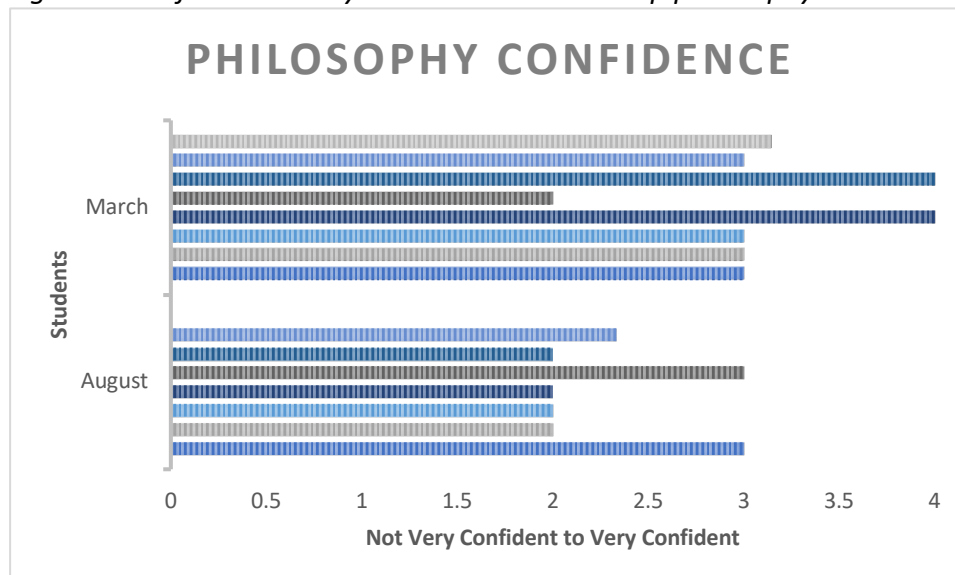
Through these activities, we responded to the need identified by E3 focus group participants to receive assistance in making connections across their coursework and extracurricular activities to enhance their learning now and prepare them for their future.

Anchoring connections

One of the goals of the New University Scholars program is to help break a large university down into more manageable sub-communities. Students learn in smaller classes in their learning communities, and develop relationships with other students in those learning communities. Some of the learning communities also incorporate out-of-class opportunities for students to work, learn, and enjoy together as a way to build community. NUS monthly dinners provide another opportunity for students to gather with their learning community friends, and expand that circle of connections to students in other learning communities. Although we have

not formally assessed New U Scholars to determine whether the program increases their sense of community, we do know that many students in the E3 focus groups indicated that anchoring connections formed in their learning communities.

Figure 3: Confidence ability to articulate leadership philosophy



We also know that anchoring connections develop with staff across campus. NUS provides students with the additional opportunity to work closely with a Student Success Advocate. First-year students work on developing study, stress, and time-management skills, and second year students work on leadership development. Both of these curricula are developed and implemented by Student Success Advocates to meet the specific needs of first- and second-year students, so students not only learn from the Advocates, but they get to know them on a close level. The goal is to encourage relationships with the SSAs that can also serve as anchoring connections at the University.

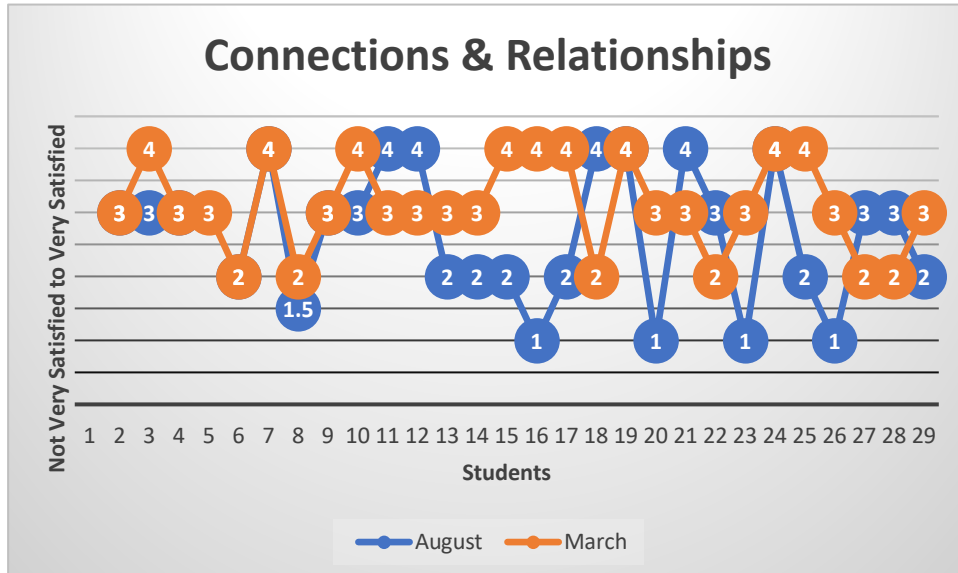
In our beginning and end of year assessment, we asked students to indicate their level of satisfaction with their connections and relationships across campus. Figure 4 below illustrates the growth across the group in this regard:

Awareness of on-campus events and resources

In response to changing our NUS student profile to one that represents the middle range of students, we have added a number of supports to the program. One of these is this year's focus on college success strategies for first year students. As part of this curriculum, presented at the monthly dinners, we integrated information about campus resources that support students' success. From learning how to access counseling services, academic advising, and career development support, to understanding how internships, undergraduate research, and community-engaged scholarship can enhance their University experience, we talk constantly about the options available to make the most of their time in college. And, in the second year, we get students thinking about what their impact on the University will be, which further

exposes them to resources and opportunities. This year, we also added attending a play on campus to the curriculum, which, while sparsely attended, was enriching for those who did make the effort to go. We will continue to do our best to keep students well-informed about the many opportunities to actively engage in their educational experience at the University of Utah.

Figure 4: Satisfaction with connections and relationships built at the U



Related to this area, we asked students at the beginning and end of the year to indicate their comfort level with navigating the University. Figure 5 below shows their growth in this area:

Financial support beyond the first year

Each student in NUS receives a scholarship of \$1000 per semester for the four semesters of the program. To maintain this financial support, students are required to stay enrolled in 15 credits each semester, maintain a 3.0 GPA, and attend all monthly NUS meetings. Students who leave the program for any reason are not able to retain their funding. We work to accommodate students as much as possible to ensure that the funding needed to support their success stays in place. We lost a number of students from the 2018-18 first-year cohort due to low GPAs, not fulfilling the meeting requirement, and not completing 15 credits per semester. Table 1 below illustrates enrollment in the program. This was also an issue with the previous year’s cohort, so this year, the first-year curriculum has focused on college success skills. Our hope is to keep a larger proportion of our 2018-19 students in the program as they move to the second year, which will be an indicator of the success of the curriculum changes.

Figure 5: Confidence in ability to navigate the University of Utah

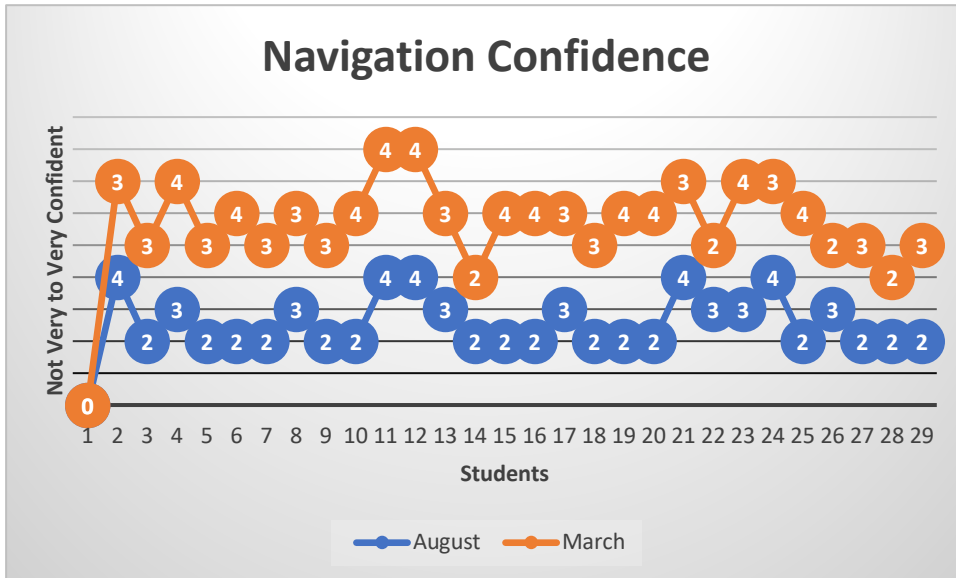


Table 1: NUS Enrollment 2014-2019

	Fall 2014	Spring 2015	Fall 2015	Spring 2016	Fall 2016	Spring 2017	Fall 2017	Spring 2018	Fall 2018	Spring 2019
1 st -year Students	53	45	55	43	53	54	30	24	40	37
2 nd -year Students	20	14	36	31	33	32	38	36	11	8

Thinking Forward

While the New University Scholars program clearly contributes to several aspects of an exceptional educational experience, below we describe our thinking as we plan for the next year’s cohort.

At the program’s inception, New University Scholars were high-achieving, high-involvement high school students, with many options for attending college. Additionally, this group of students often had additional scholarship offers. In an effort to both increase participation in the program and to increase enrollment at the University, the 2017-18 cohort was comprised of students whose ACT scores are in the mid-range for the University and focused on students of color and women who expressed interest in majors where they were underrepresented. This created a much more diverse group of students, comprised largely of students who may not have received other scholarship support. We continued with this trend in the 2018-19 academic year.

In addition to helping the University meet some of its strategic enrollment initiatives, this approach to inviting New University Scholars enabled students who stood to benefit the most from learning community participation the opportunity/incentive to enroll in a learning

community. University data show that students who participate in learning communities such as those represented in our partnership are more successful and complete college at higher rates than students who do not. Thus, it makes sense to use NUS as a way to encourage middle-range students who can benefit greatly from this approach to learning to enroll in learning communities. We continue to struggle to retain students in the program, and will focus more intentionally on assessment in the coming year as we determine how to encourage more students to stay with the program for the full two years.

Assessment

Given the degree of change in the composition and structure of the NUS program, our main goal for the 2019-20 is to continue to develop and implement a comprehensive assessment plan. We continue to be concerned about the consistent under-enrollment in the program and the attrition of students from the program.

The basics of our assessment plan will include assessing student satisfaction with the program, contacting students who do not stay in the program to learn why they left, and working with Mike Martineau to determine patterns in persistence and completion for NUS students. These data points will allow us to establish baselines from previous years that will inform future program adjustments, goals and budget processes.

Homeless Student Task Force

Student Success Advocates have been at the forefront of a new initiative providing support for students on campus who are experiencing displacement or homelessness. Working in amazing partnerships with the Women's Resource Center, Housing and Residential Education, Financial Aid, and University Student Apartments, the SSAs assisted over 70 students who did not have a safe or steady place to live in finding more stable housing, accessing financial aid and other resources, and developing a plan to improve their stability. Forty of these students completed the HSTF Intake Form, through which they requested emergency funding support. This section of the report is not organized around E3, as the support provided by the HSTF centers on ensuring the success of students who face extreme challenges in persisting in college. Many of these students cannot even begin to imagine finding an anchoring community because they do not know where they will sleep at night or where their next meal will come from.

At the beginning of fall 2018 we had \$15,155 of the original \$20,000 (we have also received a number of donations through development) set aside in an account to fund the HSTF. These initial funds were provided by the Vice President for Student Affairs and the University Student Apartments. Table 2 displays how funds were allocated to support students during the 2018-19 academic year. In reviewing this data, it is important to note that not every student who approaches our team actually utilizes the emergency funds. SSAs provide holistic support to these students that often extends beyond financial resources.

Table 2: Allocation of HSTF Funds 2018-2019

Type of Service	Number of Students Served	Amount
Payment of rent or housing deposit	2	\$1,801
Miscellaneous expenses (personal hygiene supplies, insurance and cell phone payments, utility payments)	6	\$2,759
Housing in Promise Apartment (USA)	6	Offered at no cost or reduced cost to student.

We received amazing news in May that Wells Fargo will provide a \$20,000 fund to supplement the HSTF emergency fund. Wells Fargo's money will provide additional flexibility in how we can support students, since the funds are private and not University monies. We are excited to see how this additional funding can assist us in supporting students facing homelessness and displacement and are extremely grateful to Erica Marken for championing the work of the HSTF with Wells Fargo to secure these funds.

Although Christina Cherry and Lisa Lewis led out on this project with the Homeless Students Task Force we continued to use a rotation within the office to assign these cases to SSAs. When we were contacted about students needing HSTF support, we assigned them to the next SSA in the rotation. Utilizing this rotation allowed all SSAs to offer support to homeless or displaced students. Our HSTF representatives for 2019-20 will be Sifa Tonga and April Ollivier.

Since this initiative began in 2016, we have learned that homeless and displaced students require continued effort and a case management approach that extends beyond the responsibilities of the Student Success Advocates. As a result, our approach for 2018-19 utilized SSAs for providing immediate support and initiating funding requests. After triaging and setting up an action plan for students, SSAs hand them off to the Care team that is part of the Behavioral Intervention team in the Dean of Students Office, who take on the continued responsibility for managing students' complex cases. Additionally, SSAs initiate an incident in the BIT tracking system, so the campus is more broadly aware of students who may be in high-risk situations. This new approach allowed SSAs to support students facing homelessness and displacement while also balancing their needs with those of other students.

An additional resource that will be joining these efforts in fall 2019 is the United Way 211 Service. 211 representatives will be on campus one day a week to provide access to community resources to students who need them. The Office of Student Success and Empowerment is in the process of creating an MOU for this arrangement, and we will see 211 staff on campus starting early in fall semester, 2019.

To help understand the impact of this work, we asked our partners in the Student Affairs Assessment, Evaluation and Research Office to explore the enrollment status of students who had been assisted through the HSTF/SSA program. A list of University ID numbers was provided

to AER of students who had been served by the Homeless Student Task Force between Fall 2016 and Fall 2018. There were 133 UNIDs, including one known invalid entry. This number includes a number of students who did not apply for emergency funding using the HSTF Intake Form.

Table 3 shows enrollment and completion for these 133 HSTF/SSA supported students. AER used the Student Data Warehouse to determine enrollment status for students in each of the semesters of interest, along with whether a degree was awarded. From there, the continued enrollment of the student was determined based on whether or not they were enrolled in both semesters. For example, a student who was enrolled in Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 would have a “Yes” value for continued enrollment, whereas a student who was enrolled Fall 2016 and not enrolled in Fall 2017 would have a “No” value. The total number of students who have a value varies, because a student who was not enrolled in the first semester (Fall 2016 in the previous example) would not be counted at all. This exclusion relates to students new to the U, as well as students who were not enrolled for multiple semesters. Students who graduated are *only* counted in the separate column.

Table 3: Enrollment and Graduation Information for HSTF/SSA-Assisted Students

	Fall 16 to Spring 17 Continued Enrollment	Spring 17 to Fall 17 Continued Enrollment	Fall 17 to Spring 18 Continued Enrollment	Spring 18 to Fall 18 Continued Enrollment	Graduated
Yes	46	45	67	59	25
No	6	7	3	14	
<i>Total</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>73</i>	

Given the dire circumstances many of these students faced, the fact that significant numbers continued to be enrolled and that 25 actually graduated, supports the important role that these efforts have in supporting student success. However, we know that our current efforts are limited in their effectiveness and that the decentralized nature of the number of areas working with these students inhibits our ability to tell a compelling story of how effective this support is. Therefore, we have started conversations around the need for a Basic Needs Center, which would coordinate the services we offer homeless/displaced students. This coordination would greatly benefit students, who need access to a variety of campus resources, as well as the University’s ability to show the impact of this work. We have identified a space in the Union for the Basic Needs Center, have begun working with several development staff across campus to identify funding sources for the build-out of the space, and are developing a budget for the Center. The goal is to have a pilot version of the Basic Needs Center operational at some point during the 2019-20 academic year. This expansion continues to reflect the collaborative spirit necessary behind the gargantuan work of assisting students in accessing the basic needs that are essential to their academic success.

Newer Initiatives

The three areas described above represent the most developed aspects of the work of the Office of Student Success and Empowerment. Several areas have been added to this portfolio in the past two years, and are still in development. These include Civitas, E3, the Leadership Minor, Sophomore Rise, and the Learning Success Center. Below we report on the status of those and identify goals for the coming academic year.

Civitas

As mentioned above, the primary role of the Office of Student Success and Empowerment in the Civitas initiative, is to send population-based nudges that address issues common across students based on the academic calendar. In the 2018-19 academic year, we sent over 65,000 individual messages to students through this format. Messages were sent to: first-time, first-year students; sophomore students, transfer students, and online students. Four messages went out each semester, timed to let students know that we care about them as they tackled the various challenges. Messages went to students' preferred email boxes and open rates varied from high 20% to 75%. Below is a sampling of messages received from students in response to these messages:

"You have no idea how uplifting the subject line was. I just saw "You are Important!" and it made me smile. Thank you."

"Awe.:. This made me smile. Thanks for that."

"Thank you! I've been feeling really unmotivated and this made me feel a bit better."

"Thank you for reaching out to me! This is actually something I've been looking to do. I don't feel involved in the college community at all and meeting new people has been a little difficult for me. I was wondering where I could start to look for student organizations or clubs to join? Thanks!" (I introduced this student to an SSA and they engaged in an ongoing conversation about the possibilities...)

"Thank you for your email. I'm wondering if they offer any scholarships or grants for a retired 56 yr old woman who has gone back to school to finish her degree 🙏 Have a great day" (I was able to connect this student to Annie, who helped her identify some funding sources)

These quotes indicate that the purpose of these messages, which is just to help students know that we are interested in them and have options for supporting them, was met.

As we move into our next year with Civitas, the work of the I2 committee needs to center on identifying large-scale patterns that need attention to continue to support student success. The I2 committee meets bi-weekly, and although we have not yet really engaged with the data, our

plan is to begin doing so in the fall. This is a specific goal for the Office of Student Success and Empowerment. When appropriate, messages will be sent from OSSE, but we also hope to engage other areas in sending larger-scale nudges where it seems like a fit.

E3

The Exceptional Educational Experience is an important commitment, and the Office of Student Success and Empowerment is proud to be the home for the research component of this presidential initiative. Over the last year, the research has flourished. While the results of the research will be reported in a University-wide town hall meeting in September, the process for the 2018-19 year is described below.

The first year of research included focus groups, a survey, and individual interviews. Doctoral students from the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy provided support for this project in both data collection and analysis. We conducted 37 focus groups in fall semester, which involved about 110 students. The team analyzed the data and developed the 10 themes noted earlier in this report. The second step of the process was a survey which allowed us to dig deeper into the themes identified in the fall. About 650 students completed the survey. Two ELP doctoral students and Mark St Andre have been analyzing the survey data. Later in the spring, we conducted 22 individual interviews with students who indicated in focus groups or the survey that they were interested in talking with us further about their experiences at the University. The data from these interviews are being analyzed in summer 2019. The results from all three data collection phases will be reported at the town hall in September 2019.

Moving forward, the 2019-20 year will be spent collecting interview data from staff across campus who work directly with students. The goal of this phase of the project is to understand how the University supports and hinders these individuals' efforts/motivation to provide students with the Exceptional Educational Experience they described in the first year of the research. We will continue to work with ELP doctoral student research teams, including Shawn Coon, who will help coordinate the work as a UGS Research Assistant. We will also consider the best outlets for sharing the next phase of the work with the campus community. Year three (2020-21) will involve a similar process to phase 2, but with faculty. By the end of the three years, we should have a clear picture of what students see as pain points and how those who work closely with students view the institution as part of or a solution to those pain points. This picture will then contribute to a plan for alleviating those pain points – for all of those who are involved in the Exceptional Educational Experience on the University campus. We are excited about this ongoing work and look forward to sharing our results with campus constituents as well as seeing these efforts lead to changes that will support President Watkins' vision for students' experiences.

Leadership Studies Minor

The Leadership Studies Minor will be based in the Office of Student Success and Empowerment starting July 1, 2019. Melanie Lee, Associate Director, will take the lead on coordinating the minor. We have several goals for the minor in the coming year, including: increase enrollment (we currently only have eight students officially enrolled in the minor); develop a curricular

structure that will ensure that students build their skills through the three required courses; develop a selection process for faculty for the minor; and create a training for faculty that will ensure consistency across the courses while allowing faculty to bring their personalities, expertise, and skills to their teaching. Finally, we will develop clear learning outcomes for each of the required courses and the minor as a whole and create an assessment plan that will allow us to determine the impact of the minor on student learning.

Learning Success Center

The Learning Success Center, which houses tutoring and supplemental instruction, will move to the Office of Student Success and Empowerment July 1, 2019. We are in the process of ironing out budget issues, and a primary goal in this process is to ensure we are able to continue employing all of the staff from the LSC. We also need to find a physical home for the LSC, and are considering the Marriott Library as well as options within the Sill Center. On July 1, a new LSC Program Manager will start employment at the University of Utah. We will work together to develop a vision for the LSC and then begin thinking strategically about how to bring that to fruition. One goal that is already on the table is to make the LSC a place where the decentralized tutoring options can find excellent training and support. Another is to determine where and how online tutoring fits into the LSC's mission. The coming year promises to be exciting as we develop a mission and vision for the Center, and work together to begin achieving those goals.

Summary

Academic year 2018-19 has been exciting for the Office of Student Success and Empowerment. We have experienced significant growth as an office, and our programs are thriving. The continued investments in student success through our programs has allowed us to continue making a difference in students' lives. We look forward to continuing this work in the coming year, and to deepening our programs' roles in ensuring an Exceptional Educational Experience for all students. We have lofty goals and plans to assess our efforts in ways that will allow us to tell a compelling story about our work. We are grateful to the University of Utah and its leadership for providing us the opportunity to grow, learn, and devote our time and energy to the success of students.