



## Part I: Follow-up Assessment Report Template

**Date of Follow-up Report Submission:** November 2, 2020

**Name of Contact Person:** Tom Menchhofer

**Name of Person(s) Completing Follow-up Report:** Tom Menchhofer

### I. Follow-Up on Last Year's Assessment Report Recommendations

In the 2018-2019 academic year, the Office of New Student and Family Engagement conducting a needs assessment focused on the transfer student experience at DePaul. After surveying transfer students, we identified the recommendations listed below. As indicated, some of these recommendations were within the purview of our department and other recommendations relied on partnerships with college advising offices. Several recommendations were in the midst of conversation when the campus shifted to working remotely due to the pandemic. Progress on each recommendation will be detailed below.

#### *2018-2019 Assessment Report Recommendations for the Office of New Student and Family Engagement*

- Consider ways to implement more peer-to-peer engagement opportunities within the Transition DePaul orientation by:
  - Ensuring each small group is led by a transfer student orientation leader
    - *Response: We increased our efforts to recruit more transfer students to serve as orientation leaders this year. While the number of transfer students increased slightly, we did not receive enough applicants to ensure all transfer students had a fellow transfer as their orientation leader. We will continue focused efforts to encourage more transfer students to apply to become orientation leaders in the upcoming year.*
  - Implementing a “Transfer Student Meet-up” area during the information fair, where orientation leaders are present to help students connect and answer questions
    - *Response: During quarterly orientation programs, we added an Ask a Transfer Q&A session to the orientation agenda. Summer orientation programs were shifted to virtual programs and therefore we were not able to create a space for meet-ups. However, transfer students all received outreach from orientation leaders via email and/or text after attending orientation.*
- Consider offering a tour of the campus not hosting the Transition DePaul orientation program at the end of the day (ie. Offering a tour of the Lincoln Park campus at the end of a Loop-based program)

- **Response:** *Summer orientation programs were shifted to virtual programs and therefore we were not able to provide tours of campus.*
- Facilitate the ongoing support of transfer students throughout their first quarter, and potentially their first year at DePaul.
  - Consider facilitating transfer student events once a quarter
    - **Response:** *See below.*
  - Consider implementing a transfer student mentoring program
    - **Response:** *See below.*

*2018-2019 Assessment Report Recommendations for the College Advising Offices*

- Increase advisor outreach to new transfer students
  - **Response:** *Due to the shift online, college advisors communicated with new transfer students to schedule advising appointments this past summer. Capacity issues for advising teams limit the ability for extended outreach to new students.*
- Consider creating peer support for transfer students within the colleges
  - **Response:** *Transfer Peer Mentor programs now exist in the colleges. Student mentors conduct outreach to new transfer students and arranged programs to which transfers were invited. These transfer peer mentor programs gained access to Mentor Collective resources in 2019-2020 to help recruit new transfer students and to assist with the matching process between students and mentors.*



## **Part II: Annual Assessment Report Template: Alternative Reflection**

Academic Year: 2019-2020

**Date of Report Submission: November 2, 2020**

**Name of Department / Unit: New Student and Family Engagement**

**Name of Contact Person: Tom Menchhofer**

**Name of Person(s) completing report or contributing to the project: Tom Menchhofer**

### **I. Reflection on Student-facing Program-areas**

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to remote working provided a unique challenge for NSFE staff and programs. As we were preparing for the start of our busiest time of year with the opening of the orientation and Chicago Quarter registration system in early April, it was paramount that we set up remote systems quickly. Within two business days, the team established a virtual office, created multiple Microsoft Teams channels to manage communications and planning, and began making updates to our planning timelines. For the sake of this assessment, we will provide a review of two of our program areas, Fostering a Sense of Belonging and Campus Resource Knowledge. We will discuss both the challenges and opportunities that have been presented during this unprecedented time.

#### **Program Area #1: Fostering a Sense of Belonging**

*NSFE programs assist students in establishing a sense of belonging within the greater DePaul community. Through orientation programs, Common Hour lessons, and student success coaching appointments, new students are provided opportunities to connect with faculty, staff, and peers in an effort to deepen students' engagement with and commitment to DePaul. Additionally, programs assist in creating a connection between students and the city of Chicago by teaching them to navigate the city and identifying both formal and informal learning opportunities.*

Prior to this year, the departmental programs and activities that lead to an increased sense of belonging for new students focused on being in-person. Orientation programs, Chicago Quarter courses, our Blue Demon Welcome convocation event, and our success coaching appointments all needed to shift to a virtual format for the first time.

#### **Challenges:**

- Limited time to plan a new approach to deliver programs in new modalities. This challenge led to times when programs or activities needed to scale back plans and prioritize what must be included.
- Building community in Zoom rooms is significantly harder than when in person. In summer 2020, many of us were still working to identify best practices for online engagement through trial and error. Meanwhile, students and staff alike were experiencing Zoom fatigue making it crucial to balance a desire to build synchronous programs and recognize the toll long sessions may take on participants.

- Lost ability to have ongoing conversations with students throughout the hours of the orientation or CQ programs—students needed to work harder to access staff or resources when in person they might have more quickly consulted a peer in close proximity to them.
- Issues of equity and access to technology resources presented themselves in more obvious ways—WiFi connectivity issues, ability to find private spaces to connect to events or classes, access to well-functioning computers.
- Staff and peer mentors needed additional training to support new students in these virtual environments (virtual engagement strategies, technology trainings).

### **Opportunities:**

- We redesigned the entirety of our summer orientation programs to take place in a virtual environment. Summer 2020 orientation programs include an asynchronous pre-orientation online module, synchronous Zoom sessions, and separately scheduled Zoom advising appointments. Additionally, we designed and created a library of videos, a virtual magazine, and a care package to supplement the orientation experience. In response to these program changes, the team renegotiated and lowered the orientation fee. These shifts introduced some new possibilities for orientation moving forward including creating options for both virtual and in-person programs and potentially shifting how and when students gain access to an academic advisor to register for classes.
- During the summer of 2020, our department pivoted our approach to how we engaged with incoming students and created a sense of belonging following orientation. At orientation, Orientation Leaders lead small groups with incoming students, and after the programs leveraged these relationships by creating virtual outreach opportunities to connect with these students. We used the AT&T Landline Texting platform to communicate with incoming students. Student leaders also planned virtual events and met with new students in 1:1 Zoom appointments. We will continue this practice in future years as a way to continue to engage students throughout the summer.
- A shift to online Chicago Quarter sections also pushed us to consider how to facilitate the Common Hour curriculum virtually (synchronously and asynchronously). A unique opportunity to collaborate with the Center for Teaching and Learning emerged leading to the creation of new online Common Hour modules for first-year students in CQ classes. Additionally, we identified ways for CQ classes to better utilize D2L to its full capacity by creating submission folders to collect and grade Common Hour assignments, setting up all courses with a pre-built D2L grade book to track Common Hour points and attendance, uploading pre-populated content to ensure ease in facilitation for CQMs and Staff Professionals. By creating these structures using D2L, we hoped to free up more time for CQMs and SPs to focus on building community in synchronous Zoom sessions and 1:1 meetings outside of class. These online modules will continue to be useful in the future even if we return to in-person instruction.
- The Student Success Coaching program also pivoted to conduct appointments online rather than in person. Through summer outreach initiatives, we learned that students might be more willing to answer the phone and have a conversation than in previous years given this virtual environment. Therefore, this year we will be leaning more heavily on phone calling to make connections with our first-year students and will use texting and emails when needed. We also adjusted the coaching program to ensure we

are adapting our model to fit each student's individual needs, rather than taking a prescribed approach with all participants. We believe this will increase the number of sessions a student is likely to have with a Success Coach, therefore increasing both the amount of support they receive from our program and their sense of belonging at DePaul.

### **Program Area #2: Campus Resource Knowledge**

*NSFE programs introduce new students to myriad campus resources available to support their academic and social transition into the community. Orientation programs, Chicago Quarter courses, and the success coaching initiative seek to normalize the importance of asking for help and utilizing campus and community resources to ensure each student reaches their potential.*

#### **Challenges:**

- DePaul's greatest asset and resource are the people who make up our community. As we shifted to a remote environment, access to meet with faculty, staff, and students became more challenging. In previous years, our orientation programs introduced new students to dozens of university members through information fairs, in-person presentations, appointments, and group activities. Chicago Quarter courses met in-person weekly on campus near the resource offices designed to support them. Student Success coaches met with students in 1:1 appointments on campus and would often escort students to resource offices. Given the limited presence on campus, we needed to redesign all of these activities and programs to serve the same purpose in new ways.
- We presented campus resource information in myriad ways this year however, students and families needed to review the material mostly asynchronously. Videos, virtual magazines, emails, and websites all contained detailed information about how to connect with campus resources yet the loss of direct, face-to-face communication was noticeable. In a sea of communications from the institution, we needed to rely on students to prioritize what content to review closely and to take action.

#### **Opportunities:**

- The shift in the design of orientation programs, as described above, led to students accessing the academic advising experience differently this summer. Students who traditionally needed to wait until the end of summer to attend an orientation program in person were able to register for classes earlier in this new format. As we move into planning for future years, we will consider how we can continue this practice of making advising available earlier in one's transition process.
- Long leveraged as a resource for students in transition, the Chicago Quarter course was delivered differently this year. Before the pandemic, there was a plan to pilot two CQ courses online this fall to provide increased flexibility for students. The shift to online courses required that all sections of the CQ program went online in either asynchronous, synchronous, or hybrid formats. As planning for the next year continues we will incorporate the best learning from these courses and consider how to incorporate flexibility into the first-year seminar.
- Across campus, many resource offices have created brief videos to introduce their services and their staff teams. As resource offices have become more comfortable in creating these media productions, we see an opportunity to find creative ways to share these videos with new students. Of increasing importance is the utilization of

instructional how-to videos to familiarize students with the many technology platforms and processes that DePaul engages (SLATE, D2L, CampusConnect, DeHUB, campus Apps, Microsoft Teams, Advising resources).

- Between Student Success Coaches and Orientation Leaders conducting outreach to new students, we recognize the continued opportunity for these student leaders to normalize the importance of asking for help and to direct students to campus resources. We will review how we can increase support for new students in 1:1 relationships throughout the first year.