

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Program Review
Multicultural Student Services (MCSS)

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS
Mary Ho
Program Director
Office for Multicultural Learning
Santa Clara University

Monica Nixon
Director
Office of Multicultural Affairs
Seattle University

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The external review team read the annual reports written by the Assistant Dean; reviewed the completed CAS Standards; reviewed benchmarking data; interviewed students, faculty and staff; and met with the Vice President, Dean of Students, Associate Dean of Student Development and other relevant members of the campus community. Prior to their visit, the reviewers were provided with USF's Vision, Mission, Values Statement; University Life's Commitment Statement along with the most recent divisional strategic goals; the department's self-study; and other university and department-related materials. Below is a summary of their key findings.

Overall Quality of MCSS

External reviewers rated the overall quality of the department as very good, within the context of the department's human, financial, and spatial resources. Noted strengths of the department included collaborative leadership, professional competency, student-focused commitment, and mentoring. Challenges included "overtaxing" of two full-time staff members, lack of administrative support, and general lack of financial resources. Moreover, MCSS does not have adequate space, staffing, large-scale programming, and community outreach as other established multicultural centers and programs.

General Issues

In their report, the external reviewers focused on six core areas: staffing, relationships, programming, MCSS mission, resources, and communication and marketing. Specific recommendations for these areas are stated below. In addition, reviewers mentioned other issues that were related to MCSS but had more to do with the institutional context. These were: campus climate assessment, first-year experience program, first-generation student support beyond the first year, "ownership" of retention, cohesive institutional approach to diversity and equity issues, LGBTQ student services, difficulty in institutionalizing collaboration with faculty, and expanding of training related to ally development.

Specific Recommendations

The external reviewers provided specific recommendations for each of the aforementioned areas.

MCSS Staff

- Examine ways to provide consistent administrative support to MCSS, perhaps including sharing such support with another UL unit, and to build programming capacity, with the possible addition of another professional staff member or graduate assistant
- On a divisional level and with peer institutions, examine the coordinator role for possible realignment as assistant director position
- Continue to support and fund the involvement of Simon and Mary Grace on regional and national levels

Relationships

- Reach out intentionally to first-year students, including through the new student orientation program and the Foreword program
- Clarify the roles of MCSS and SLE in supporting and advising the Culturally-Focused Clubs Council
- Creating ongoing structures involving MCSS that support first-generation students
- Build relationships with faculty, staff and students outside the cadre of faculty, staff, and students who use their services
- Institutionalize faculty and staff relationships through programs
- Continue efforts to build relationships with Alumni Relations, Academic Support Services, Financial Aid, and the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

Programming

- Access student orientation as an outlet to engage first-year students around the area of diversity
- Create a diverse array of programs that would have a wider reach in terms of student engagement
- Develop a standardized evaluation and assessment process
- Determine ownership of programs such as advising of the Culturally-Focused Clubs Council and Creating Community Retreat

MCSS Mission

- Continue division- and institution-wide dialogue regarding how diversity, multiculturalism, and cultural competency are understood and put into action
- Examine and consider integrating existing structures to support LGBTQ faculty and students, such as the LGBT Caucus, Queer Alliance, and Allies training

Resources

- Maintain funding of the Creating Community Retreat outside the MCSS budget
- Consider “small” space enhancements to enhance the security and welcoming feel of the MCSS suite
- Encourage use of the lounge by students and clubs
- Develop opportunities for dialogue about use of the fifth floor of the University Center as a “center” that includes under its umbrella students of color, international students, LGBTQ students, first generation students, women, and other historically underrepresented or underserved populations

Communication and Marketing

- “Brand” MCSS programs and services, through creation of a new logo and revision of the website to be more interactive
- Commit resources to target intentional communication to faculty, staff, and students in order to increase the visibility of MCSS across the institution

Advancing Strategic Initiatives and Goals

External reviewers noted the explicit connections between MCSS' mission statement and programs with USF's vision, mission, and core values. The "inclusive and clear" language of the department's mission, for instance, reemphasizes the university's mission of "empowering students to be change agents and to engage with issues of justice." In regards to advancing divisional strategic initiatives, reviewers stated that an unclear understanding of diversity, multiculturalism, and cultural competence within University Life has an impact on MCSS mission and goals. More specifically, there is a perception from those who are not currently involved in MCSS programs that the office works with students of color only. However, reviewers mentioned that the Council on Equity & Inclusion, chaired by the Assistant Dean, would assist in developing a common language and understanding of these concepts within the division.

Best Practices and Professional Standards

Ms. Ho and Ms. Nixon observed several best practices within the program, namely: intentional and sustained student development programs, student involvement, collaborative leadership, and relationship-building with key constituents. In addition, reviewers commented on the staff's participation in professional activities and national recognition of programs. The areas where MCSS is not doing well in comparison to other institutions on a national scale are: outreach efforts to first-generation students, LGBTQ students, culturally-focused clubs, and the campus community at large. Other areas of improvement are space configurations, operating budget allocation, and more large-scale and one-time events. Lastly, reviewers remarked that the organizational structure of the department (i.e., Coordinator and Assistant Dean as the only full-time positions, heavy reliance on student staff, and lack of full-time administrative support) hinders program development and implementation, as well as basic departmental operations.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment

External reviewers recommended improvement in program assessment and evaluation, noting specifically the inconsistency in assessment methodology and evaluation instruments¹. They further posited improved evaluation would demonstrate MCSS' impact on the student participants' learning and the campus community climate at large.

Divisional Response

The external review team submitted their written report on time, nearly seven weeks following their on-campus visit. Following the written report, the Assistant Dean for MCSS, Associate Dean for Student Development, and Vice President for UL met to discuss next steps. The top priorities determined during that meeting were: re-classification of the Coordinator position to Assistant Director, increase in full-time professional staff, reconfiguring MCSS as an

¹ A sample of an event evaluation was included in the extern review report.

intercultural center, and increase in operational budget. Discussions are currently underway regarding these priorities and no specific timeline has been determined.

Important Considerations

It is important to note that the two external reviewers were representatives from comparable Jesuit institutions that were similar in size and diversity to USF. Ms. Ho's professional experience includes faculty outreach and development, program development, and office management while Ms. Nixon's profile includes student leadership development, training and development, and teaching. Given their expertise and experiences in Jesuit campuses, the MCSS staff felt they were the best reviewers to understand, articulate, and critique the overall quality of the department.

Another important consideration is the disparity of operational budgets of the multicultural affairs departments across the three institutions. At the time of the external review, MCSS had an operational budget of \$29,914.00. Both Santa Clara University and Seattle University boasted operational budgets over \$50,000. As Program Director for the Office of Multicultural Learning at SCU, Ms. Ho's responsibilities revolve primarily around marketing and communications, and program management. As Director of Multicultural Affairs at Seattle University, Ms. Nixon is charged with oversight of all administrative operations of the multicultural center and divisional priorities. Despite the differences in job responsibilities among all three centers, both SCU and Seattle have operational budgets that are nearly double that of USF's.