



**Division of Student Affairs
Student Life & Services**

CAS Best Practices Self-Assessment SWOT Analysis

INTRODUCTION

The Division of Student Affairs commissioned Student Life and Services units to complete comprehensive self-studies for their respective areas, including an assessment of their individual unit in comparison to established standards of practice and criterion measures published by the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) in Higher Education, based on best practice research.

SLS units assessed their programs and services on 14 domains, including mission, program, leadership, human resources, ethics, legal responsibilities, equity and access, diversity, organization and management, campus and external relations, financial resources, technology, facilities and equipment, assessment and evaluation. This briefing provides a report of the integrated findings across units.

The Strengths and Weaknesses noted in this SWOT analysis were generated directly from the raw data of completed Self-Assessment Guides. Opportunities and Threats have been generated from environmental scan and internal group review and discussion.

STRENGTHS

The bulleted items in bold typeface were rated by 70% or more of the offices as “well met” or “fully met.”

- **Mission – Units reported that their mission statements are consistent with the mission of the institution, consistent with professional standards, and encompass the relevant services and opportunities for students provided by the offices.**
- **Programs and Services – The scope of programs and services provided to students within the offices are consistent with the CAS standards for the distinct offices. Staff reported strengths in the provision of developmentally and culturally competent services, meeting the needs of our student population.**
- **Diversity – Units positively assessed performance in promoting diversity, cultivating respect for differences, providing and a nurturing environment for all students.**

- **Equity & Access** – Units reported strengths in maintaining a non-discriminatory climate for student participants, a non-discriminatory work environment, and providing opportunities to meet the needs of all students in establishing hours of operation and programs.
- **Ethics** – Units assessed that staff adhere to ethical guidelines of practice for their disciplines, strive to ensure fair and impartial treatment of others, seek to avoid personal conflicts of interest, and disseminate promotional and descriptive information that is accurate and free of deception.
- **Human Resources and Leadership** – Units assessed that staff and unit leaders are well-qualified for their positions. Unit leaders were assessed as strong in administration of their units, advocating for programs and services, accessibility for supervision, leadership and communication skills, and collaboration with campus units and external agencies.
- **Campus and External Relations** – Units report strengths in collaboration with a network of relevant individuals, campus offices, and external agencies to meet the needs of students, disseminate information about programs and services, and promote effective relations.

WEAKNESSES

The bulleted items in normal typeface were rated by 40% of the units as “not met” or “partially met” on the standards published by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education. The bulleted items in bold typeface were rated by 70% or more of the offices as “not met” or “partially met.”

- Communication of Institutional Information - Units reported a need for improvement in communication of institutional policies regarding changes in legal obligations and training on privacy and disclosure of information in student records.
- Facilities – Facilities are not believed to be in compliance with health/safety regulations or reviewed regularly. Several units noted a need for improvement in office space with respect to ability to secure work, access to private space, and access for persons with disabilities.

- **Financial Resources** – All units reported deficiencies in funding to accomplish mission and goals, funding priorities, and fiscal authority to strategically implement their programs and services.
- **Technology** – Units reported deficiencies in access to adequate technology, adequate security and backup of data, integration of appropriate technologies into programs and services, and information on the ethical and legal issues regarding the use of technology.
- **Compensation and Equity** – Units reported that they did not believe salary levels are commensurate with those of comparable positions within the institution, similar institutions, and geographic area.
- **Human Resources** - Staff reported that they believed there are deficiencies in fair, inclusive, proactive, and non-discriminatory hiring and promotion practices. Staff reported a need for improvement in human resource processes including recruitment, selection, development, supervision, performance planning and evaluation. Units reported lacking adequate technical and support staff to accomplish job functions.
- **Professional Development** – All units reported deficiencies in opportunities to improve the professional competence, continuing education, and professional development of all staff.
- **Staff Recognition and Award** – Units reported deficiencies in staff recognition and reward processes.
- **Emergency Preparedness** – Staff reported a need for improvement in training and a system of procedures (institutional and office) for responding to threats, emergencies, and crisis situations.
- **Assessment & Evaluation** – Units reported areas of improvement in the use of multiple qualitative and quantitative methods for collecting evaluation data. Units reported a need for improvement in articulation of specific learning and development outcomes for student participants and providing evidence of achieving defined student learning and development outcomes. Units reported relative strengths in illustrating evidence of achievement of program mission and goals.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Build upon existing strengths in promoting diversity, equity and access, and multicultural competence of staff with increasingly diverse student population in flagship university
- Increase student engagement in extracurricular opportunities and the life of the institution by making use of new student center and expansion of residential life
- Market programs to increasing number of full-time students who will have more interest in and availability for student life activities
- Make a greater use of temporary staff during peak periods (e.g. orientation, first week of classes)
- Increase communication with students through use of rapidly expanding technology provides opportunities for increased communication with students through electronic means
- Make greater use of national experts in student life and services assessment through the use of webinars and videocasts

THREATS

- Possible temporary decline in revenue during transition from open enrollment to flagship university model may further reduce resources available to departments
- Inefficient accounting and procurement procedures and lack of budget transparency decrease efficiency in use of limited resources
- Structural impediments to electronic communication with student audiences through direct media (e.g. inability to directly modify web content and social networking sites) make it more difficult to promote programs/events and encourage spontaneous student engagement
- Pervasive uncertainty about future staffing levels is associated in research with decreased staff productivity and increased turnover
- Varying levels of communication lessen coordination of services among campuses