

Student Engagement Strategic Plan Workgroup Final Report

A workgroup was created in Spring, 2021, in connection with Goal 1 (Engagement) of the Division of Student Life Strategic Plan. This report contains a process summary, results, and proposed next steps.

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Workgroup Information

Scope:

- The work group should focus its efforts on the Division of Student Life to create a common language around student engagement across the division. A future work group will think about how the definition can be adopted institutionally.
- The work group should ensure the definition of student engagement is broad enough to capture the various opportunities students can engage in. The work group should share the definition with the key stakeholders for feedback: Pomerantz Career Center, Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates, International Programs, Undergraduate Student Government, and Graduate and Professional Student Government.
- Clarify and distinguish, as necessary, the difference between student engagement and high impact practices.

Members:

Danielle Barefoot (Co-Chair), Jamarco Clark (Co-Chair), Shalisa Gladney, Leandra Jenkins, Bailey Anderson, Mallory Valentine, Ben Lewis, Steph Beecher, and Ian Van Anden

Deliverables:

Deliverable 1:

Definition of student engagement that encompasses a broad array of significant learning experiences that has been shared with key stakeholders.

Deliverable 2:

A plan to share and reinforce the definition with staff in the division. This plan should clarify for staff what this definition means and why it matters.

Approach:

Major Considerations:

Throughout the workgroup's time the following major considerations guided our decision making regarding the definition of student engagement:

- Ensuring the definition could be broadly applied to the varying student populations we work with.
- Keeping the language accessible for students, staff, and faculty.
- Creating a measurable and meaningful.
- Actively soliciting feedback from campus partners

Process Overview:

The workgroup met bi-weekly from April 2021 to June of 2021 and completed the following major tasks.

1. As a group we identified and read relevant student engagement literature, definitions from other schools or organizations and identified information specific to the University of Iowa that would inform a definition for student engagement.
2. After developing our groups understanding of student engagement, small groups met and determined:
 - a. What are key factors or tenants of student engagement that should be included in our definition?
 - b. What do we know about our students at the University? How should what we know about our students inform our definition of student engagement?
 - c. What are key priorities, and values connected to student engagement both inside out outside of the Division of Student Life? How should these values and priorities inform our definition?
 - d. How can we make our definition equitable and accessible to all students, faculty, and staff?
 - e. What, if anything, else is important for us to consider when we write a definition for student engagement?
3. Drafted 2 potential definitions for student engagement and sought feedback from VP Hansen, Dean Reams and Director Schnelle.
4. Revised the definition and shared the draft language with stakeholders outside of the division. The definition was shared with:
 - a. The Office of Community Engagement, University College, Academic Support and Retention, Pomerantz Career Center, School of Law, School of Dentistry, Graduate College, Division of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, International Programs, and Distance and Online Education.
5. Complied all feedback and finalized a proposed definition for student engagement.
6. Identified needs and a plan for implementing a Divisional definition for student engagement.

Workgroup Results

Deliverable 1:

Definition:

Our workgroup proposes the Division adopt the following definition of student engagement: **“Student engagement is intentional participation in meaningful learning experiences that foster students' academic success, sense of belonging, holistic well-being, and community involvement. Student engagement helps students develop knowledge, values, skills, and behaviors that support their success at Iowa and beyond.”**

This definition incorporates key literature, best practices, and the university context. This definition was broadly vetted within and outside of the Division.

Deliverable 2:

Plan for Sharing and Reinforcing the Definition of Student Engagement

For the Divisional definition for student engagement to be successful the workgroup recommends the following steps:

- **Build confidence in how the definition of student engagement was developed.**

- Publicly share the workgroup process with the Division.
 - The members of the work group believe that On Common Ground would be a critical opportunity to achieve this goal.
- Allow for members of the Division to submit questions to the workgroup.
- **Have Divisional leaders highlight student engagement regularly.**
 - Potential examples:
 - Utilizing On Common Ground to highlight work in the Division connected to the definition.
 - Connecting pride points that might align with the work of student engagement.
- **Support departments in seeing how the work they already do connects to the definition of student engagement.**
 - Develop reflection and processing questions to help departments identify ways to make meaning of the work they are already doing to support the student engagement definition. Potentially build off of the Strategic Focus and Decision Making Guide. Ask all departments to engage in this reflective process to determine how they connect to the definition.
 - Develop guidelines for how to utilize the definition when developing new initiatives.
- **Work with DSL leaders to develop clear expectations for departments on how they should use the definition.**
 - Example expectations:
 - Including the definition on the department's webpage.
 - Incorporating language from the definition into marketing and outreach for student engagement opportunities.
 - Mapping departmental initiatives to the definition of student engagement.
 - When working with student employees, highlighting how campus employment is a form of student engagement.
- **Develop centralized resources for the Division connected to student engagement.**
 - Utilize Student Life Connect to have a centralized hub of resources related to the definition of student engagement.
- **Look at current Divisional resources like Hawkeye Engage and data dashboards to create a centralized way to track and measure student engagement.**

Next Steps

Develop Plan for Marketing of Student Engagement Definition to Students, Families, and Stakeholders

- Work with Student Life Communications to determine the best methods of integrating the student engagement definition into the larger conversation around student success and engagement on campus.
- Charge Student Life Communications with developing a marketing campaign for sharing the definition with students, families, and stakeholders with the institution.
- Any message shared about the definition should include a call to action specific to the audience but focused on getting students involved.

Meet with Key Divisional Partners to Share Final Definition and Discuss Mutual Partnerships

- While many partners were able to provide input on the definition, we recommend connecting back with partners to share the final definition and identify how the Division can use the definition to connect students to their services. We recommend starting first with:
 - Undergraduate Student Government
 - Graduate and Professional Student Government
 - Pomerantz Career Center
 - Iowa Center for Undergraduate Research
 - International Programs

Utilize Technology to Support the Tracking and Assessment of Student Engagement

- Identify ways the SWIPE 2.0, Hawkeye Engage, and the Excelling@Iowa could be utilized to track student participation in student engagement opportunities and the impacts of student engagement.
- Work with the office of Assessment, Improvement, & Research, and the DSL Assessment Council to develop and execute an assessment plan for student engagement.

References

During the definition writing process, the workgroup utilized the follow sources to develop our shared understanding of student engagement literature and University of Iowa specific considerations.

1. Terrell L Strayhorn (2008). How College Students' Engagement Affects Personal and Social Learning Outcomes, *Journal of College and Character*, 10: 2, DOI:10.2202/1940-1639.1071
2. Harper, S. R. & S. J. Quayle. Making Engagement Equitable for Students in U.S. Higher Education. In *Student Engagement in Higher Education: Theoretical Perspectives and Practical Approaches for Diverse Populations* (August 15, 2014) (1st ed., pp. 1–14).
3. University of Iowa 2020-2021 Data Digest
4. University of Iowa 2018 SERU Report: How Students Report Using Their Time
5. University of Iowa 2018 SERU Report: Taking Learning Beyond the Classroom
6. University of Iowa 2018 Undergraduate Student Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Campus Climate Survey and Listening Sessions Report (Pages 3-20)
7. Dr. Shaun Vecera's Learning Model drafts on Staff Memory, Staff Metacognition and Staff Mindset
8. Division of Student Life Strategic Plan
9. Closing the Gap: Experiential Education for All Undergraduates at Iowa P3 Proposal
10. Partner Websites:
 - a. <https://careers.uiowa.edu/about-pomerantz-career-center>
 - b. <https://icru.research.uiowa.edu/students>
 - c. <https://international.uiowa.edu/>
 - d. <https://usg.uiowa.edu/>
 - e. <https://gpsg.uiowa.edu/>
 - f. <https://newstudents.uiowa.edu/iowa-challenge>
 - g. <https://studentlife.uiowa.edu/about/>