

## **Student Relations Committee Year-End Report 2016-17**

Senators: Marinda Allender, Sharon Canclini, Monica Jenschke, San-ky Kim, Jay Ryu (fall), Adam Schiffer, Krista Scott (spring), Melissa Sherrod, Michael Sherrod, Gregory Stephens (FSEC Liason), Keith Whitworth, Robin Wright (Chair)

*Charge: Meet with officers of the Student Government Association (SGA) and SGA House of Representatives at least annually in order to monitor issues of concern to the student community. Attend the weekly meetings of the SGA.*

Throughout the year SRC members attended weekly SGA House of Representatives meetings. In January, SRC members met with SGA Executive Branch to discuss how FS-SRC could help them achieve their goals.

*Charge: Assess the state of TCU undergraduate graduation and attrition rates and propose ways to improve these rates.*

Dr. Cathan Coghlan from the Office of Institutional Research met with SRC to explain graduation retention rates for last reporting year 2011: 90.6% graduation retention rate is an impressive gain from the 2009-2011 with a 10.4% point increase. The Chancellor is championing the *Project 85 Program* with the goal to improve the 6 year graduation rate to 85% by the year 2025 (representing the 2019 cohort). Current 6 year graduation rate is above 82% based on 2011 data. The university is on track to meet the goal, but continued effort is required to maintain momentum.

*Charge: Represent the Faculty Senate on matters involving student concerns. Study the transfer students experience at TCU. Study the state of diversity and inclusiveness at TCU. If under-served areas are identified, propose a plan of action.*

In an effort to better understand the needs of our students who represent various minorities and our non-traditional students, the Student Relations Committee (SRC) met with various TCU staff to learn more about what those needs might be & to address how they might be met. Here are our findings:

### **Inclusiveness and Intercultural Services Needs**

- Appointment of a chief inclusion officer: This need was met in October '16 with the creation of this new position and appointment given to Dr. Darron Turner.
- Encourage more departments to receive Inclusiveness Training

- More faculty volunteering to help interview students pursuing the Community Scholars Program
- More faculty and staff volunteering as a speaker at the Inclusiveness Luncheons

### **International Services Needs**

- Increase professional staff: IS started in 1999 with 3 staff members and 250 students and currently has 700 students with 3 staff members.
- More faculty participation in panel discussions in the International Student Workshop

### **LGBTQ+ Needs**

- TCU offer at least one scholarship for LGBTQ+ students
- Spectrum should receive institutional support to be involved with national organizations, like Campus Pride, and to attend conferences and trainings, such as the Campus Pride leadership camp offered each summer.
- Both Faculty Senate and Staff Assembly to consider officially recognizing TCU Allies as a special interest group for faculty and staff.
- Encourage departments to receive Safezone Trainings for their faculty/staff
- Job title directly stating LGBTQ+. That would be a significant step in TCU openly affirming that it values the LGBTQ+ population here, and that it understands their unique needs that warrant such an institutional commitment.

### **Religious & Spiritual Life Needs**

- Training for faculty and staff on religious literacy: Students feel conversations around their tradition (LDS, Islam, Judaism) have been handled poorly or that they often have to defend their non-evangelical-Christian faith in classroom discussions
- Importance of increasing our religious diversity at TCU through Admissions Recruitment
- Opportunities for the RSL Staff to be guests in classrooms, where they might be able to help facilitate conversations around spiritual beliefs and how they impact sensitive topics, or how topics from today's headlines impact what students believe

- A staff person to work specifically with the Jewish Community
- A staff person to work specifically with the Muslim Community

### **Transfer Student Needs**

- Indication on class rosters if students are transfers
- Survey for faculty to understand transfer students' needs in the classroom. In April SRC met with Transfer Center to make suggestions about survey.

### **Veteran Service Needs**

- Institutional support to create a centrally located Veterans Resource Center housing the Veteran Services Department with facilities to foster a “safe” environment as veterans transition to campus life
- Academic advisor that works with veterans who understands the impact of using veteran benefits
- Priority registration to help with the restrictions that veterans have regarding what VA will pay for: These non-traditional students also may be juggling full-time job and/or family and need more flexibility for class schedules.

### **Committee Recommendations**

Based on findings from TCU professional staff accompanied by our own thoughtful research and reflection around the growing support needed for some of our student minority groups, the Student Relations Committee would like to make the following recommendations in this particular order:

- Through the oversight of the Veterans Service Department, we recommend creating a centrally located Veteran Resource Center housing the Veterans Services Department, the Veteran Affairs Certifying Official, and the Student Veterans Alliance, including a conference room and a lounge space where the veteran and military community can congregate.
- Through the oversight of the Office of Religious & Spiritual Life, we recommend hiring a professional staff person (perhaps a graduate student) who will have the direct responsibility of working a minimum of 10 hours a week with the Muslim community at TCU. While primarily providing direct on-going support to the

Muslim Student Association or MSA (TCU's Muslim student religious organization) and its student leaders, this individual would also provide programming and educational opportunities on better understanding Islam and supporting the broader Muslim community. They may also provide support in the recruitment of other Muslim students through the office of Admissions.

- Through the oversight of the Office of Religious & Spiritual Life, we recommend hiring a professional staff person (perhaps a graduate student) who will have the direct responsibility of working a minimum of 10 hours a week with the Jewish community at TCU. While primarily providing direct on-going support to Hillel (TCU's Jewish student religious organization) and its student leaders, this individual would also provide programming and educational opportunities on better understanding Judaism and supporting the broader Jewish community. They may also provide support in the recruitment of other Jewish students through the office of Admissions.
- Through the oversight of the Office of Intercultural and Inclusiveness Services, we recommend hiring a professional staff person (perhaps a graduate student) who will have the direct job responsibility of working a minimum of 10 hours a week with the LGBTQ community. In addition to coordinating and preparing for all Safezone Trainings (which is done now by staff who volunteer their time and resources but who do not have this as a job responsibility), this individual would also support Spectrum (TCU's LGBTQ student organization) and its student leaders, as well as managing the restricted fund that was given to TCU to support the LGBTQ community.