Aboriginal Student Services Team Visioning

April 2017

Facilitator: Madeline Whetung

Attendees: Mark Gray (Manager), Tommy Akulujuk, Kylie Fox (Aboriginal Coordinators)

Purpose

Team visioning was planned in order to strategize together about the future of the Aboriginal Student Services department. Additionally, the team required an opportunity to review the successes of the year and collaborate about areas that need attention, internally to the department.

Summary of Program

The first day was comprised of a meeting of Indigenous staff members only in the morning, and the full team in the afternoon. The focus of day one was an open team discussion about Indigenous student needs, how staff feel they are meeting those needs, and how the department can improve as a whole to meet student needs. This day focussed on “thinking big.” The purpose was to allow staff members to brainstorm possibilities and dreams for the department.

Day two was more focussed. The team met altogether in the morning. We worked together to mete out what the Aboriginal Student Services department is responsible for, and what they should be responsible for, and also, how they can collaborate with other departments to streamline services. In doing so, the team also established which team member is primarily responsible for various aspects of the services provided. In the afternoon, a dense brainstorming session was geared towards establishing a mission and vision statement to guide Aboriginal Student Services in the coming years.

Outcomes of Meeting

1) The open brainstorm indicated that the team is interested in collaborating further with other departments. In particular, the team sees the Registrars and Financial Aid offices as important collaborators who can help support Indigenous students. These offices may require some education about the intricacies of funding structures for students from diverse Indigenous backgrounds. Health Services is another important department for the team to collaborate with so students can have access to culturally appropriate counselling services.

2) The team was able to establish the role each staff member holds, and the duties each staff member is responsible for. The following is a listing of positions that currently exist and their duties, along with three suggested positions to fill gaps in services, or to enhance already existing services. New positions listed are: Recruitment and Outreach, Student Hires, and an Aboriginal Counsellor.

Manager

Staff Supervision

Overseeing operations

Service Level Partnerships

Inter-College Relations

Budgeting

Report writing

Seeking Funding Opportunitis

Overseeing Research

Indigenous Voice at Executive level (advocacy for students and staff)

Coordinators (Kylie and Tommy)

1 to 1 student support

Advocacy 4 students at operational level

Indigenous student funding support

Communications to students

Supervising students

Knowledge sharing and capacity building with students

Strategic programming and Program planning

Relationship building (elders and knowledge keepers)

Space management

Student: Paid, Volunteer, Coop

Event planning [organizer] – logistics, booking, advertising, food, parking

Liaising with elders and community knowledge holders (guided by coordinators)

Space maintenance and upkeep

Neechie calendar updating and facebook events

Recruitment and Outreach

Outreach and engagement to prospective students

Community liaising

Student transitions/mentorship

Institutional partnerships (operational)

Data management (student stats and self ID, tracking recruitment)

Application and admission support

Alumni relations

Aboriginal Counsellor

Counselling: traditional and elder guided, clinical

3) Space emerged as another important theme in providing adequate support for Indigenous students, both in terms of having more space for Indigenous students, and also broadening Indigenization on campus. The team sees shared office/lounge space for Indigenous faculty, student services staff, and students as important to creating a safe and welcoming environment for Indigenous peoples on campus. As it is, shared space for faculty and staff and students altogether, is lacking.

4) The mission and vision statement for Aboriginal Student Services were designed to capture not only the services provided to students but also the cultural perspective in which the services are rooted. They can be shared widely and are intended to be placed on the website to help students and families understand how FASS intends to support students during their time on campus.

**Vision Statement:**

**Rooted in Indigenous perspectives, FASS strives to nourish students’ spirits on their learning path by supporting connection to community, culture, and self.**

**Mission:**

**FASS provides cultural programming, 1 to 1 student support, and develops meaningful partnerships with Indigenous organizations and local service providers to foster student success and connect students to community.**

Conclusions

The team wrapped up the two day session by establishing some to-dos for members of the team in order to carry the visioning forward. They are as follows:

- Individual workplans by each staff member

- Mark: budget considerations for hiring students, to follow up and secure closure on outreach and engagement, advocate for Aboriginal manager

- Review current job descriptions with HR