
CSU Division of Student Affairs Strategic Planning Equity Review Consultation

Executive Summary

In early spring of 2023, CSU's Division of Student Affairs underwent a strategic planning exercise. They used surveys, focus groups, and working groups to address the challenges they had faced over the past three years. In the second phase of this process, they invited an outside consultant, Dr. Josefina Carmona, to review materials created by DSA departments. These materials aimed to advance student success goals equitably, capture the needs of current CSU undergraduate students through IRB-approved research, embrace new staffing strategies as the pandemic becomes endemic, and provide recommendations on their progress to provide staff with equitable compensation. Strategic planning recommendations for DSA were prepared by Dr. Carmona through the review of division artifacts and conducting informal focus groups at CSU in July 2023. The following provides an overview of the most critical observations and recommendations that the DSA can integrate into their continued work with their strategic planning process.

Overview & Priorities

The equity review was conducted to evaluate whether the planning and preparation for the new strategic planning cycle were grounded in a cohesive vision for the division that prioritizes equity in its student success model. The evaluation of CSU's DSA was performed using a critical framework to determine its alignment with equity-minded practices in both student affairs service plans and university strategic plans and reports.

Holding Space for Grieving and Healing. The CSU DSA's strategic initiative places great importance on equity-mindedness. During the review process, certain key areas emerged, creating and nurturing spaces to **humanize** and **value** the DSA staff and their labor. Creating a safe space for DSA staff to heal after the pandemic and realignment is crucial. This is a reminder that student affairs professionals prioritize creating a space where their students can feel heard, seen, and valued. Therefore, it is equally essential for staff to have a safe space to heal. By prioritizing this process, executive leadership can lead in the healing process and understand the compassion fatigue that staff may be experiencing.

Salary and Labor Inequities. Salary and labor fairness issues must be addressed to foster a sense of connection between DSA staff and executive leadership. The pandemic has presented novel and innovative methods of demonstrating appreciation for the workforce while simultaneously navigating student affairs professionals' persistent and demanding workloads. It remains vital for the leadership team to continuously work towards confidently affirming their

commitment to achieving the division's student success objectives by creating a culture and norm of saying "YES" to flexible staff work requests and pilot programs, while simultaneously ensuring workloads are distributed across employee classifications appropriately and with the intention to prioritize goals, align the work to those goals, and streamline existing programs and processes. The Division cannot do "MORE" without first understanding overlaps in gaps in existing programming and the impact to frontline staff.

Shared Definition and Vision for Equity. Just as critical as the first priority area, developing a ***shared*** definition and ***vision*** for equity is a crucial priority that requires investment in ***professional development*** for equity-mindedness. The report emphasizes the staff's need for professional development. Despite being a leading division in diversity, equity, and inclusion, investing in individual and departmental development is critical to the success of the new strategic plan.

Student Success. The department has been working to involve students and prioritize their success, but an unhealthy staff could hinder these efforts (*see priority one*). The report offers practical recommendations from students and the reviewer. The Student Success Workgroup, which was recently formed, is a good first step towards promoting collaboration with faculty to develop a comprehensive plan for achieving the university's student success goals.

Organizational Structure and Communication. Additionally, there are suggestions for executive leadership on organizational structure and logistics to implement the strategic plan, promoting a fair and open approach to building a workforce that values equity. A strong focus on communicating decisions, changes, new initiatives, and strategies for investment in resources plays a significant role in plans success.

Final Thoughts and Next Steps

The CSU DSA is committed to ensuring all students succeed and prioritizes fairness in their work. Their approach to student affairs is highly respected and often seen as a model for best practices. Despite recent challenges, the DSA remains a leader in this field. Considering organizational changes and the COVID-19 pandemic, the DSA is well-positioned to prioritize equity and excellence in its strategic planning process. This report provides several recommendations on what is critical, how to operationalize recommendations, and additional resources to assist the division in its strategic planning endeavors. Lastly, and most important, is that the DSA leadership recognizes that the answers and recommendations of this report come from a team of committed individuals. By listening to their voices and implementing their recommendations, this strategic plan will successfully achieve its overall goal of serving students from an equity-minded approach.