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Enhancing the Global Competency of Our Students

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Dr. Covey Welcomes in the New Year

I am delighted to share with you the inaugural edition of THE BLUEPRINT, the newsletter of Georgia State’s Division of Student Affairs. We hope that you will find this to be an interesting and ongoing source of news and information about programs and resources impacting the quality of student life at the university. Just as a blueprint provides architects and engineers with a detailed plan for achieving their objectives, we believe THE BLUEPRINT will be a useful guide for students, faculty, staff and parents seeking to make the most of the opportunities available at Georgia State. THE BLUEPRINT will also serve as a vehicle which will celebrate the successes of our students and staff.

In its first semester of publication, we anticipate additional issues in March and May. By Summer 2015, we plan for THE BLUEPRINT to appear monthly. This is an exciting time for the university and for the Division of Student Affairs. We’re happy to have the opportunity to share the many changes which lie ahead through a new medium. We look forward to your comments as we proceed.

Best wishes for a productive and successful new year.

Sincerely,
Dr. Douglass F. Covey, Sr.
Vice President for Student Affairs

Centered on Innovation

When it opened its doors for spring semester, both the Student and University Centers welcomed the university community with a range of improved facilities and services in keeping with a new mission to guide its growth as Georgia State moves into its second century.

The department also now sports the new name Student Center, a distillation of the former name and an expression of the center’s role as a student centered environment on campus. The center’s two buildings, the Student Center and University Center, will soon take new names as well: Student Center East and Student Center West. The name changes will be implemented in stages, and more information will be shared with the campus throughout spring semester as the plan progresses.

A more tangible indication of the Student Center’s emphasis on innovation is its newly renovated Information Center.

“The larger, more inviting space has been expanded out into the Student Center atrium to make it more visible and increase the space available for services, such as the center’s growing discount ticket sales operations.”
~ Boyd Beckwith, Director of the Student Center

Discount tickets to movies, theme parks, sporting events and other local attractions are available for purchase throughout the year by students, faculty and staff at the Information Center and online. The improved Information Center features a new touch screen for wayfinding.

Staff Spotlight: Melissa Buchheit

Dr. Douglass F. Covey, Vice President for Student Affairs, announced on December 9, 2014, the selection of Melissa Buchheit as Director of Recreational Services.

A native of Savannah, Melissa earned her BS in Health, Physical Education and Recreation from Armstrong State College.

She received her MA in Exercise Science from Georgia State University.

Following an internship, she joined the Rec Department as Intramural Coordinator in 1989 and subsequently served as Fitness Coordinator, Fitness Specialist, Associate Director for Programs and Interim Director. In 1991, she was chosen as a Sparks Award recipient in recognition of superior service to the campus community.

“This is a fitting culmination to her many years of service in the department and I have great confidence in her leadership for the future. Not only does she have great expertise in her field, but no one could rival her passion for the work or her dedication to Georgia State University.”
~ Dr. Douglass F. Covey, Vice President for Student Affairs

The position of Director of Recreational Services was vacated when long-time Director, Scott Levin, resigned to become Recreation Director at the University of Miami.
The New Multicultural Center Continued

The center’s library serves as a resource for students with reference books, novels, magazines, and videos on different cultural communities around the world. Its collection consists of African American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, LGBTQIA, Middle Eastern and Native American culture and history and it provides an opportunity to promote cross-cultural experiences by placing books, articles and videos on reserve for students. These are great ways to facilitate learning and discussion outside the classroom.

Students have begun taking advantage of the Multicultural Center including participating in welcome receptions and the Open House.

“The Multicultural Center Open House was one of my favorites. I enjoyed hosting a booth with my executive board members of Panthers Allure and promoting our organization. It was also great to network with other student organizations that promote diversity.”

~Justin Rodriguez, the Marketing Director for Panthers Allure

For more information about the Multicultural Center located in Suite 250 of the Student Center, please call 404-413-1584 or visit multicultural.gsu.edu.

Centered on Innovation Continued

in the Student Center, as well as two screens that are the latest addition to the center’s digital signage. Implemented in early fall, the extensive digital signage network promotes events and services of the center and the Division of Student Affairs.

These enhancements are aligned with the Student Center’s new mission statement, which was refined by the center’s staff last year to focus on fostering meaningful growth opportunities that nurture an inclusive and diverse community through innovative services, programs and facilities. This goal also prompted the renaming of the Reservations Office to Event Management, with an increased emphasis on event planning support and customer service. Staff positions in the area were given new titles – event planning manager, event planning coordinator and event planning assistant coordinator – to reflect the new focus. Other new services launched in the fall 2014 semester include Campus Events’ Panthers at Woodruff Pass program, the Student Government Association’s Go Green, Save Green refillable mug initiative and Spotlight Programs Board’s creation of a Films Committee.

The Panthers at Woodruff (P.A.W.) Pass offers students a season pass to the Woodruff Arts Center and its affiliates the High Museum of Art, Alliance Theatre and Atlanta Symphony Orchestra for the low price of $25. Almost 200 students have purchased passes, and sales are continuing this spring. Campus Events also continued to expand the university community’s horizons through the Distinguished Speaker Series, which hosted Alexis Ohanian, Sonia Nazario, Laura Ling and Eric Alva during fall semester.

SGA’s Go Green, Save Green initiative offers students, faculty and staff the opportunity to save on refills of fountain drinks, coffee, cappuccino and hot chocolate at Georgia State food courts with a refillable Go Green mug. Students can get one free mug at the SGA office, and students, staff and faculty can purchase an unlimited number of mugs for $5 each at the Information Center. Mug holders can purchase refills for $1 for fountain drinks and $1.50 for coffee and hot chocolate through June 30, 2015.

The Spotlight Programs Board created a films committee to provide more students with the opportunity to have an active role in choosing films shown at Cinefest and other film related programming like “Campus Moviefest.” Based on three years of attendance data, Cinefest’s hours were also rescheduled to show movies only on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. The new movie selections and theater rentals boosted attendance this fall more than 140 percent – to 7,450 with 226 showings in 2014 from 5,294 with 636 showings during the same period in 2013. By reducing the number of film showings, it has allowed Cinefest to be used by student organizations and departments for other programs.

For more information about Student Center programs, services or facilities, please visit studentcenter.gsu.edu.
Cooperative Education at Georgia State University

Imagine an enrolled student spending six months in a paid full-time professional work environment experience that directly aligns with that student’s academic program and career plans in preparation for her or his next steps after graduating from Georgia State University. That student’s competitiveness for those next steps would be significantly increased, so much so that they may graduate with a job offer in hand, including a higher starting salary, as a result of real-world and relevant work experience.

“This is one of the very clear outcomes accomplished recently when a student from the first cohort of the new Cooperative Education Program at Georgia State University received a job offer and started work immediately after graduation. In addition to the benefits for our students, the participating organizations enjoy a talent pipeline that delivers well-prepared, work-ready Georgia State University students.”

~ Kevin Gaw, Senior Director of University Career Services

To date, students have applied or worked at sites such as Better Cloud, Central Intelligence Agency, Cox Communication (Auto Trader), EZE Software Group, Institute of Nuclear Power Operations, Norfolk Southern and UPS. The list is expanding weekly as the program expands to include more majors and more sites.

Prior to its launch in January 2014, a diverse group of campus professionals representing many offices and programs from across the University came together in the spring of 2013 to put together the Cooperative Education Program. Headed by Dr. Robin Morris, Associate Provost for Strategic Initiatives and Innovation, this team built the program from the ground up. The process was complex as it required the revision of university policies, website development, new Banner coding, creation of audit courses and revamping academic program course sequences to accommodate a six month rotation rather than a typical semester. A true multidisciplinary and collaborative approach was used by Dr. Morris and the dedicated team brought the program to life.

The co-op program cohorts run from January to June (includes Maymester) and from June to December. University Career Services (UCS) provides on-going student support for the program as UCS has been home to the Cooperative Education and Internship Program, serving all colleges and majors across the campus. Students engage with the co-op program as early as their first year of enrollment at the university and participate in job-readiness preparation modules provided by UCS. They are coached and mentored and, if approved by their academic and faculty advisors, begin to apply for co-op sites. Students are not placed into co-op sites; they must compete as bona fide applicants. The co-op sites are developed by UCS in collaboration with the academic departments as the work experience must meet academic expectations, must be paid, and must meet other critical criteria for approval. Students participating in the program enroll in an audit course for the duration of the co-op and do not take any other academic courses; students can opt for a second co-op if their department has a two-cohort cycle. They are paid and work on-site full-time, gaining invaluable hands-on experience.

With its first outbound cohort of computer science and computer information systems students, the Co-op Program is steadily gaining ground using an intentionally-paced growth model. To initiate their students’ participation in cooperative education, departments must first realign

The New Multicultural Center

The new Multicultural Center opened its doors to the Georgia State University community in the 2014 fall semester. Serving as a unique place to learn, grow and explore, the center provides a space where members of Georgia State University’s diverse community can gather and share in the promotion of cross-cultural interactions, awareness, communication, dialogue and mutual learning through an integration of engaging activities. Programs organized by the center are designed to allow individuals from different cultural backgrounds and social identities to engage in meaningful experiences that assist in building a culture of care.

Jeffrey Coleman, Director of the Multicultural Center, has a passion to develop programs and services that positively impact identity development, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, academic success and graduation rates of diverse student populations.

“My undergraduate involvement in Multicultural Affairs, Student Government Association, academic and social conduct committees and work-study employment in the Dean of Students Office inspired me to pursue a career in Student Affairs focusing on advocating for historically underserved and underrepresented populations.”

~ Jeffrey Coleman, Director of the Multicultural Center

An integral component of the Division of Student Affairs, the Multicultural Center bases its philosophy on equity, diversity and inclusion through design and implementation of programs to improve students’ multicultural competencies. The center supports the academic mission of the university by offering advocacy and support services designed to encourage student success, particularly focusing upon traditionally under-served populations such as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. By offering practical educational experiences for students that heighten awareness to multicultural issues and societal needs, the center strives to help students recognize the ways they benefit from understanding how their individual cultural identities and the identities of others impact their purpose and vision for life and influences personal, academic, and career aspirations.

The community office hours in the center provide an opportunity for students to develop a network of support with faculty, staff and other students from their cultural community. The Multicultural Programming Council, consisting of student leaders of multicultural groups, functions as the advisory board to the center and its programs and also provides workshops, advisement and funding to student groups. Book discussions highlight publications by Georgia State University faculty related to topics of multiculturalism, diversity and difference. Classroom presentations on multicultural and diversity topics are offered in various formats, and can be adapted to the particular needs of faculty, courses and student groups. Conversations on contemporary social concerns address contemporary issues affecting societal needs while drawing connections between multiculturalism and diversity and everyday events and experiences that range from the personal (i.e. campus events) to the national and the global. The Safe Zone program is designed to create a network of allies who promote a campus environment that is open and welcoming to all LGBTQIQA students. Workshops are offered to create safe spaces for students to engage in meaningful experiences and dialogues. They are designed for various audiences and can be tailored to fit any group, whether it is for an inside or outside of the classroom presentation.
Indian Creek Recreation Lodge

The Department of Recreational Services’ mission to promote healthy lifestyles through exceptional recreational programs, services and facilities is exemplified by the construction of the new Indian Creek Recreation Lodge that officially opened its doors to the Georgia State University community in April 2014. Nestled among the 15.5-acre recreation area in Stone Mountain, GA, the 4,700 sq. ft. Lodge is the first university-owned building to be awarded the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. Sustainable features of the Lodge include low emission building materials, high-efficiency water fixtures and generous windows to optimize natural sunlight, as well as repurposed barn wood and granite from the previous Lodge.

Open exclusively to student organizations, university departments and recreation members, the Lodge serves as a premier off-campus venue for meetings, conferences, retreats and social events. The Lodge has been particularly popular among university departments, hosting over 30 retreats during its inaugural summer as faculty and staff prepared for another busy fall semester. The Lodge houses a large multi-purpose room, two breakout meeting rooms, an open lobby reception area with a fireplace, a catering kitchen and front and rear decks overlooking the wooded property. With built-in AV capabilities and Wi-Fi access, the lodge offers a unique alternative to the urban setting of the downtown campus.

Along with their use of the lodge, many university groups have also taken advantage of the Challenge Program, creating a full day of staff development and team building. The Challenge Program offers both a low ropes course and a high ropes course with zip lining. During the 2014 spring and summer, 49 Georgia State University groups participated in programs varying from two to seven hours with student organizations representing 65 percent of the 1147 individual participants. Whether a person enjoys the thrill of being on a cable 40 feet above ground or prefers never leaving the ground, the Challenge Program can provide a rewarding teambuilding experience for everyone!

Recreational Services has received positive feedback about the ambience, spaciousness and comfort of the meeting rooms as well as the beauty of the surrounding locale.

“With its picturesque setting, environmentally friendly features, and proximity to the downtown campus, it is clear that the Indian Creek Lodge and Challenge Program will only continue to grow in popularity among the Georgia State University community.”

~ Melissa Buchheit, Director of Recreational Services

For more information about scheduling meeting rooms at the Indian Creek Lodge or participating in the Challenge Program, please contact Ellen Whitney or visit recreation.gsu.edu.

Cooperative Education at Georgia State University Continued

their courses to accommodate at least one, and sometimes two, six month co-op rotation(s) all within a rigorous four-year academic plan including front loading essential courses prior to the co-op rotation to ensure co-op candidates are competitive candidates. Unlike an internship, co-op students are expected to arrive at their sites with early-level knowledge, skills, and abilities. Departments must then undergo a review of the revised curriculum plan and the feasibility of co-op sites. In the 2014 fall semester two new majors, geosciences and political science, were added to the program and three additional departments are currently in the preparation phase. As the success of the program spreads, more departments will engage.

For more information about the Cooperative Education and Internship Program located in 33 Dahlberg Hall, please contact Angela Walker, Associate Director of University Career Services, by email or by calling 404-413-1836, or visit career.gsu.edu.
In 2012, the Counseling and Testing Center initiated a data-driven service delivery model designed to increase the number of students served by licensed mental health professionals while decreasing the wait time for appointments. Within the first two years of studying the model’s effectiveness, it has become apparent that one of the most beneficial features is the addition of a same-day walk-in service. Prior to implementing the new model, same-day services were only available to students who indicated they were experiencing a crisis. As a result, the vast majority of students seeking counseling services waited one or two weeks for an initial consultation appointment and then as long as another four weeks to begin receiving individual counseling. All students now receive an initial consultation appointment on a same-day walk-in basis regardless of their reason for requesting services, thus, eliminating the wait time for initial consultation as well as decreasing students’ subsequent wait time for follow-up counseling. The walk-in service has dramatically increased the number of students accessing counseling services from 250 during the Fall 2011 semester to more than 500 in each subsequent Fall semester (2012, 2013, 2014). Further, the number of individual counseling sessions provided to students by licensed mental health clinicians increased from 847 in Fall 2011 to 1516 in Fall 2012.

When students arrive at the Counseling and Testing Center, they complete brief questionnaires on iPads that are automatically scored and sent to the walk-in counselor with whom they will meet. This initial visit generally takes about 40 minutes and is not designed to be a therapy session, but rather a consultation to assess needs and make a follow-up plan. Students are then referred, as appropriate, for follow-up individual or couples counseling, to the Mind-Body Clinic, a nutritionist, an MD for medication, a sports psychologist in the Performance Enhancement Center, for a substance use risk reduction consultation and/or tobacco cessation in Student Health Promotion, or for group counseling. Students may also be referred to a Client Advocate in the center who can assist them with referrals or make appointments for services from other on-campus or off-campus resources.

Data collection throughout students’ utilization of services is key to ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of the service delivery model. For example, given that 68% of students who have utilized the walk-in service reported that their academic performance was moderately or severely impacted by the problem that led to their having sought services and 58% indicated that their problem affects their school performance often or constantly, increasing students’ access to and timeliness of service delivery provides an important means of supporting their academic performance. Additionally, data collected from students about their perceived progress toward resolving their problem after having participated in a series of 5 counseling sessions helps the counselors know if the strategies they are using are working well for students or if changes are needed. Clinical data also assists the center in evaluating both individual clinician effectiveness with symptom reduction as well as measure the center’s overall effectiveness in providing treatment across broad symptom categories (e.g., depression, eating disorders). Such information is useful because it can suggest the need for specific staff development to ensure that the optimal treatment is provided for Georgia State University students.

In addition to clinical service data, student satisfaction data is also collected; each semester, students are asked to provide anonymous satisfaction feedback about service delivery including identifying factors they believe have contributed to successful psychotherapy. 96% of students report feeling that they are cared for by their counselors, 95% report feeling understood, while 98% reported feeling respected. In addition, 88% of students report that what they learned from their counseling sessions led them to make positive changes in their lives and 83% said that the counseling services they received positively influenced the chances of their remaining enrolled at Georgia State. Finally, 98% of students seen at the Counseling and Testing Center reported that they would return to the center if they felt the need.

Beginning in January 2015, after-hours service is now available to all students, commuter and residential; specifically, they are able to talk with an on-call counselor who can be reached by calling the main Counseling and Testing Center telephone number (404-413-1640). This new service is also available to faculty or staff who have emergency concerns about students outside of regular business hours and need a crisis consultation with an on-call counselor.

For more information about the services of the Counseling and Testing Center located at the Citizen’s Trust Building, 75 Piedmont Ave., Suite 200A, please call 404-413-1640 or visit counselingcenter.gsu.edu.