DEGREES Project ASSESSMENT REPORT
2013-2014

MISSION

The Dedicated to Educating, Graduating, and Retaining Educational Equity Students (DEGREES) Project is designed to promote the retention and graduation of all campus underrepresented students. The program is composed of four tracks including early warning interventions/continuing student support, curricular enrichment, mentoring/tutoring services and engagement. The overarching goal of the program is to connect students with a variety of campus resources to impact their overall success in college.

GOALS

1. The demographics of the DEGREES Project Coaches will be representative of the Sacramento State under-represented minority (URM) student body to embolden the direct connection between the DEGREES Project and the target student audience.
2. DEGREES Project Coaches will receive intensive training of on-campus services, resources and programs to connect students based on individual needs.
3. DEGREES Project Coaches will enrich their own academic experience through the training and overall experience of serving as a coach.

DEPARTMENTAL DASHBOARD

- Number of URM students in spring 2014 = 8,080
- Number of DEGREES Project Coaches in spring 2014 = 12. Coaches help URM students identify individual needs and navigate campus services and resources.
- DEGREES Project students have stated: “Feeling grateful to know someone cares, only time I ever heard from Sac State was when I owed money until now, and it is easier for me to share with another peer my needs and concerns.”
- DEGREES Project website: www.csus.edu/degreesproject/
- DEGREES Project brochure: www.csus.edu/degreesproject/Brochure.pdf

POINTS OF PRIDE

- Smarthinking — free, online tutoring available to all students, 24 hours per day, seven days per week
- EBI MAP-Works — Piloted this early warning system with 500 students in Spring 2014
- Augmented faculty advising in four out of seven Colleges
- “U” Mentor — campus-wide online mentoring program that pairs Sacramento State students with vital services and mentoring support provided by faculty, staff, and alumni using Mutual Force as the online platform
- DEGREES Project Resource Guide — a comprehensive list of resources and services designed to promote student success and professional development at Sacramento State. The guide was designed to familiarize DEGREES Project Coaches with relevant on- and off-campus services so coaches can make appropriate student referrals.
The DEGREES Project will ensure the DEGREES Project Coaches are diverse in all aspects to meet the needs of the target student population. Diversity criteria include: race/ethnicity, academic standing, College affiliation, first-generation college students, native English speaker, workload, and financially supporting dependents.

**Methods and Measures**

By the end of the spring 2014 semester, DEGREES Project Coaches participated in 14 trainings. The DEGREES Project Coaches were surveyed at each of the final trainings of the academic year, which took place on May 13 and 16. In addition to the survey, a focus group was conducted. The survey consisted of 13 demographic questions regarding personal characteristics: (a) Race/ethnicity, (b) academic standing, (c) financially supporting dependents, (d) Native English speaker, and (e) workload.

**Data Collection Dates:** Tuesday, May 13, 2014 and Friday, May 16, 2014

**Distribution Channels:** The survey was distributed as a hard copy at the final DP Coaches Trainings, filled out individually by each Coach, and then collected by the program Co-Director. Following the surveys, a one-hour focus group was conducted (2 total).

**Survey Type:** The survey included 13 demographic information questions, eight closed-ended learning outcomes questions and two open-ended learning outcomes questions. The types of questions varied from a ranking system (“Highly Impacts” to “Does Not Impact”) and “List the top three” responses.

**Focus Group Type:** Nine semi-structured open-ended questions.

**Population:** DP Coaches (12 total)

**Findings**

Twelve DEGREES Project Coaches were surveyed at the end of spring 2014 during the final trainings. The following figures and tables represent the responses to the demographic questions section.

The DP Coaches were racially/ethnically diverse to be representative of the Sacramento State URM student body, with proportionately greater percentages of individuals identifying as Hispanic or Latino, Asian or Pacific Islander, and African American or Black comparable to the greater student population.
FIGURE 1: Race/Ethnicity

In keeping to the demographics of the Sacramento State student body, 83% of the DP Coaches were undergraduates and 17% were graduate students.

FIGURE 2: Undergraduate vs. Graduate Students

The two DP Coaches in graduate standing were enrolled full-time at 6 or more units per semester, and all of the undergraduate standing DP Coaches were also enrolled full-time at 12 or more units per semester.
**TABLE 1: Units Enrolled in Spring 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units Enrolled in Spring 2014</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 units</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similar to the Sac State student body, the majority of the DP Coaches were in the 80–120 units of completion category.

**FIGURE 3: Number of Units Completed**

- 40-80: 25%
- 80-120: 58%
- 120+: 17%

The DP Coaches were in degree programs within each college of the University, with the exception of the College of Natural Sciences & Mathematics.
TABLE 2: Majors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Majors</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication Studies</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Credentials</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Nursing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Studies</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational Parks and Tourism Administration</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Engineering</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dietetics</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

92% of the DP Coaches were in upper-division standing or graduate level to provide the most comprehensive support as peer coaches who are modelling success at the institution.

FIGURE 4: Academic Level

Further demonstrating academic success, 83% of the DP Coaches had a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher.

TABLE 3: Cumulative GPA as of Spring 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cumulative GPA as of Spring 2014</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.0 and higher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 – 3.99</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 – 3.69</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0 – 3.29</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.99 and below</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similar to the greater URM student body, the majority of the DP Coaches identified as first-time freshmen, first in the family to go to college, and had a language other than English as their first
language. Two-thirds of the DP Coaches were first time freshmen, and the remaining third were transfer students.

FIGURE 5: Transfer Student vs. First Time Freshmen

Three-fourths of the DP Coaches were the first in their family to attend college, further providing representation of the Sac State URM students population in the DP Coaches.

FIGURE 6: First in the Family to Attend College

Similarly, three-fourths of coaches spoke a language other than English as his or her first language.
The characterization of the Sac State student body as commuter-friendly was represented through one-quarter of the DP Coaches financially supporting any children, parents, or other dependents; and working and interning upwards of 20 hours per week.

Half of the DP Coaches worked 6-10 hours per week, 17% worked 10-15 hours per week, and 33% worked 15-20 hours per week.
FIGURE 9: Hours per Week Worked with DEGREES Project

Half of the DP Coaches worked at the DEGREES Project between 6-10 hours, and supplemented this income with jobs outside of the DEGREES Project. 42% of the DP Coaches worked 10-20 hours outside of the DEGREES Project (in addition to classes and coursework).

FIGURE 10: Hours Worked Outside of DEGREES Project

Conclusions/Status

The results signify that the diversity of the DEGREES Project Coaches was representative of the Sac State URM student body in demographic features that include: race/ethnicity, academic standing, financially supporting dependents, native English speaker, and workload. The diversity of the DP Coaches was purposeful to serve as a bridge between University student support services and academic colleges. The coaches’ diversity empowers them to relate to the target student population
in terms of background, academic experience, and methods to overcome barriers to educational goals. Coaches’ diversity ensured the DEGREES Project was able to provide the most intensive and comprehensive peer-coaching services to promote the retention and graduation of all campus underrepresented students.

Learning Outcome/Program Objective 2

DEGREES Project Coaches will feel familiar with at least 75% of the support services and programs at Sacramento State.

Methods and Measures

By the end of the spring 2014 semester, the DEGREES Project Coaches participated in 14 trainings. The DEGREES Project Coaches were surveyed and participated in a focus group at each of the final trainings of the academic year. In addition to demographic information questions, the survey also consisted of four learning outcomes questions directly pertaining to Learning Outcome/Project Objective 2. These four learning outcomes questions related to: (A) Familiarity with Sac State support services and programs, and (B) Student referrals to Sac State support services and programs.

Data Collection Dates: Tuesday, May 13, 2014 and Friday, May 16, 2014

Distribution Channels: The survey was distributed as a hard copy at the final DP Coaches Trainings (May 13, 2014 and May 16, 2014), filled out individually by each Coach, and then collected by the program Co-Director. Following the surveys, a one-hour focus group was conducted (2 total).

Survey Type: Thirteen demographic information questions, eight closed-ended learning outcomes questions and two open-ended learning outcomes questions were included in the survey. The types of questions varied from a ranking system (“Highly Impacts” to “Does Not Impact”) and “List the top three” responses.

Focus Group Type: Nine semi-structured open-ended questions.

Population: DP Coaches (12 total)

Findings

Prior to being a DP Coach, 17% of the coaches reported being “Extremely Familiar” with support services and programs at Sac State. The dispersion of the remainder of responses was an array of the available options.
Following completion of their first term as a DP Coach, every coach marked the highest response of “Extremely Familiar” with the exception of one coach who marked the second highest response of “Somewhat Familiar.”

The DP Coaches also responded to “List the top three” questions regarding: (1) Support services and programs he or she was not familiar with prior to the DEGREES Project, and (2) Support services and programs he or she most frequently referred students to.
TABLE 4: Top Three Support Services/Programs Not Familiar with Prior to Trainings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Support Service/Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Parents and Families Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Community Engagement Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Peer and Academic Resource Center</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 5: Top Three Support Services/Programs Most Frequently Referred Students To

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Support Service/Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Peer and Academic Resource Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Career Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Student Organizations and Leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions/Status

The DEGREES Project Coaches self-reported large gains in familiarity with support services and programs at Sac State as a result of being a DP Coach. This large gain in familiarity with campus services and programs is crucial for the DEGREES Project to fulfill its missions of promoting the retention and graduation of campus underrepresented students. The DP Coaches act as the bridge between existing campus services and programs to the student. The vitality of this bridge is contingent upon the DP Coaches familiarity with campus services and programs, and actively referring students to these proven student support methods. The diversity of the DP Coaches is central to the functionality of the DEGREES Project because each individual will connect with different campus services and programs, and identify different components to address students' individual barriers to achieving a college degree. Through the comprehensive trainings of campus services and programs, the DP Coaches are skilled to deliver the DEGREES Project to promote the retention and graduation of campus underrepresented students.

Learning Outcome/Program Objective 3

DEGREES Project Coaches (themselves) will utilize on-campus services more often than prior to becoming a DP Coach.

Methods and Measures

By the end of the spring 2014 semester, the DEGREES Project Coaches participated in 14 trainings. The DEGREES Project Coaches were surveyed and a focus group was conducted at each of the final trainings of the academic year. In addition to the demographic information questions, the survey also consisted of six learning outcomes questions directly pertaining to Learning Outcome/Project
Objective 3. These six learning outcomes questions related to: (A) Individual perspective of the scope and effectiveness of DP upon academic and professional success, (B) Utilization of Sac State support services and programs themselves, and (C) Quality of the DP staff attentiveness.

**Data Collection Dates**: Tuesday, May 13, 2014 and Friday, May 16, 2014

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**Survey Type**: Thirteen demographic information questions, eight closed-ended learning outcomes questions and two open-ended learning outcomes questions were included in the survey. The types of questions varied from a ranking system (“Highly Impacts” to “Does Not Impact”) and “List the top three” responses.

**Focus Group Type**: Nine semi-structured open-ended questions.

**Population**: DP Coaches (12 total)

**Findings**

75% of the DP Coaches reported that the role as a DP Coach impacted their own success as either “Highly Impacts” or “Somewhat Impacts,” and none of the DP Coaches reported zero impact.

**FIGURE 13: Impact Upon Own Success**

Since the trainings, the DP Coaches reported strong increases in utilization of campus services. Only 8% responded that they do not use campus services more frequently.
FIGURE 14: Increase in Utilizing Campus Services

Q4. Do you find yourself utilizing campus services more frequently since your DP Coach training?

All of the DP Coaches reported believing they could benefit from having a DP Coach. The majority of coaches (67%) responded “Definitely” and 33% responded with “Maybe.”

FIGURE 15: View of Self Benefit from Having a DP Coach

Q5. Do you think you could have benefitted from having a DP Coach?

All of the DP Coaches also reported their professional network has expanded from working as a DP Coach, with 33% responding with “Highly expanded” and 67% responding with “Somewhat expanded.”
92% of the DP Coaches reported having “Satisfactory” or “Somewhat Satisfactory” resources to be a DP Coach, and 8% responded with “Neutral.”

92% reported that the DP staff was “Very Attentive” or “Somewhat Attentive” to his or her needs, and 8% responded with “Neutral.”
Conclusions/Status

The findings demonstrate that the DEGREES Project Coaches found the coach role enriched their academic experience through trainings and overall experience. DP Coaches view their role as a productive and effective instrument to promote student success, and report that they could have benefitted from a reverse relationship in which they acted as the student and received services from a DP Coach. The DP Coach position provided a platform for students to further develop leadership skills, communication skills, professional etiquette, and fluency of campus programs and services to access these support structures and embolden their own success. In sum, the DP Coaches trainings were a critical component of the DP model, particularly in providing the DP Coaches the resources necessary to fulfill their duties and responsibilities.

PLANS FOR THE COMING YEAR

- Continue to develop strategic on-campus partnerships and collaborate with a variety of departments and divisions to plan and host events that meet program objectives
- Develop a partnership with Public Affairs and Advocacy and University Advancement to increase visibility and funding for DEGREES Project programs (e.g., “U” Mentor, Smarthinking)
- Continue to assess coaches’ learning experiences during mandatory weekly trainings
- Continue to increase the number of students using Smarthinking
- Continue to increase the number of faculty and staff participating in “U” Mentor

ATTACHMENTS

Department Name Attachment A: DEGREES Project Survey
Department Name Attachment B: DEGREES Project Focus Group Questions