Peer Advisors as a Tool for Student Success

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RSS Mission Statement

Rural Student Services is committed to responding to student needs by providing quality services to Native and rural students who expend positive efforts in the pursuit of higher education and its opportunities. Our comprehensive approach is unique in recognizing students’ efforts to develop and maintain academic and personal balance as they contribute to the cultural richness of the University of Alaska Fairbanks.
Program History

• AK State Legislative Bill Resolution #56

• Program Origination (Student Orientation Services)

• Troth Yeddha’

Chief Peter John
Target Population Served

- Alaska Native Students
- Rural Alaska Students

(includes first year, returning, traditional, non-traditional, 1st Generation)
RSS Students by Region

Rural Student Services Fall 2009 Students by Region

- Arctic Slope region: 33
- Doyon region: 74
- Fairbanks area: 144
- Ahtna region: 6
- Sealaska region: 23
- Chugach region: 10
- Cook Inlet region: 32
- Koniaq region: 24
- Bering Straits region: 36
- NANA region: 31
- Bristol Bay region: 30
- Aleut region: 3

Out of State: 14
Total Students: 547
Statistics by Ethnicity

- Ahtna/Eyak: 1/558
- AK Eskimo: 3/558
- Alaska Native: 11/558
- Aleut: 12/558
- Aleut/Black: 1/558
- Am Indian: 11/558
- Asian/PI: 8/558
- Athabaskan: 99/558
- Black: 3/558
- Cup'ik: 1/558
- Eskimo: 1/558
- Filipino: 1/558
- Haida: 1/558
- Hawaiian Native: 2/558
- Hispanic: 10/558
- Inupiaq: 94/558
- Not specified: 5/558
- Other: 3/558
- PI: 14/558
- Polish: 1/558
- Tlingit: 4/558
- WNH: 137/558
- Yup'ik: 134/558
RSS Comprehensive Model

Outreach → Pre-advising → Advising → Graduation → Community

Outreach
Pre-advising
Community
Advising
Graduation
Academic Advisor Pre-Advising

• Community Relationships
• Outreach to High Schools
• Workshops and Training
• Video teleconferencing
Comprehensive Academic Advisor Role

- Academic Advising
- General Eds Vs. Major Requirements
- Communicating Opportunities
  - Internships
  - Scholarships
- Recommendations
- Mentor
Culturally Relevant Advising Methods

• Establishing Trust
• Overcoming Assumptions
• Interpretation
• Understanding Knowledge Systems
• Recognizing Family Relationships
• Not at Risk but at Promise
• Involved in Community
• Balancing Academic Requirements with Cultural Values
RSS Peer Advisors History

- 1969-present
- Training
- Extended Hours

- Responsibilities
- Program Support
- Outreach
Peer Advisor Pre-Advising

• Community Relationships
• High School Student Campus Visits
  – Panel discussions
  – Class shadowing
Comprehensive Peer Advisor Role

• Role Model
• Pre Advising
  – Connecting Students with their advisor
  – Review Course Options
  – Ordering Books
  – Financial Aid
  • Scholarships
  • FAFSA
Peer Advisor Responsibilities

– Event Coordination
  • Association of Village Council Presidents
  • Bristol Bay Native Association
  • Holidays
  • Positive Connection Nights
Peer Advisor Training

• Active Listening
• Cross Cultural Communication
• Team Building
• Confidentiality
• General University information
Peer Advisor Program Support

- Program Support
  - Tutoring Resources
  - Plan and Participate in Cultural Activities
  - Develop support materials
  - Assist in compiling statistics
  - Front desk support
Peer Advisor Peer Support

• Peer Support
  – Connections with Advisor
  – Connections with Funding Agency
  – Check Ins on Regular Basis
  – Academic support connections
  – Student club support
OUTCOMES MODEL FOR UTILIZING PEER ADVISORS AS A TOOL FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

**Inputs**
- Staff
  - Academic Advising
  - Support networks
  - Outreach
  - Recruitment
  - Travel home
  - Positive Connection Nights
  - BBNA/AVCP events
  - Academic support
  - Inform about tutoring
  - Scholarship information
  - Communication with:
    - Registrar
    - Business Office
    - Financial Aid
    - Residence Life
    - Dining Services

**Activities**
- Funding Agencies
- Students
- Campus Resources

**Short Term Outcomes**
- Increase support for student academic support.
- Increase understanding of different courses available.
- Increase Alaska Native student enrollment.
- Regular check-in with students served.
- Increased number of students confirming major.
- Traditional and non-traditional activities.

**Intermediate Outcomes**
- Improved grades for Alaska Native students in challenging classes.
- Increase Alaska Native Student retention.
- Sense of belonging.
- Sense of community.

**Long Term Outcomes**
- Increased academic success for all students served.
- Increased graduation of Alaska Native students.
- Sustainable network of healthy Alaska Native role models.
- Long-term network of healthy friends and allies.
- Greater number of Alaska Natives in leadership roles.
What can a Peer Advisor do for you?

• Increase office productivity
• Provide more services for students
• Facilitate communication
• Engage in office culture
• Develop networks
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