

UNEXPECTED BENEFITS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING WITH PARENT VOLUNTEERS

A BOLD UNDERTAKING AT PENN STATE UNIVERSITY



PennState
Student Affairs

Parents Program

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OVERVIEW

- In the spring of 2016, the Penn State Parents Council began a year-long strategic planning process. Working remotely and creating opportunities for the 45-member council provided challenges during the process, but the unexpected benefits outweighed the challenges. While the main was to complete a strategic plan, discovering the talents and expertise of council members and the personal connections made within the group were wonderfully unexpected.



PENN STATE UNIVERSITY

PENN STATE

- Large, public, land-grant institution
- Multi-campus system

University Park Campus:

- 42,000 undergraduates
- Rural, college town

PARENTS COUNCIL

- Formed in 2011
- Organization structure includes:
 - Leadership team and committee chairs
- 40+ members
- No gift requirement

WHO, WHAT, WHY?

- Players
- Process
- Timeline
- Final Plan
- Benefits



PLAYERS

- Parents Council
- Institutional Research Office
- Parents Program Staff



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PROCESS

- Most importantly, we had a chair who felt strongly about the project
- She announced at the beginning of her term that this would be her goal for the year
- Utilized positive planning approach*

*“Building Your Plan and Building Support from a Positive Base”, presented by Marianne Guidos and Barbara Sherlock at the plenary session of the Society for College and University Planning Mid Atlantic Regional Conference, March 2-4, 2008.

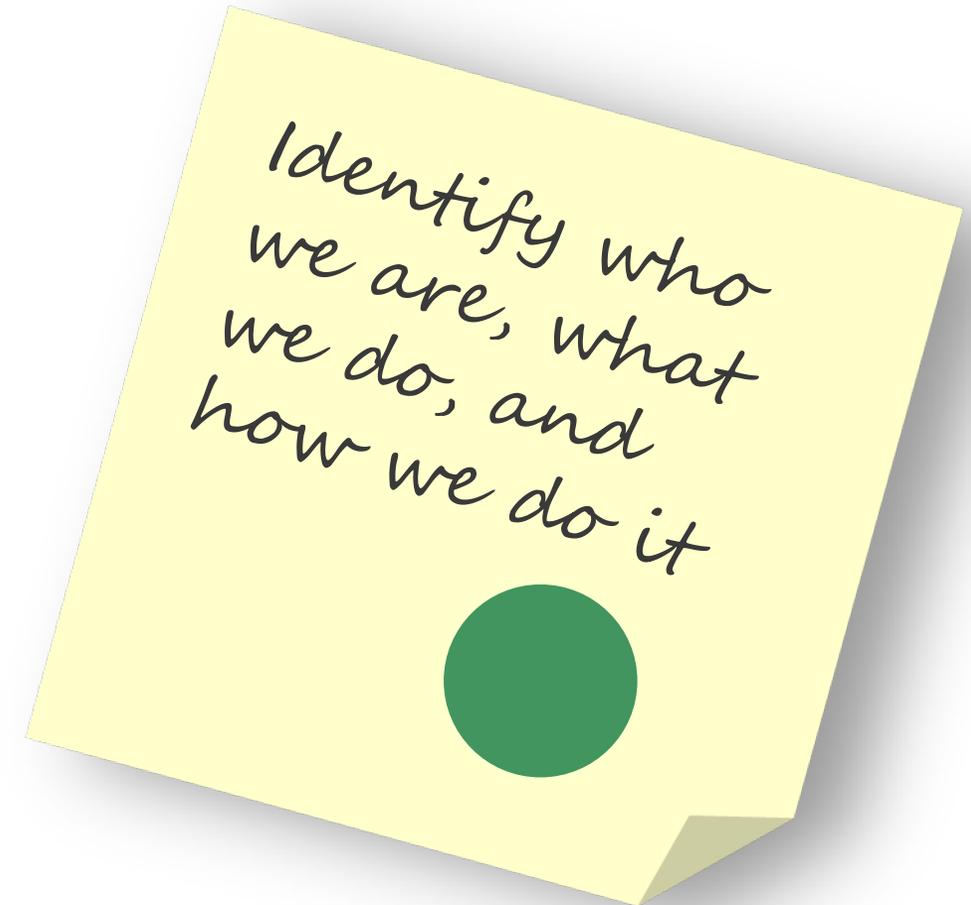


STEP I: MEMBER SURVEY

- **Top reasons for joining:** Represent families and become more involved in the community
- **What to continue** – Meet with administration, meet as committees
- **What to start** – Hear from more departments on campus, more opportunity for discussions, address parent concerns, more student interaction, develop mission and vision
- **What to stop doing** – More discussion, fewer presentations, more time,
- **Frequency of office contact** – Monthly
- **Most important way we support parents and families** – Addressing hot issues, communications, resources
- **My experience would be more fulfilling if** – helpful to others, keep education affordable, the administration hears our voices, a strategic plan, programs with lasting impact

STEP 2: SUMMER RETREAT

- All members invited to campus for full-day retreat (about 2/3 attended)
- Facilitator from institutional research
- Who, what, and how (using sticky notes)
- Share notes and sort into common themes
- Prioritize (importance and timing)



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- You are providing an update at the Parents Council fall meeting about how the Council has fulfilled its goals over the past three years.
 - What specifically has the Council done?
 - What were the results?
 - How have you measured these results? What data do you have about how the Parents Council has contributed to parents' positive experience, engagement, involvement, outreach, and other measures?

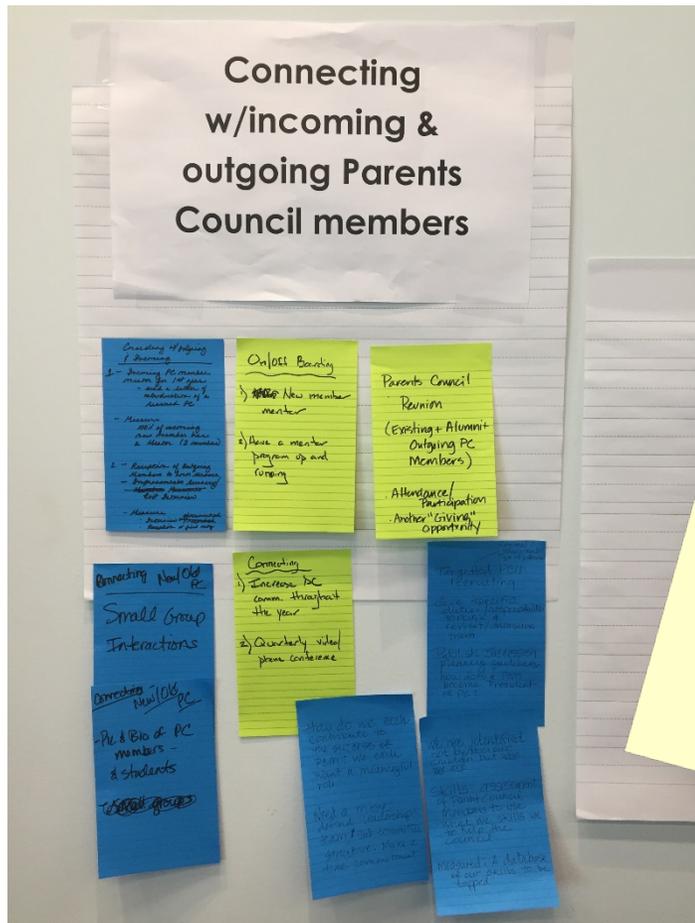


PRIORITIES EMERGE

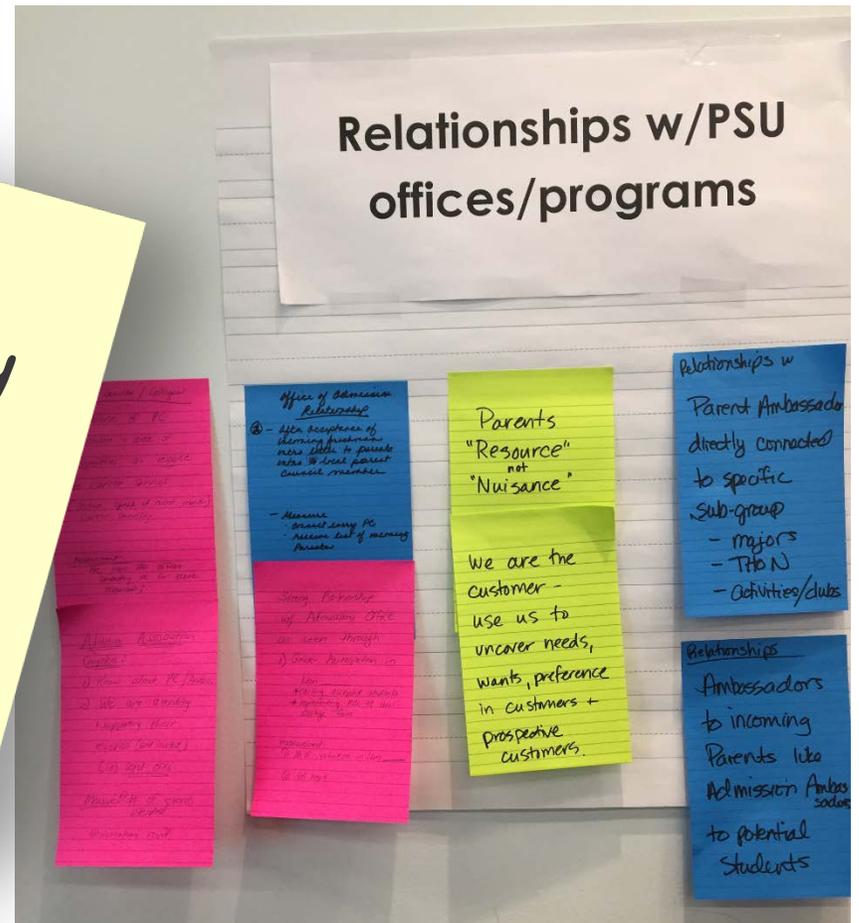
- **Priorities:** Organization that welcomes all parent and family volunteers; welcome; communication; Parents & Families Weekend and other events; connect with University offices; advocacy/institutional support; build relationships (especially with Alumni Association and Career Services); increase attendance at events, actively engage with other offices; accurate reporting of impact...
 1. Develop Mission/Vision
 2. Branding/Visibility
 3. Relationships with other offices/programs
 4. Connecting with incoming and outgoing PC families



STEP 3: FALL MEETING – STRATEGIES, ACTIONS & METRICS



More sticky notes - with dots added



STEP 4: FINALIZE PLAN & BEGIN IMPLEMENTATION

- Working with leadership team and a core group of members, the plan was finalized
- The first team identified was the Mission & Vision Team
- Other existing teams (committees) instrumental in implementing plan



FINAL STRATEGIC PLAN

Goals:

- 1: Develop and refine the mission and vision of the Parents Council
- 2: Create branding and increase visibility of the Parents Council
- 3: Develop relationships with key Penn State programs and offices
- 4: Build and strengthen the Parents Council as a welcoming and supportive community



GOAL #1: DEVELOP AND REFINE THE MISSION AND VISION OF THE PARENTS COUNCIL

■ Strategies

Create a working group of current members to develop a draft to be shared for approval by the leadership team and the Parents Council

■ Measures/Metrics

Complete mission and vision statement to be presented to the leadership team and the Parents Council

Mission and vision statement approved by Parents Council

Mission and vision shared publically

■ Actions (Fall 2016 – April 2017)

- Invite vice chair to lead effort
- Invite members of working group
- Conference call to share process with working group
- Via email, draft and edit
- Finalize draft and share draft with leadership team
- Share draft with Parents Council
- Discuss and incorporate suggestions
- Develop final mission and vision
- Share final with Parents Council for approval
- Include on printed and digital materials
- Share at meeting

UNEXPECTED BENEFITS

- Increased member engagement
- Recognized the talents and skills of members
- Increased connections among members

Still seeing the benefits, even with new members



THANK YOU

“I think that instead of helicoptering our kids, we should be strapping some parachutes on their backs made out of things like common sense, kindness, and courage. Then we should teach them to jump.” Joelle Wisler, Blogger



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