



**OFFICE OF STUDENT SUCCESS & EMPOWERMENT
ANNUAL REPORT
2020-2021**

OFFICE OF STUDENT SUCCESS AND EMPOWERMENT 2020-21 ACADEMIC YEAR

An important focus of Dr. Ruth Watkins' presidency at the University of Utah was providing an Exceptional Educational Experience (E3) for every University of Utah student. The Office of Student Success and Empowerment (OSSE) is key to this effort. As the lead office in a number of retention efforts, OSSE supports students' transitions to the U, promotes their persistence to degree completion, and provides avenues for students' empowerment along the way. These efforts support students' thriving by assisting them in developing connections with the University, understanding the resources and opportunities available to them, and encouraging them to engage deeply in their University of Utah experience. The following offices, programs, and initiatives are key to meeting these goals:

Transition

Office of Orientation and Transition: New Student Orientation is key to students' transitions to the University. This office reports to OSSE to support the overall transition of both first-time, transfer, and returning students. The Office of Orientation and Transition (OOT) also supports programming for Sophomore Rise, a retention effort for second-year students. OOT will submit its annual report separately following the completion of 2021 summer orientation programs.

Student Success Advocates: SSAs work with new students to assist them in navigating the complexities of college life. Students develop study, stress management, time management, and other skills through their work with SSAs, all of which support their initial and on-going success.

Summer Bridge: The Summer Bridge program is intended to provide wrap-around support to ensure a successful start at the University of Utah for students who were not initially admitted to the University. Summer Bridge students enroll in two specific courses and participate in an extra-curricular experience with two Student Success Advocates, their LEAP Peer Advisors, and specialized tutoring support.

Pasifika Summer Bridge: Pasifika, a summer bridge program for prospective and new Pacific Islander students, provides a culturally-rich curriculum that helps develop a college-going mindset and introduces them to the supports available to them at the University of Utah. OSSE provides assessment and infrastructure support to this program which is a collaboration between the College of Education, the School of Social and Cultural Transformation, and the Office of Undergraduate Studies.

New University Scholars: NUS is a transition program for students with high financial need. This scholarship program, which requires students to participate in a Learning Community experience, includes monthly dinners, leadership development, and a

curriculum designed to enhance students' success in their first two years at the University.

Retention

Student Success Advocates: SSAs' ongoing work with students supports them throughout the student journey. Providing students with information about how to engage deeply in their college experience is one way SSAs assist students. They also support their development of relationships across campus, and provide a caring, holistic approach that supports students' sense of belonging at the University.

Civitas: The OSSE is responsible for sending administrative nudges to students based on Civitas persistence predictions. Messaging coordinated and sent by OSSE include planned nudges, event-based nudges, and nudges that are indicated by specific data points in the Civitas toolkit. The OSSE works closely with the I2 Team to ensure that these nudges are sent by the most relevant parties and provide students with just-in-time information that can increase their persistence at the University.

Sophomore Rise: Sophomores often face challenges in their second year. They typically no longer receive specialized institutional support, and many are still determining why they are in college and where they hope to go after this experience. Sophomore Rise supports students in developing their sense of purpose and fulfilling that purpose while at the University of Utah. OSSE supports programming for Sophomore Rise, and annual reporting for Sophomore Rise falls under the Office of Orientation and Transition.

E3: OSSE is the home of the research related to the Exceptional Educational Experience. Through this research, we guide institutional efforts to improve students' experiences and persistence at the University. Data collection efforts include focus groups, individual interviews, and surveys that aim to gain the perspective of students, staff, and faculty across campus.

Neuro-Diverse Peer Mentoring Program: This peer mentoring program for neuro-diverse students will provide support to a specialized group of students who face particular challenges at the University of Utah. Current funding for the program comes from the Center for Disability and Access. Iris Moulton, the SSA with specialized experience in supporting students with disabilities, will coordinate this program which will start with two peer mentors in fall 2021.

Basic Needs Collective: Housing challenges are an increasing problem for college students across the country and the University of Utah is no exception. For the past three years OSSE was home to an emergency fund for students experiencing homelessness or displacement. Student Success Advocates were the frontline campus support for students in this situation. SSAs worked closely with the Office of Financial Aid to determine students' eligibility for emergency funds. Regardless of whether students qualified for funding, SSAs offered support in meeting the immediate needs of

students and then smoothly handed the students off to the Office of the Dean of Students Care Team for long-term support and follow-up. In the 2020-21 academic year, the HSTF transitioned to a Basic Needs Collective, which falls under the purview of the Assistant VP for Student Development and Inclusivity, Bryan Hubain. While OSSE remains part of the BNC, we no longer house general emergency funds or coordinate these efforts.

Learning Center: The Learning Center provides tutoring, supplemental instruction, and learning consultations to students to support their academic success. Individual and group tutoring are available, both in-person and online. Tutors and Supplemental Instruction Leaders are trained in CRLA, which ensures high-quality support for students across campus and in specific SI sections. The Learning Center's annual report is submitted separately.

Learn + Earn: University of Utah data indicate that working on campus improves students' persistence and degree completion -- particularly for first-generation students. We also know that many students choose to work off-campus because the pay is higher. Learn + Earn seeks to address this by offering additional stipends to student employees in partnering departments. In addition to the stipend students and their supervisors participate in training that aids in setting learning goals, connecting to the University, and understanding how their student employment prepares them for their post-college plans.

Empowerment

Student Success Advocates: One of the key missions of the SSAs is to support students in a way that allows them to learn to advocate for themselves. While long-term relationships with students are a goal, it is also important that students begin to see themselves as empowered actors who can make things happen while at the University.

Leadership Studies Minor: The Leadership Studies Minor supports the development of leaders across campus through an interdisciplinary approach to leadership that is deeply rooted in reflection. This academic minor provides students with the opportunity to think critically about what leadership is and how they enact it in ways that are consistent with their personal values, and it offers opportunities to practice leadership in settings where reflection enhances on-the-ground experiential learning.

Veterans Studies Certificate: The Veterans Studies Certificate was approved in spring of 2020 and began enrolling students in the 2020-21 academic year. The certificate provides students in a variety of majors and programs with skills needed to serve veterans. Focusing on history, politics, and social science, the certificate includes a capstone course in which students identify an area of need for veterans, and conduct research to determine solutions to the specific problems identified. Advising for the major is housed in the Veterans Support Center, and OSSE works with the VSC to coordinate and assess the certificate.

While OSSE houses a number of programs and initiatives, the reports below focus on the Student Success Advocates, New University Scholars, Summer Bridge, Homeless Student Task Force, Civitas, E3, Learn + Earn, and the Leadership Studies Minor. Each report includes data illustrating highlights from the 2020 year and a discussion of goals for the 2021-22 year.

STUDENT SUCCESS ADVOCATES

The four goals of Undergraduate Studies as articulated in the Utah Pledge are to support students by providing them with learning communities, mentors and advisors, a plan to finish, and deeply engaged learning experiences. These goals directly support the larger University of Utah commitment to promoting student success to transform lives. Key to both of these efforts is the work of the Student Success Advocates (SSAs). Student Success Advocates meet students where they are, engage with them to develop a holistic understanding of their experiences as students, and provide individualized support for students' success. *SSAs embody the University's commitment to student success* through their understanding of a range of campus resources and information, their connections to other individuals whose roles include supporting students, and their on-going, in-depth relationships with students. One student told us, "My SSA helped me get un-stuck." *Our job is to make it easier for students to succeed at the University of Utah.* Through these efforts, we contribute to increased retention and graduation rates, as well as students' satisfaction with their University experience, all of which are essential to the University's bright future.

Our Mission

The mission of the Student Success Advocates is to support students in making the most of their University of Utah experience. As caring, knowledgeable professionals, SSAs engage and empower undergraduate students in exploring and clarifying their interests and goals, overcoming personal and academic challenges, and connecting to campus resources and opportunities. Our holistic, individualized, mobile approach allows us to meet students right where they are.

Our Staff

Director

Amy Aldous Bergerson

Associate Director for Education, Support, and Assessment

Melanie Lee

SSA Coordinator

Jon Bernal

Student Success Advocates

Jeilani Athman

Christine Contestable

Tramaine Jones

Iris Moulton

Loretta Rowley

Leslie Cepeda

Annie Friedman

Lisa Lewis

April Ollivier

Administrative Manager

Juan Rios

Graduate Assistant

Shawn Coon

Our 2020-21 team included 11 SSAs, the Associate Director, a Graduate Assistant, the Director, and the Administrative Manager. With the addition of Learn+Earn, which Associate Director, Melanie Lee, is coordinating, we moved Jon Bernal to the role of SSA Coordinator to help support the SSA team. In spring 2021, Melanie Hall, our Nursing SSA, moved to a full-time position in the College of Nursing, and at the end of June, 2021, Amy Bergerson will leave for a new position at Miami University of Ohio. Melanie Lee and Jon Bernal will assume leadership for the Student Success Advocate program until a new Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies is hired.

Important to note is that the 2020-21 academic year was conducted entirely online. Students and faculty engaged in their academic work remotely, and Student Success Advocates also moved their operations to the online environment. We learned that working with students from afar is not the best modality, but we also learned that we could do much of our work in this format. Everyone in the University of Utah community was open to learning, and as we learned we adapted our approaches to working with students. In addition to increasing our overall number of interactions during the 2020-21 academic year, we know that in these interactions we continued to deliver the high-quality connections that SSAs are known for.

Our Contributions to and Exceptional Educational Experience

Results from the E3 research year (2018-2019) indicated 10 findings that shape the day-to-day lives of University of Utah students. Students tell us that they desire: connections across courses and extra/co-curricular experiences, clear understanding of how college courses and experiences relate their future endeavors, faculty to understand their essential role in the student experience, anchoring connections that change their campus experiences, strong awareness of on-campus events and resources, accurate portrayals of the University when they are in the college decision-making process, financial support beyond the first year, better communication around the constantly changing physical environment, to not feel like there are “second class” citizens on campus, and smoother processes such as admissions, financial aid, and course registration. Below, we describe how the Student Success Advocates assist students in navigating these issues and contribute to students’ exceptional experiences. These descriptions are reflective of the **69,074 total interactions** SSAs had with University of Utah students in the 2020-21 fiscal year. Our goal to increase interactions by 2%, was far exceeded by reaching a 27.6% increase in total interactions. Embedded in the descriptions below are additional highlights from the 2020-21 year.

Connecting across courses and connecting college to the future

One of the Student Success Advocates’ primary functions is assisting students in defining what success at the University of Utah means to them and then connecting students to the resources

necessary to achieve their vision of success. Inherent in these conversations is assisting students in making the connections they expressed a desire for in the E3 research. High impact practices such as undergraduate research opportunities, internships, and learning communities are one way that students can connect their knowledge across their coursework. SSAs made **1,159 referrals** to various high impact practices across campus this year. SSAs also help students make these connections through referrals to the Career and Professional Development Center; in fact, referrals to the CPDC have consistently ranked in our top 10 campus partner referrals for years. This year we made **176 referrals** to CPDC and talked with **151 students** about finding a job. SSAs' holistic approaches to these conversations assist students in thinking about how their academic lives are woven into other facets of their lives, modeling the kinds of integration students spoke about in the E3 focus groups.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, SSAs invested significant time in developing **11 virtual events** to support new and continuing students in making connections across their academic interests to their passions and future goals. These virtual events fostered spaces and featured resources and opportunities for students to learn more about integrative engagements such as undergraduate research, internships, community engagement and capstone projects, and also provided hints for handling the stress of a US presidential election year, learning online, and trying to build community while attending college remotely. We tracked visits to the events page in the SSA website to determine the ongoing use of these events. These data are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Events Web Page Traffic

Events Page	327 visitors	1,199 pageviews
Recorded Event Content	164 views	

We saw an increase of 144% in visitors to the events page, and of 533% in page views. The recorded event content views were up 84% over last year.

Faculty

Student Success Advocates recognize that faculty are key to University of Utah students' success. Given this, SSAs spend significant time talking to students about faculty and their classroom experiences. Sometimes this is a matter of rehearsing a conversation a student needs to have with a faculty member. Other times, it involves reaching out to faculty members on students' behalf. In addition to assisting students with navigating faculty relationships, SSAs also facilitate faculty efforts to provide supportive classroom environments for students. Two specific efforts reflect this commitment:

E-LEAP PARTNERSHIP AND COURSE INTEGRATION: SSAs are now embedded in all E-LEAP sections and partner with additional courses in the Block U program, First-Gen Scholars program, and various courses that have been identified as high-DFW courses. SSAs regularly attended classes, presented short content- or skill-based presentations, were invited to talk with students regularly, and were often allowed access to course Canvas pages, even as all learning in these courses was moved online in the fall. Both faculty

and SSAs continue to be enthusiastic about this model, noting that as trust develops between SSAs, faculty, and students, interactions between them become more meaningful. In the 2021-22 academic year, we will continue to partner with E-LEAP, Health Sciences LEAP and Refugees LEAP, as well as our Block U colleagues to bolster our embedded model. Additionally, SSAs Lisa Lewis and Christine Contestable will work to develop standards of practice for our LEAP and BlockU partnerships that will ensure that SSAs, partner faculty, and students all benefit from these partnerships.

FACULTY ENGAGEMENT WORK GROUP (FEWG): We established this work group in 2019 to determine how SSAs can more effectively work with faculty. The goals were to: 1) create a menu of workshops that provide students with time and stress management skills, study tips, and emphasize the importance of building a strong relationship with faculty to present in classes; and 2) increase faculty awareness of the SSA program and all it offers students. One mechanism for attaining these goals was the development of a “supporting students” tab on the SSA website, where faculty, staff, and graduate teaching assistants can find resources that encompass requesting a presentation, referral forms to connect a student to an SSA, and how to support students around crises or behavioral concerns. In Table 2 below, we provide a brief description of, and analytics for, these features on our website. It is important to note that these numbers are in addition to the direct student engagement of the SSA team. The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted our plans to increase marketing of these new tools for faculty and staff across the University, and we plan to resume our efforts to spread the word about their availability in the coming year.

Table 2: Traffic for Supporting Students Elements of SSA Website

Page & Content	Page Visitors	Total Page Views
<i>Request a Presentation or Workshop</i> – Informational presentations or content-based presentations or workshops	16	19
<i>How to Connect (and Why) to an SSA</i> – Introduction information about the SSAs	80	149
<i>For Issues of Behavioral Concern or Crisis</i> - A menu of options, resources, and campus departments related to crisis, bias, and sexual violence	39	51

Anchoring connections

Student Success Advocates are all about connections. Our job is to connect students to the people, resources, and programs that support their success goals. Referrals are one way we connect students to campus resources. Our top six referrals are: Financial Aid and Scholarships, Department/College Advising, Academic Advising Center, Learning Center, Career and Professional Development Center, and ASUU. Table 3 includes our top referrals.

Table 3: Top Referrals

Office	Number of Referrals
Financial Aid/Scholarships	295
Department/College Advising	339
Academic Advising Center	169
Learning Center	290
Career & Professional Development Center	176
ASUU	47

Overall, our referral numbers are down for the 2020-21 year. This re-enforces the notion that our on-campus, in-person modality is important for ensuring that students make the connections across campus that are so important to them.

Another way SSAs contributed to students' anchoring connections was through multiple texting outreach campaigns to continuing and new students. New students enrolling in fall 2020, and spring and summer 2021, received messages from SSAs after they completed their New Student Orientation programs. In total, SSAs sent **2,246 text messages** to new students. In fall 2020, we engaged in a texting outreach campaign to continuing students who had never interacted with an SSA to make them aware of our support services, particularly given the changes to the online modality. This campaign consisted of **19,855 text messages**. About 10% of these students followed up with significant interactions with SSAs.

We also joined our Office of Orientation and Transition partners to present **10 virtual Welcome Week events** to introduce new and returning students to SSAs, campus resources, and the many opportunities available to them while attending college in a virtual environment. Because we understand the importance of anchoring connections for students, the team is now building a catalog of online events and resources that will live on our website. These events will be categorized into the following buckets, which are consistent with the University's Learning Framework: connecting, engaging, learning, and integrating.

Qualitative data illustrate how SSAs assist students in developing anchoring connections. We share some of these comments below:

"[SSA] -- I am really thankful that I have met you and we have remained in contact all these years. You have provided me with great advice and have been an extraordinary role model! I thank you again for your kindness that you show me again and again, take care..."

"Just wanted to say thank you for all your support over the last couple of year. Sometimes I felt so lost and unseen trying to navigate the system. Thanks for not being judgement of some of my struggles or the small question that I may have asked."

Financial support beyond the first year

Financing a college education is an area of major concern for University of Utah students. This academic year, SSAs provided support to **1,172 students** around this concern. Additionally, we made **295 referrals** to the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships for additional assistance.

Our partnership with the Alumni Association to support students beyond the first year grew in the 2020-21 year. The Alumni Association provided an initial gift of **\$25,000 for the SSA team to award directly to students**. In the fall 2020 and spring 2021 terms, SSAs awarded financial support to **14 students** whose financial situations had changed in ways that made it challenging for them to pay their tuition. At this point, our Alumni Association partner was so moved by the stories of need from the applicants that she was able to secure an additional **\$8,500** for us to award in summer 2021 term. Two students who received awards this year have completed their degrees and all of the other awardees continue to stay enrolled and progress toward completing their degrees. We hope this partnership will continue into the 2021-22 year.

In addition to the Alumni Association scholarship funds, a team of SSAs was awarded a **UGS Parent Fund grant of \$2,000** to support students who identify as international, undocumented or DACA-recipients, or are otherwise ineligible for federal financial aid funds. Because of COVID-19, the SSAs were not able to distribute this money during the 2020-21 year, but the funds will be used to support students beyond their first year of school in the 2021-22 year.

The following data highlight how SSAs support students in accessing financial support:

“SSA: Good news! No, great news!! You will be receiving the For Utah scholarship this summer term. The funds should show up in your account this week.

Student: ooooooh that’s really good to hear, THANK YOU SOOOO MUCH

SSA: I’m pretty happy, too! You’re welcome. I am so glad it worked out this way.

Student: same, this is amazing. i’m so grateful.”

“I hope this email finds you well. Last year you helped me with my personal statement and I wanted to inform you that I received the Utah Opportunities Scholarship (UOS). Which will provide up to \$8,000 per year towards tuition & fees (Fall \$4,000/Spring \$4,000) for four years (8 semesters maximum). Getting this scholarship really made continuing at the University of Utah a certainty and I wanted to thank you for your help with navigating the scholarship board and also perfecting my personal statement. I am sincerely grateful and I'm looking forward to all the amazing opportunities the University of Utah has to offer me the next four years.”

Navigating University processes and the physical environment

Students find many challenges in the physical environment and University of Utah processes. From limited parking to construction that impedes their ability to move around the campus, students told us in E3 focus groups that we need to communicate better about changes to our physical environment. Students also indicated that they sometimes struggle with University

processes such as admissions, financial aid, course registration, and transfer. All of these concerns were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Student Success Advocates responded to student needs in numerous ways, including referrals to Academic Advisors. Advisors comprise one of our main campus partners, and in the past year, SSAs made **169 referrals to Academic Advising, 339 referrals to Academic Department/College advising, and, as mentioned above, 295 referrals to Financial Aid and Scholarships** to assist students navigating University processes.

COVID-19 and the move to online learning made navigating an already complex environment even more challenging for students. For SSAs, the online modality often made it difficult to provide the soft handoffs that are an integral part of our work with students. Some offices did not answer their phones, and our ability to walk a student to an office and make a personal introduction to the person who could help solve their issue was completely upended. The team worked quickly and consistently to maintain a website filled with information about COVID, navigating campus from a distance, and staying motivated while learning from home. We frequently heard from students how helpful SSAs were as they navigated University processes and procedures during the pandemic. The quotes below illustrate the importance of SSAs in students' navigation of the University:

“And, wow -- thank you so much! This is the most help I've received since I've enrolled in the University”

“I remember you were a huge support when I was struggling academically. I am very excited to finally graduate!”

“Awesome, thank you so much for all of your advice! It all makes a whole lot more sense now. I will definitely follow up with an academic advisor to see if I need a grade in those two classes to get into any upcoming classes I need. I will also contact you with further questions when I come across them.”

Second class citizens

In the E3 focus groups, students told us that many of them feel like they are less important to the University of Utah than other students. Identity (race/ethnicity, gender, age) can impact this, but major, being a commuter student, or not being an athlete also contribute. Student Success Advocates can help mediate this feeling by providing one-on-one, holistic attention to the details of students' lives to assist them in determining what they need to be successful.

The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare numerous disparities in health care and other areas. Many University of Utah students did not have access to the technological tools they needed to continue their education virtually. In the days immediately following the cancellation of in-person instruction, we expanded our WiFi hotspot program, doubling the number of hotspots available to students. We continued the program through the 2020-21 year, with 12 hotspots in the hands of students who needed them to complete their school work. One student wrote late in April 2021, “Hey! I just graduated and no longer need the WiFi hotspot. Where should I

return it? It was a huge help, thank you so much!” While small in number, the hotspots had a significant impact.

The unrest around racial justice during summer 2020 also had a disproportionate impact on Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) around the country and at the University of Utah. In response, the SSA team, along with the Learning Center and Office of Orientation and Transition engaged in several activities. Tramaine Jones led several anti-racist practices and racial justice education conversations, and we invited Dr. Wazir Jefferson to lead additional conversations. We posted an anti-racist statement on our social media accounts and formed an anti-racist hiring practices group, which significantly altered the Student Success Advocate position description to forefront our commitment to anti-racist and social justice practice. This group will also engage in a revision of the OSSE mission statement to reflect our anti-racist foundations. We also engaged in bi-monthly conversations and workshops with several campus partners (ODOS, OUR, CPDC) to support the development of educational spaces related to racial justice. Our work in this area will continue to develop as we include Dan Cairo and Emma Houston from EDI in the conversations to ensure that our efforts align closely with those of the University.

The following quotes indicate how SSAs help students feel like they matter on the University of Utah campus:

“I just wanted to let you know that my SSA has been an excellent help to me and has been very quick to respond and answer my questions fully. She is a very valuable resource when I have miscellaneous questions that I do not know where or who to ask. In the past, I have often been very frustrated with small yet bothersome questions that I have had to leave unanswered because they are not a high enough priority to reach out to professors or offices. I very much appreciate her assistance!”

“I do not know how to say thank you all. It is definitely not easy to survive with work restrictions in a foreign land for an orphan like me who do not have any hope of receiving any financial help from home. But the U is completely showing me that I can still be successful in my education, regardless. I do not know how to express my gratitude nor where to put out this kindness for the whole world to see. I wish I have a better word to say thank you! All my siblings are so marveled by your intense kindness to me and they are all saying thank you to you all. Thank you for making me to have tears of joy!”

“Student: Hi [SSA], I’m doing better, man. Thanks for checking in. It all caught up to me, but every day looking to improve.

SSA: Good to hear. Thanks for letting me know. If you want to schedule a time to talk, please let me know. I know it’s a crappy time for you.

Student: Will do. Thanks, [SSA}, you really helped the other day”

“Thank you for your constant support through my time at the U! All your emails and short conversations have really been appreciated and have meant a lot. I will be sure to contact you in the future if I ever need assistance.”

Additional Highlights from SSA Data

Interaction Data

During the academic year 2020-21, SSAs have had **69,074 interactions** with University of Utah students. As noted above, the total interactions far exceeded our growth goals. Of these interactions, 68% are significant, meaning the interaction was deep enough to collect contact information. Light interactions, (32% of the total), are those in which SSAs talk briefly to students, mainly introducing themselves and their work. SSAs focus on significant interactions because collecting students’ contact information allows them to follow up with students around specific topics. The growth in light interactions this year was due to changes in how we track these interactions which allowed for more accurate measurement. Of the total interactions above, **36,858** were in class visits, which is a primary means for making introductions to students.

SSAs work with students around numerous topics., which requires that they remain well-versed to support students in many different ways. This is illustrated in our top topic areas shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Top Interaction Topics

Topic	Number
Classes/coursework	3580
Health & Wellness	2330
High Impact Practices	1159
Scholarships	609
Identity	449
Appeal/Petition for Consideration	359
Paying for College	335
Housing	235
Finances	228
Finding a Job	151

Tools for Success

As part of our focus on empowerment for students (and in support of students), we continue to build and compile resources to assist students in identifying tools that align with their goals. To this end, Christine Contestable continues to curate information for the Tools of Success page on the SSA website. During the 2020-21 academic year, our Tools for Success site had **2,357 visitors**, including **1,537 new visitors**, who viewed the Tools for Success page **4,819 times**. The

Tools for Success page is a terrific resource for students when an SSA is not immediately available to meet in-person, and was especially helpful during COVID when our entire community was learning and working remotely.

Goals

The 2021-22 goals detailed below for the SSA program focus on four primary areas: continuing to grow our numbers of interactions, increasing faculty partnerships, developing a series of workshops for classrooms or other small groups, and deepening our use of Civitas.

Increase Interactions

Our target growth for 2020-21 was 2%. As noted previously, we increased our growth by an incredible 27.6%. In 2021-22, aim to continue increasing our overall interactions, with a goal of 1-2%. As part of this growth, we hope to increase our significant interactions by 5%. As we return to campus, it will be interesting to see how the nature of our interactions with students changes. In some ways, the virtual environment enabled a large number of light interactions. We anticipate that we will bring our referral numbers back to their previous levels when we are in closer proximity to our campus partners. These growth goals are attainable as we return to campus, but also remain working in a more hybrid approach in the coming year .

Increase Formal Faculty Partnerships

Our partnership between the E-LEAP faculty and SSAs has been very productive, both for SSAs and for the faculty involved in this partnership. We currently also partner with the E-LEAP, Health Sciences LEAP, and Refuges LEAP. SSAs will be fully embedded in these classes in the coming year, and we will evaluate the impact of the partnership again in the spring to determine whether future growth can occur. Additionally, we look forward to standardizing these experiences for SSAs, faculty and students in the 2021-22 year.

Our collaboration with the Block U program has evolved over the years and 2021-22 opportunities for SSAs to connect with faculty, particularly as we return to campus. An SSA will be connected to each Block U offering in the upcoming academic year and will aim to incorporate video bios, video announcements, and support to faculty through marketing efforts that highlight our “supporting students” tab on the SSA website.

Faculty and Instructor Engagement

Many students come to the SSAs through faculty referrals. Our Faculty Engagement Committee will develop a communications plan for faculty about the resources we offer to support students. This plan will include information for faculty along with a timeline for reaching out to faculty and instructors, including video content that faculty can embed in Canvas, as well as suggested syllabi statements for faculty and instructors to add to their course syllabi. Second, the group will work closely with the Learning Center to develop workshops related to learning and student success that can be delivered by either SSAs or Learning Center team members.

Increased use of Civitas

While working remotely, we continued to train SSAs on the use of new tools in Civitas, including using specified lists of students for mass communications. Our use of the tool is increasing across the team. In the coming year, we will deepen our use of this tool to join Academic Advisors in providing just-in-time support to students by monitoring students in Advocates' caseloads for sudden decreases in predicted persistence. We are in the process of developing a departmental communication plan to ensure that timely messages are sent to individual SSA student caseloads, and we are excited about the new SMS messaging feature which is now ready for use. We will also continue to use Illume for campus-wide insights into student persistence and large-scale nudges.

NEW UNIVERSITY SCHOLARS

Our Mission

New University Scholars are exceptional, accomplished students with diverse backgrounds and life experiences. Admission to the New University Scholars program is by invitation only. These scholars are chosen through the holistic admissions process at the University of Utah, which places importance not only on high grade point averages and test scores but also on community involvement, service-related experience and a demonstrated commitment to improving the world around them.

Our Staff

Director

Amy Aldous Bergerson

Student Success Advocate

April Ollivier

Our Contributions to an Exceptional Educational Experience

New University Scholars is a learning community enhancement offered to a group of specially selected students. New University Scholars are required to enroll in a learning community, attend monthly dinners where they learn from Student Success Advocates, maintain enrollment in 15 credits per semester, and maintain a 3.0 GPA. In their second year, New University Scholars participate in leadership education and are required to engage in some type of leadership – broadly defined – on campus. They receive a \$2000 annual scholarship. New University Scholars addresses the following areas that students in E3 focus groups told us were important to them: connections across courses and extra/co-curricular experiences, clear understanding of how college courses and experiences relate their future endeavors, anchoring connections that change their campus experiences, strong awareness of campus events and resources, and financial support beyond the first year. Below we discuss how we supported these areas for students during the COVID pandemic year. It is important to note that the 2020-21 academic year was the final year for the New University Scholars program. Due to changes in scholarship priorities, we have decided to discontinue the program.

Connecting across courses and connecting college to the future

New University Scholars are required to participate in one of five partner learning communities: Beacon Scholars, BlockU, Diversity Scholars, Humanities Scholars, or LEAP. The learning communities partnering with NUS are committed to assisting students in integrating their courses and developing the ability to tell the story of their education in a way that will contribute to their future endeavors. The activities in which New U Scholars engage continue these conversations outside of the classroom. April Ollivier worked with New U Scholars both in-person and through Zoom to do the following:

- Develop skills for managing time and stress as new University of Utah students
- Engage in discussions about leadership and their plans for making an impact at the University of Utah
- Learn how to translate their leadership experiences to other contexts so that they are prepared to talk about their leadership in job and graduate school applications. We asked students to gauge their confidence level in articulating their leadership philosophy at the beginning and again at the end of the year.

Through these activities, we responded to the need identified by E3 focus group participants to receive assistance in making connections across their coursework and extracurricular activities to enhance their learning now and prepare them for their future.

Anchoring connections

One of the goals of NUS is to help break a large university down into more manageable sub-communities. Students learn in smaller classes in their learning communities, and develop relationships with other students in those learning communities. Some learning communities also incorporate out-of-class opportunities for students to work, learn, and enjoy together as a way to build community. NUS monthly meetings provided additional opportunities for students to interact with learning community friends, and expand that circle of connections to students in other learning communities.

We also know that anchoring connections develop with staff across campus. NUS provided students with the opportunity to work closely with April Ollivier, a Student Success Advocate. The focus for this year was leadership development, which is a specialization area for April. New U Scholars not only learned from April, but they got to know her on a close level, which supports the type of relationship that serves as an anchoring connection.

Awareness of on-campus events and resources

All of the 2020-21 New U Scholars were second year students. Our focus on leadership development provided them with a chance to think about their impact on the University as they continue their educational journey. This process exposes them to resources and opportunities they may not have learned about during their first year of college.

Financial support beyond the first year

Each student in NUS received a scholarship of \$1000 per semester for the four semesters of the program. To maintain this financial support, students were required to stay enrolled in 15 credits each semester, maintain a 3.0 GPA, and attend all monthly NUS meetings. Students who left the program for any reason were not able to retain their funding. We worked to accommodate students as much as possible to ensure that the funding needed to support their success stayed in place, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic when financial concerns loomed large for many students. We retained all of our second-year New U Scholars through this challenging year.

SUMMER BRIDGE

Our Team

Student Success Advocates

Lisa Lewis

Jon Bernal

LEAP Instructor

CoCo James

At the request of Provost Dan Reed, we partnered with Enrollment Management, LEAP, and the Learning Center to develop a summer bridge program for students who would otherwise not be able to attend the University of Utah. The Admissions Office selected students for a 5-week residential program during the second session of summer term, with an initial goal of enrolling 25 students. Thirty-seven students accepted our invitation to be part of the program prior to the suspension of in-person operations due to COVID-19. Once the bridge program was moved to fall and did not include the residential portion, 82 students accepted the invitation to participate. Ultimately 61 students enrolled in fall-semester courses.

With the number of Summer Bridge students being much higher than originally anticipated, we needed to add more courses. We expanded to two LEAP sections and three Writing 1010 sections. The LEAP sections had 30-student caps and the writing sections had 23-student caps. We were fortunate that several students placed into Writing 2010, or had already taken Writing 1010 through concurrent enrollment, so we were able to fill the three 1010 sections, but not over-enroll them. For LEAP, we handled the overage by placing all students who had listed engineering as their major in E-LEAP sections, and all of the students with health sciences or medical-related majors in the Health Professions LEAP. This meant that the experience we had planned for students in LEAP and writing was diluted significantly, and a few students had neither the Summer Bridge LEAP or writing courses, which meant they received none of the planned academic support from these courses.

We worked closely with Dr. CoCo James as she planned the Summer Bridge LEAP course, and looped all three writing instructors into the group so they understood that Summer Bridge students might need extra support. We initially assigned one Student Success Advocate to work with the Summer Bridge program. However, with the significant increase in enrollment and the

dilution of the program in its fall semester format, we decided to add a second Advocate to support the students. Jon Bernal and Lisa Lewis provided SSA support.

We planned bi-monthly meetings for Summer Bridge students and Student Success Advocates and purchased the Wayfinder curriculum for the program. Wayfinder is developed for students transitioning from high school to college, and we felt this would be useful, particularly for this population of students. Jon and Lisa, and Dr. James, the LEAP instructor, attended Wayfinder training virtually. Dr. James incorporated concepts from Wayfinder in her Summer Bridge courses and the SSAs delivered the curriculum in the bi-monthly meetings. Despite the fact that we repeatedly communicated clearly to students that their Summer Bridge meetings with the SSAs were required, attendance was sparse. In fact, 14 students did not attend one of these meetings or meet with Jon or Lisa individually, which was offered as a way to make up for missed meetings. The Learning Center provided three writing tutors specifically for Summer Bridge students. Tutoring was minimally utilized even though the SSAs constantly encouraged students to take advantage of this support.

Summer Bridge students were required to complete 12 credits with a 2.5 GPA and attend all bi-monthly SSA meetings in order to continue their enrollment at the University of Utah. At the end of fall semester, all but 16 students met the requirements to continue their enrollment at the University. Two students whose GPAs were below 2.0 were given the opportunity to appeal, and were granted permission to enroll in spring semester. The other 16 had to leave the University.

Overall, the Summer Bridge program was successful. We were able to continue 45 students who would otherwise not have enrolled at the University of Utah through the academic year. The students received wrap-around support, and those who took advantage of this were successful in meeting program requirements. Table 5 shows the final outcomes for the 45 remaining Summer Bridge students at the end of spring semester 2021.

Table 5: Summer Bridge Spring 2021 GPAs

GPA	Number of Students
<2.0	4
2.0-2.4	7
2.5-2.9	8
3.0+	26

Ultimately, VP Dan Reed and Steve Robinson decided not to offer Summer Bridge for the 2021 enrollment year. A detailed report was submitted to VP Reed, which can help guide future iterations of the program should the University decide to offer it again.

HOMELESS STUDENT TASK FORCE

Student Success Advocates have been at the forefront of an initiative providing support for students on campus who are experiencing displacement or homelessness. Working in partnership with the Women's Resource Center, Housing and Residential Education, Financial Aid, and University Student Apartments, we have assisted hundreds of students for whom stable housing was an issue.

During the 2020-21 year, the nature of this work changed extensively. The HSTF was reimagined as the Basic Needs Collective. Along with this, construction began on the new Basic Needs Center in the Student Union building. Oversight for this work was moved to the Associate VP of Student Affairs, Bryan Hubain. Additionally, the emergency funds that had been under our purview were consolidated in the Financial Aid Office at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. SSAs remained a key part of the Basic Needs Collective. Loretta Rowley, Leslie Cepeda, and Iris Moulton are key connectors to this work. They offered virtual office hours in the BNC weekly, and served as the contacts from our team for the larger collective. This partnership will remain strong in the future, with Melanie Lee taking Amy Bergerson's place in the leadership of the BNC, along with Bryan Hubain, Kim Hall, Kirstin Maanum and Sarah Elizabeth Garza-Leavitt.

We also continued to benefit from the \$20,000 Wells Fargo donation which was secured two years ago to supplement the HSTF emergency fund. Wells Fargo's money provided flexibility in how we supported students. Because the funds are private monies, the students we supported were almost all international or undocumented. These funds also remained in the Office of Undergraduate Studies after our regular HSTF funds were centralized due to COVID-19. The funds provided **\$6,956 to a total of five students**. We hope that the Undergraduate Advancement team will be able to secure similar funds in the future.

CIVITAS

As mentioned above, the primary role of the Office of Student Success and Empowerment in the Civitas initiative, is to send population-based nudges that address issues common across students based on the academic calendar. In the 2020-21 academic year, we sent **5,438 individual messages to students** through this format. Messages were sent to: first-time, first-year students; sophomore students; transfer students; and online students. Three messages went out fall semester, timed to let students know that we care about them as they tackled the various challenges. In the spring we did not send messages, because many students had indicated that they felt they were getting too much email from the U during the pandemic. Messages went to students' preferred email boxes and open rates varied from 40% to 90%. About 5% of students responded to the messages; some just acknowledged the message, but many others expressed appreciation, or asked for support around specific issues. We responded to *every* message we received in response to Civitas nudges. Below is a sampling of messages received:

“Thank you so much! It has been quite a semester and I'm surprised I made it through unscathed. Thank you as well for everything you have done and how much work you have put in as well!”

“That was so sweet, thank you so much. This semester has definitely been very challenging, I've been having quite the hard time navigating and going through it, but like you said, we did it! Thank you for the kind words, and yes! I'll be recharging for spring!!! Thank you again for the recognition. Sometimes the smallest messages mean the most!”

“I really appreciate this, thank you. The work you and other staff and faculty have put in hasn't gone unnoticed. Thank you for working on making this semester just a little bit easier during the pandemic! I hope you're able to rest and re-energize as well, you all certainly deserve it.”

As we move forward, we are excited to engage new features of Civitas *Inspire*. These features will allow SSAs to create groups of students they want to contact, better understand how to support students they are working with, and mass text groups of students. At the administrative level, we should customize fall 2021 messages to make sure that students are receiving the support they need, particularly as they return to campus after the COVID-19 pandemic.

EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE RESEARCH (E3)

Our Team

Lead Researchers

Amy Aldous Bergerson, Ph.D.

Shawn R. Coon

Contributors

Year 1: Val Guerrero, Taunya Dressler, Bobbi Davis, Shari Lindsey, Kathy Campbell

Year 2: Vanessa Johnson-Ojeda

COVID: Marilisa Vega, Chris Wallace-Carrete, Shenrui Yang, Bobbi Davis, Willie Chen, Denise Brenes, Jessi Gerowitz, Sierra Stevens, Diane Le Strain, Latu Kinikini, Mayumi Kasai

Year 3: Chris Wallace-Carrete and Yocia Abney

The Research

The Exceptional Educational Experience (E3) Research Initiative was created at the behest of President Ruth Watkins with one primary goal: to improve services and programs at the University of Utah to better support students' ability to succeed and thrive in college. From its inception, this study explored the experiences for students, staff, and faculty at the University of Utah in an attempt to understand how the university can provide the highest quality educational experiences. The findings reported below represent the comprehensive insights gleaned from the three years of this study, which involved students, faculty, and staff, and included a COVID-related investigation.

Methodology

The primary form of data collection for E3 was informal interviews. We also utilized a survey and focus groups during the first year of the study. The E3 Study occurred in four phases: the student phase, staff phase, COVID phase, and faculty phase. The findings from each phase informed future phases. Data from these phases were coded and analyzed by various members of the research team. Research team members consisted of doctoral, masters, and undergraduate students. Below is a list of the data that was collected in each phase:

Student Phase:

- 37 Focus Groups (109 students)
- 27 Individual Interviews

Staff Phase:

- 25 Academic and Student Affairs Professionals

COVID Phase:

- 20 Staff
- 89 Faculty
- 120 Students – both graduate and undergraduate

Faculty Phase:

- 17 Faculty members from all colleges that have undergraduate students

Student Findings – Year 1

During the first year of the study we sought to understand the experiences of undergraduate students. In fall 2018, we conducted focus groups with 109 students. A number of themes emerged. We then conducted individual interviews in the spring of 2019 to clarify and further define these themes. Below is a list of the themes from the student phase of the study:

Purposes of Education: Students frequently spoke about making cognitive connections between their coursework and their career goals. These cognitive connections happen between general education and major specific courses, as well as between all courses and the students' post-college goals. These connections are tied to the larger idea of the purpose of education at the U.

Essential Role of Faculty: Feelings of belonging, being engaged, and valued by faculty are essential elements in the student experience. The impact faculty can have on the student experiences can come in the form of classroom engagement, advising, and/or providing opportunities to students. Students also noted they are motivated when faculty care about the subject they are teaching as well as the students themselves.

Anchoring Connections: Our findings demonstrate that students often persist in college because of one primary point of contact. This anchoring connection can be with faculty, staff or peers. Anchoring connections provide students with opportunities and social capital that support their success in college.

Stronger Communications and Awareness of Campus Events: Students reported that they are often not aware of what is happening on campus. This lack of awareness

applies to sporting events, construction on campus, and important resources. This is especially true for transfer and non-traditional students. Failures to communicate construction, parking, or infrastructure changes cause significant stress for students.

Accurate Portrayal of the University: Students indicated that the University does not always accurately portray itself, and resulting in surprises about the difference from what they anticipated campus would be like and their actual experience of it. Issues around financial support, availability of academic programs, and diversity all played into this sense that the U does not always portray itself accurately to prospective students.

Financial Support: Financial aid is critical for the student experience. Issues with financial aid caused some students to stop out and/or enroll part-time to save money. For other students, finding access to available financial aid options was difficult. This was particularly an issue for students beyond the first year of college.

Challenging Processes: Students stated that some University processes are difficult to navigate. These processes are related to many departments, including admissions, the registrar's office, financial aid, academic advising, and various student affairs offices. Students relayed feelings of confusion and uncertainty about some processes they were only able to navigate with the help of anchoring connections.

Second Class Citizens: Some students felt that all students are not valued equally by the university. Students see inequities across facilities, programs, and resources within the university. Many students perceive that specific student populations receive better or more resources than they do and that the university values those students more. And, when students perceive they are less valuable, they feel less like staying at the university to complete their degrees.

Safety: Our findings indicate two primary forms of safety are of concern to students. First, students are concerned about their physical safety on campus. They stated that the campus is not well lit, not well patrolled, and that there is often a great distance between buildings and parking structures. Second, students feel a lack of safety with regards to the free exchange of ideas and diversity on campus, noting that the lack of diversity on campus marginalizes and silences students with differing racial, gender, ability, age, gender, and sexual identities.

Staff Findings – Year 2

The second year of E3 focused on the experiences of staff at the University. We utilized findings from the previous year to develop an interview protocol that would allow staff participants to talk about their perspectives on what is important to students. Below is a list of our key takeaways from this phase of the study:

The Importance of Relationships: We found that staff members make the most meaningful impact on students when they develop and maintain close relationships

with students. This finding relates back to the concept of “anchoring connections from the student findings.

Resources: Staff members consistently noted a lack of resources necessary to complete their jobs. These resources included technology, office supplies, time, and space. There is also an understanding amongst staff that certain colleges and departments provide more resources to staff. This leads to a sense of inequity amongst staff members and hinders their motivation and job satisfaction.

Trickle Down Communication: Effective communication is key to staff members. Participants noted that communication is often ineffective within their department, colleges, and university-wide, making numerous mentions of inconsistent communications from University and college leadership. They noted that this makes it difficult for them to do their work effectively and hinders their ability to provide the services and resources that are important to an exceptional experience for students.

COVID Findings – Year 2.5

As we wrapped up the second-year staff phase of E3, the University and society were struck with the COVID-19 pandemic. This portion of the study was not originally planned; however, it yielded some of the most interesting findings. Below is a list of key takeaways from this portion of the study, which included students, staff, and faculty:

Loss of Community: Once the pandemic took shape and the university was forced to close, students, staff, and faculty had to work and learn from home. This resulted in a loss of community which impacted mental health. Students were forced to move out of student housing and back with their families. Staff and faculty had to adapt to not seeing their colleagues. This adversely impacted the educational and work experiences of participants during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Learning New Strategies for School and Work: All participants in this phase mentioned how the pandemic and online education forced them to learn new skills. These included skills for teaching, learning, and working from home. Faculty, staff, and students had to adapt to unfamiliar technology platforms, which was challenging for all, but resulted in a rare opportunity for growth during the pandemic.

Expectations, Workload, and Uncertainty: Learning new platforms and developing new strategies for work and school caused unexpected workload increases for students, staff, and faculty. Faculty and staff were expected to do more and with few resources. Many students expressed that they were expected to complete their work without proper instruction. This led all participants to have a sense of uncertainty, which impacted their ability to thrive in school and at work. Everyone longed for the University to acknowledge how challenging the situation was, but they did not receive this message.

Faculty Findings – Year 3

The final phase of this study explored the experiences of faculty. We utilized the findings from the students, staff, and faculty who participated in previous phases of the study to inform our research design and the findings. Below is a summary of the findings from this phase of the study:

Adaptability as a Teaching Philosophy: Recognizing the humanized environment of their classrooms, faculty know that each student is different. Through this approach, faculty remain flexible and adaptable in their curricula in order to support large groups of diverse students.

Engaged Learning Models: Faculty expressed that engaged learning is a key contributor to student success. Through actively engaging and connecting with students, faculty are better able to convey course material and create environments for long-term professional development and learning.

Demonstrating Care: The individuals in the classroom are not only students, they are people, each with their own unique circumstances. By recognizing this holistic view, faculty demonstrate genuine care for students that enhances their learning experience and positively influences their lives.

Balancing University Commitments: Although teaching is a primary component in the role of a faculty member, other commitments, such as research and service, often compete for priority. These competing responsibilities can significantly impact the student experience if not balanced efficiently.

Overall Findings

Each group's findings are unique to their experiences; however, some findings cut across students, staff, and faculty. Below is a list of the comprehensive findings from all four phases of the study:

Unequal Distribution of Resources: Faculty, staff, and students all noted the unequal distribution of resources of campus. Even the symbolism of buildings and facilities takes on meaning. Some staff and faculty had limited access to office supplies and other work resources. Students noticed the lack of inequality of resources between colleges for student-focused programming and resources. This unequal distribution of resources was compounded during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Anchoring Connections: Anchoring connections were a consistent theme amongst all three groups of participants. Staff and faculty who endeavored to create lasting bonds with students see the difference they can make in students' lives. For students, anchoring connections were even more meaningful; they consistently noted how one connection to campus facilitates retention, persistence, thriving, and graduation.

Communication: Students, staff, and faculty all emphasized the importance of communication. For students, communication is essential to their ability to access campus resources and learn about events. For staff, communication ensures that accurate information is passed to students. Communication can make the difference for faculty knowing what is expected of them in the classroom. All of the issues that existed around communication at the University were exacerbated by the COVID -19 pandemic.

The E3 research project can provide valuable information for the University of Utah as it thinks strategically about supporting student success. This is particularly important as the University experiences significant shifts in leadership while growing the undergraduate student population. It is imperative for the institution to listen to the voices of all campus constituents as it considers how to offer exceptional experiences that support thriving across the community.

Acknowledgments

This research project would not have been possible without the many participants who generously share their time and thoughts. The experiences they described provided shape for the research and ensured that it can be impactful for the University. Additionally, the research was made possible through the efforts of many individuals who participated on the research team. Students from the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy and the Office of Undergraduate Research conducted diligent work that developed this robust qualitative inquiry. Their time and effort were a demonstration of how a dedicated group of people can come together in support of scholarship and a greater understanding of the student experience.

LEARN + EARN

The newest addition to the OSSE line-up in 2020-2021 is the Learn + Earn (L+E) professional development program for student employees. Through a generous donation from the Clark and Christine Ivory Foundation, 44 student employees were supported with additional pay totaling \$66,000. Campus departments involved in the pilot cohort included: Learning Abroad, the Office of the Dean of Students, the Office of General Education, Learning Center, the College of Mines and Earth Sciences, and the College of Social and Cultural Transformation.

The following learning outcomes shaped our implementation of L+E:

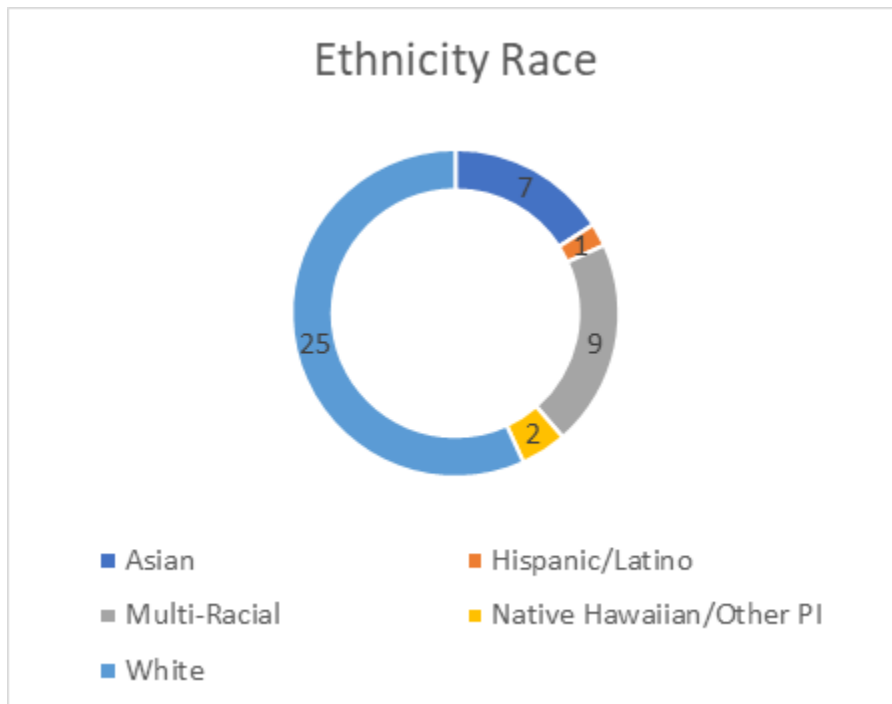
By the end of students' employment roles, they will have an increased sense of efficacy with regards to specific skills: solving complex problems, recognizing when and where to take initiative, and to think critically.

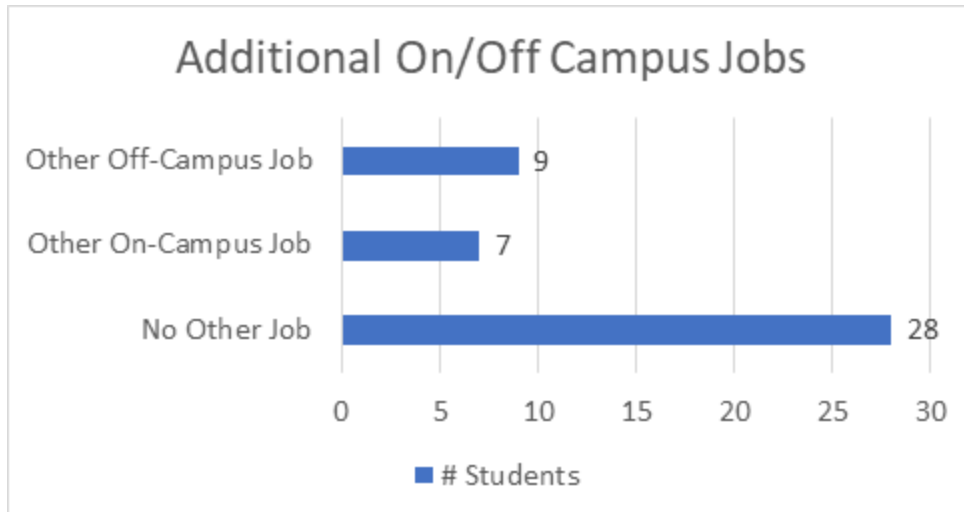
Student employees will be able to articulate how and where they enhanced skills in their on-campus roles, which will allow them to carry a transferrable set of skills and experiences into their post-graduation activities.

In the first semester, L+E participants met once per month in recorded live sessions. Content and engagement were also made available asynchronously. Student employees and supervisors engaged in parallel curricula focused on increasing efficacy in the L+E identified skills. Topics included: mentorship, the role of curiosity, translating job descriptions and experiences, and intentional reflection.

Of the 44 student participants, 18 were male and 22 were female. Eight academic colleges were represented by various student majors and 15 of the students reported taking part in the Honors College, while 12 reported that they were transfer students. On average, students were in their third or fourth year of college (by credits).

A little over half of the L+E participants self-reported that their ethnicity/race was white, while just under half of participants identified as students of color. Roughly half of participants reported working only in their L+E role, on campus, and were not employed elsewhere.



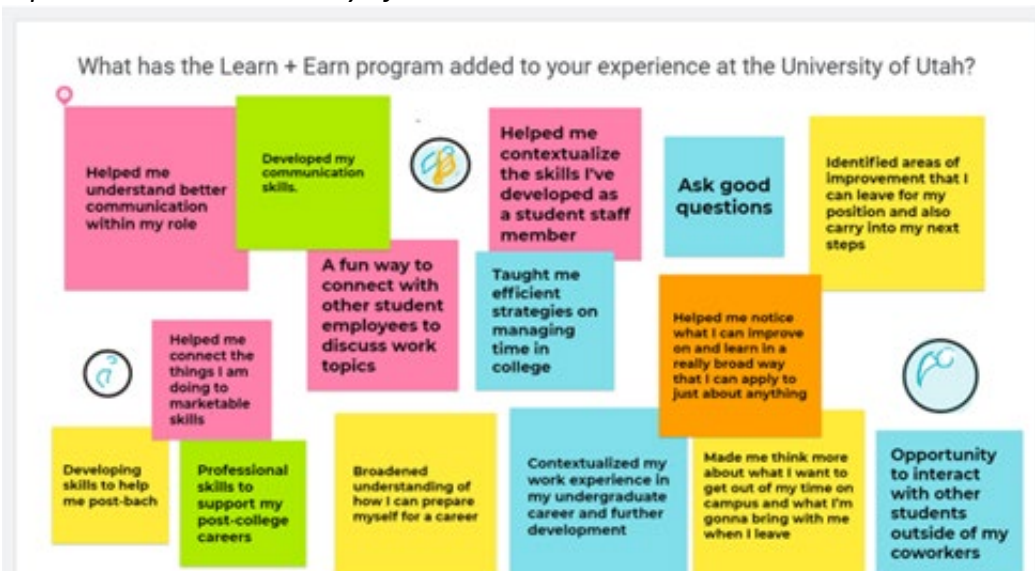


University of Utah data indicate that working on campus is an important aspect of increasing the likelihood that students will persist from term to term, as well as towards degree completion. L+E participants in 2021 reflected this. Further, they collectively shared their reasons for why working on campus is important to them, which are outlined below in order of frequency from top to bottom:

- Provides a sense of purpose
- Provides an avenue for campus involvement
- Provides a way to connect/be part of the U of U community
- Provides an environment to learn new skills and about organizations
- Provides a flexible role where the student identity is incorporated
- Provides financial support

Students shared that the L+E program added value to their University of Utah experience in a number of ways. First, students pointed to the value added in connecting the dots across their interests inside and outside of the classroom. Second, students commented that the program provided space and time to reflect on aspects of the L+E role that were meaningful for their professional development and future careers. Third, students commented on the importance of the L+E program during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond for connecting with other students in their shared community. Figure 1 illustrates these aspects of added value.

Figure 1: Responses to the question “what has the Learn + Earn program added to your experience at the University of Utah?”



Additional feedback students shared about L+E is below:

“Enjoying the sessions and learning valuable professional lessons.”

“It has gone really well! I think reflecting on your roles and how to expand them is something that every student employee should consider, regardless of the department they work in.”

“I enjoy being able to set an hour aside for L+E to articulate the professional development I’ve been doing without really noticing! Thank you!”

“I think it’s a great program, I wish I could have done this last year when I began working for the university.”

“The Learn + Earn program has been great to help me reflect on how I perform at my on campus job. It has also given me the opportunity to connect with others.”

“I’m just thankful for this program.”

In regards to growth in the program, overall, student grew in their confidence related to L+E-identified skills. By the end of the first semester of L+E, students grew in their confidence to solve problems and know when, where, and how to take initiative in the workplace. Throughout the semester, students maintained a high degree of confidence to think critically.

Further, students’ knowledge about campus resources, opportunities, and programs was increased to some degree by the student employment role connected to L+E.

Table 6: Student Confidence in L+E Identified Skills

Confidence Levels in L+E Identified Skills	Pre-Assessment	Post-Assessment	Difference	Missing Data
Critical thinking	C: 20 EC: 24	C: 18 EC: 23	C: -2 EC: -1	3 responses in post
Problem Solving	LC: 2 C: 30 EC: 12	LC: 0 C: 20 EC: 21	LC: -2 C: -10 EC: +9	3 responses in post
When, Where, How to take initiative	LC: 8 C: 28 EC: 8	LC: 1 C: 21 EC: 19	LC: -7 C: -7 EC: +11	3 responses in post

LC= less than confident, C = confident, EC = extremely confident

Table 7: Knowledge of Campus Resources as a Result of L+E Role

Degree Knowledge of campus resources increased	# of Respondents *Missing 3
Same as before the L+E role	1
Somewhat increased	5
Increased	20
Greatly Increased	15

Supervisors also grew throughout the progression of the pilot cohort. By the end of the semester, the majority of supervisors felt more confident to coach students around how to build the L+E identified skills and how to support students in thinking about where and how those moments of construction took place. Supervisors also offered additional feedback that spoke to the value of the program:

“The Learn and Earn program not only facilitates amazing dialogue between students and their work colleagues, it is a program that initiates growth and development. This program allows students to explore and gain a deeper understanding of their job descriptions and skills they acquire and hone on-the-job. The program’s main emphasis areas are student success in higher education and the workplace.”

“I feel like Learn and Earn provided both students and supervisors the opportunity to connect with others and be very intentional about articulating skills and setting goals. It was a silver lining during the pandemic. I am so grateful for the opportunity on behalf of myself and my student staff members.”

“I think, that it has provided some reflective opportunities to connect in-classroom, student work experience and post-graduation aspirations. We have also had the opportunity to explore some classroom topics which has been so insightful. Discussing classroom topics helped us have a conversation about thinking and curiosity which was engaging for both of us. I have appreciated the opportunity to hear from the student, examples of what she wants to work on, the tasks she finds engaging and the ones she finds challenging.”

In short, we achieved what we set out to do. Students on average felt confident to translate skills to roles outside of the University of Utah. We moved the needle in L+E-identified skills related to problem solving and taking initiative. Most students reported an increase in knowledge related to campus resources as a result of their L+E role. Further, supervisors reported growth; increasing their confidence to identify projects for students to manage semi-/autonomously, and examples of how L+E-identified skills connect to those projects.

Moving forward, we have goals to increase the number of departments and students connected to the program within the next two years by launching cohorts at staggered intervals:

- Launch cohort 1 (Jan 2021)
- Launch cohort 2 and resume cohort 1 (Aug 2021)
- Launch cohort 3 and resume cohort 1 and 2 (Jan 2022)

We also aim to adapt content/curriculum for students and supervisors connected to the program over the next few semesters by shifting students and supervisors into beginning, continuing and advanced levels of content:

- Beginning cohort: mentorship, job descriptions, curiosity convos/networking, reflection
- Continuing cohort: critical thinking, taking initiative, project management, reflection
- Advanced cohort: equity, diversity & inclusion, mission alignment and values, conflict, reflection

Further, we are in the beginning phases of developing and deploying templates within the University of Utah Performance Management system for supervisors to implement and use while working with students. Through this partnership with Human Resources, we hope to add

a layer of professionalism related to goal setting, monitoring, and continued mentoring for students.

Finally, in the next two to three years, we will begin to explore the role of Federal Work Study and financial aid within our current budgeting model, which is currently comprised of private donor funds. We hope this will increase the capacity of participating departments to financially support students through increased wages. This will increase the reach of Learn + Earn by allocating funds to more departments and more students, while also institutionalizing the culture of student employment as a facet of professional development and deep engagement for students.

Lessons learned from COVID

Our pilot cohort was launched during the COVID-19 pandemic and we are eager to test out the curriculum in live, in-person formats in the 2021-2022 academic year. However, while we are eager to return to an in-person format, we carry with us lessons to apply in a post-COVID world.

Asynchronous content should be included in all future cohorts of Learn+Earn, in addition to multiple meeting times in any given month. The number of student schedules to plan around creates a unique challenge where not all students can attend L+E sessions at the same time. Pre-recorded content, similar to an asynchronous course, will be curated and shared with students who cannot attend monthly meetings. Additionally, moving forward, each session will include both in-person and asynchronous directions to account for both groups of students. Monthly micro-surveys will allow us to capture real-time feedback from both students and supervisors.

LEADERSHIP STUDIES MINOR

Under the direction of Melanie Lee, the Leadership Studies Minor has experienced enrollment growth, increased organization, and energy that had been missing from the program for several years. Below, we detail the advancements taking place in the minor.

Growth and Development

At the close of 2019-2020, the number of **14 students** enrolled as currently matriculating students. At the close of 2020-2021, that number had grown to **28 students**. A total of **10 students** graduated in summer 2021 with the Leadership Studies Minor designation on their transcript. The positive trajectory of declared minors is promising.

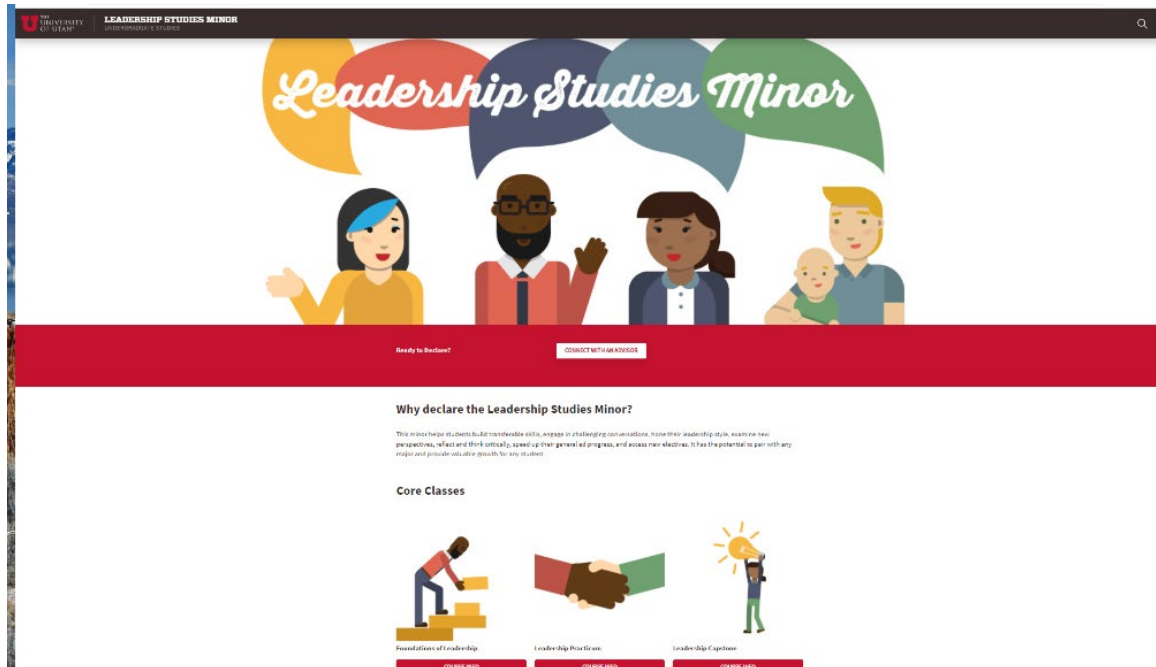
Other data that provide a sense of optimism lie in our goals to not only increase declared minors, but to increase enrollment in our core courses. Below is a snapshot of five-year historical data, current enrollment for fall 2021 (*as of May 2021), and projected goals for future academic years. Pending budget requests, we hope to offer one section of each core course in each academic term moving forward.

Table 8: Leadership Enrollment Over Time

	AY 2016- 2017	AY 2017- 2018	AY 2018- 2019	AY 2019- 2020	AY 2020- 2021	Proj. AY 2021- 2022	Actual AY 2021- 2022 *May 2021	Proj. AY 2022- 2023
LDRSP 2020: Foundations (Fall)	15	21	7	13	31	20	9	20
(LDRSP 2020 - when a second session was offered- Fall)	14	12	n/a	n/a				
LDRSP 2020: Foundations (Spring)	14	4	5	12	25	20		20
LDRSP 4100: Leadership Practicum (Fall)	9	12	2	1	10	15	5	15
LDRSP 4100: Leadership Practicum (Spring)	n/a	n/a	n/a	3	8	15		15
LDRSP 4750: Capstone (Spring Only)	6	12	5	2	10	15		15
LDRSP 4750: Capstone (Projected Fall, AY 22-23)								15
LDRSP: Special Topics/Core Course (Projected Summer 22-23 Offering)				2*				15

*Suppressed, asynchronous section offered for UAC students not returning to Salt Lake City, UT

Marketing efforts in 2020-2021 included the redesigned website with an overview video of the minor. The website (leadershipstudies.utah.edu) now features streamlined information regarding the core and elective courses, a contact form, and an updated advising checklist, and can be viewed in the screen capture below. In 2020-2021, we participated in the virtual major expos to represent not only the Leadership Studies Minor, but also the Bachelor of University Studies and the Veterans Studies Certificate.



Advisory Council

As part of the revitalization of the Leadership Studies Minor, the Advisory Council has been reformed and charged with new tasks. The current advisory council is comprised of the following individuals who represent an interdisciplinary focus, provide historical context for the program, and highlight partnerships across UGS.

Dr. Amy Bergerson – Senior Associate Dean, UGS [outgoing]

Dr. Karen Paisley – Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, College of Health

Dr. Taunya Dressler – Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Affairs, College of Humanities

Andi Witczak – Associate Director, Community Engaged Learning, Bennion Center [outgoing]

Megan Medina - Program Manager, Bennion Scholars, Bennion Center [incoming]

Erica Andersen – Director, Student Leadership & Involvement

Melanie Lee – Associate Director for Education, Support & Assessment, Office of Student Success & Empowerment

The advisory council convened five times to achieve the following for the 2020-2021 year:

- Developed AACU-based evaluative rubrics for elective category to aid in scheduled elective audits and petitions for consideration of exceptions. Annual elective audits consist of a random sampling of 25% of the elective category.
- Laid initial foundation for faculty hiring criteria

The advisory council aims to achieve the following goals for the 2021-2022 year:

- Finalize hiring criteria for staff instructors (implementation for 22-23 AY); including a recruitment strategy for staffing core courses
- Build on initial engagement in the newly formed Leadership Alliance - a cross-campus collaborative focused on the study, act, and engagement of leadership

In addition to goals of the advisory council, the Leadership Studies Minor program will continue to explore the development of a transfer articulation agreement with Salt Lake Community College.

By focusing on multiple avenues of the Leadership Studies Minor, we hope to infuse a strong foundation in the exceptional educational experience. A brief overview of how we have continued to focus on findings from the E3 data is detailed below.

Smoother processes such as admissions, financial aid, and course registration

In an effort to support students' degree progress, academic advising practice now includes a semester-by-semester outreach process for each declared Leadership Studies Minor. This email outreach contains a student's degree audit report, a completed advising sheet, and a summative message about remaining requirements. The advising sheet provides information about the organization of core course requirements and elective category courses, outlining which courses count towards the Leadership Studies Minor and carry a General Education designation. Each May, the advising sheet is updated in conjunction with staff in the General Education office. The website now includes an electronic version of the advising sheet so students can explore the ways the minor can enhance their college experience. Further, we connected with the Utah Asia Campus academic advisors for the first time in many years to discuss methods to better support students traveling to and from the UAC and SLC campuses who have declared the Leadership Studies Minor. Collectively, we are excited to increase our levels of communication between the two sites.

Connections across courses and understanding how college courses and experiences relate to students' future endeavors

Within the LDRSP 2020: Foundations of Leadership and LDRSP 4750: Leadership Capstone – Reflections on Leadership courses, we have begun to scaffold students' connections across their courses (in- and out- of the classroom), as well as across their courses in the minor. In addition to weekly worksheets, reflection prompts, and group-discussions, two specific projects support students in making intentional connections in their learning and experiences, while integrating their plans for the future. The first project is the final project in LDRSP 2020, where students design a leadership education experience for others. Students are encouraged to build this

project as authentically and realistically as possible. They are charged with identifying an audience, selecting various leadership models, ideas, or philosophies, detailing the experience they have designed, and assessing the experience. Similar to, and inspired by the Bennion Scholars program, this project brings together students' unique interests in their leadership roles and processes, while providing an avenue to create and learn with the hope of implementation in *LDRSP 4100: Leadership Practicum*.

The second project provides a book-end in the LDRSP 4750 course in which students build a project that represents how courses, experiences, and learning synthesize to inform their approach to the leadership process. The data points for students include, but are not limited to, courses while in, and adjacent to, the Leadership Studies Minor, as well as formal and informal roles of leadership. The course is designed to revisit experiences students had in previous courses by inviting reflection around course readings, videos, and activities.

The comments below, illustrate the power of the Leadership Studies Minor for students:

"These past three leadership classes opened my eyes to the greatness and the power of leadership. The power to spread so much encouragement, knowledge, empathy, humanity, vision and influence. I loved the open-ended discussions in class."

"Leadership 4750 is the class that I am currently taking, and it taught me the importance of personal experience and how to connect them to the theories I learned. Before taking this course, all the previous courses I took were theory-based and they were not focused on interpersonal growth. Through this course, I was able to realize that the courses I took connect with my personal experiences as well. By introducing different roles and frames, I was able to look back at the background or personal experiences I had that shaped the specific type I follow and this helped me to see the improvements I still need to make."

"What shaped my leadership experience cannot be simplified to any given moment or class I took, but accumulated experiences inside and outside the classroom. Something I learned from my very first leadership course (LDRSP 2020), was that being a leader means always being a leader inside the classroom, outside the classroom, as a student leader, as a friend, as a brother and as a son. Leaders do not pick and choose when to be a leader when it is convenient for themselves, but also in the times when you are taking risks and stepping out of your comfort zone- being a leader means being ready to take on responsibility and holding yourself accountable. This is still the truest and most accurate definition of leadership that I have ever heard."

Faculty understand their essential role in the student experience

Prior to the formation of hiring criteria for Leadership Studies Minor instructors, we leaned on the expertise of the Student Success Advocates (or OSSE staff) to teach courses in the minor. The student-centered, holistic approach that SSAs infuse in their work provides a natural pathway for SSAs to understand the essential role of faculty in the student experience. Jon Bernal, Amy Bergerson, and Melanie Lee, have blended their roles in OSSE to support students

in Leadership courses by connecting students to resources and opportunities outside of the classroom. Additionally, Rachel Aho from Housing and Residential Education taught a section of LDRSP 2020 in spring 2021. As a Director in HRE, Rachel provided an additional layer of support for students through her multiple campus connections and access to various departments across the university.

Financial support beyond the first year

In the 2020-2021 academic year, we did not financially support students to attend local or virtual conferences. In the upcoming 2021-2022 academic year, we anticipate spending a small portion of our operating budget to support students by paying for registration fees to attend local or campus-based leadership conferences.

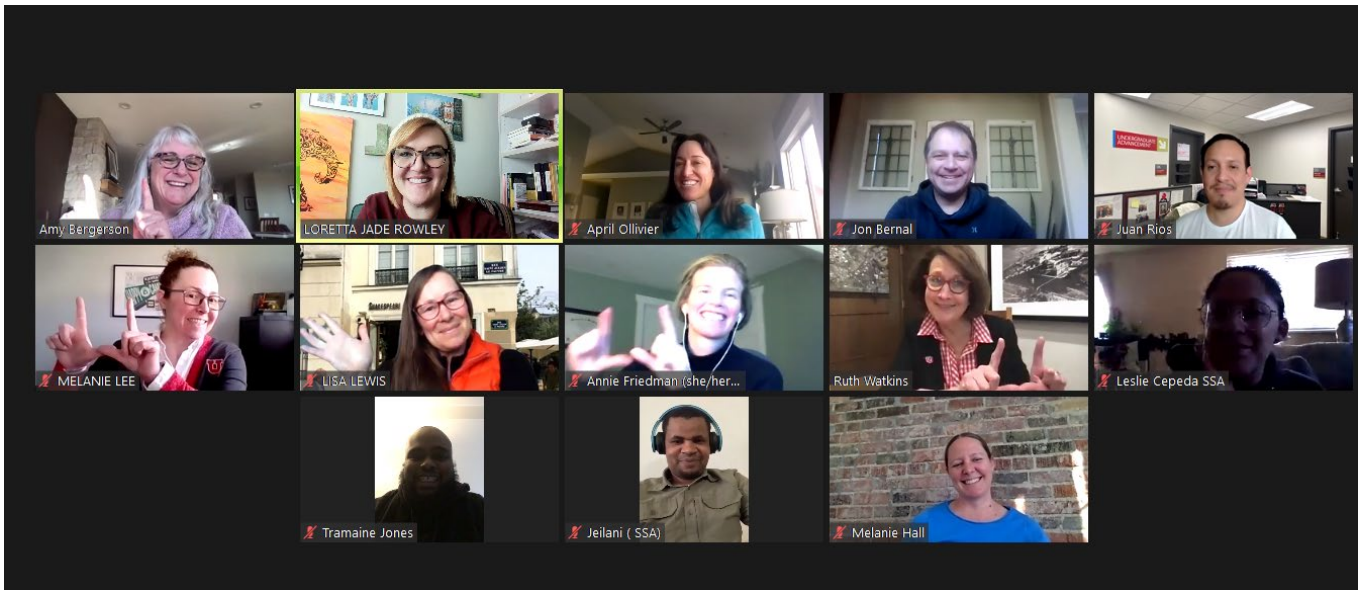
Lessons learned from COVID-19

Throughout the course of the pandemic, the Leadership Studies Minor was required to adapt to new technologies, methods, and learning. This flexibility was needed both inside and outside of the classroom. In the classroom, the benefit of inclusive course materials - financial access as well as disability-related access - became a key focal point in what content was included and required for students' engagement. Utilizing Canvas to build a classroom environment is not a lesson to be shelved with a return to more in-person courses in 2021-2022. Additionally, Kaltura and Adobe Spark are tech tools we will encourage faculty to utilize moving forward, post-COVID.

In the background, multiple processes related to advising, record keeping, budgeting, course scheduling, and student persistence, were all bolstered by the shifts to a physically-distanced environment. The use of Box, OnBase, and Civitas during the pandemic reiterated the importance of secure storage and remote record keeping. The ability to access these tools made managing the Leadership Studies Minor possible during such an uncertain time.

SUMMARY

Academic year 2020-21 has been exciting and challenging for the Office of Student Success and Empowerment. We experienced significant growth as an office, and our programs are thriving. Continued investment in student success through our programs has allowed us to continue making a difference in students' lives. We look forward to furthering this work in the coming year, and to deepening our programs' roles in ensuring an Exceptional Educational Experience for all students as we all adjust to being on campus after the COVID-19 pandemic. We are excited to continue using the online and virtual tools that have enhanced our work with students, even as we anticipate the return to working with students in-person. We have lofty goals and plans to assess our efforts in ways that will allow us to tell a compelling story about our work. We are grateful to the University of Utah and its leadership for providing us the opportunity to grow, learn, and devote our time and energy to the success of students.



THANKS FOR A GREAT YEAR!

Another successful production from OSSE Studios in Salt Lake City, UT