Virtual Case Study Competition

StudentAffairs.com
2021 Virtual Case Study

Social Engagement

California State University, Fresno

Team Leader: Nancy (Man Sze) Cheng
Team Members: Jose Medina III, Evita Soares

OUR TEAM

SACC Graduate Student Association (GSA) Executive Team

Nancy (Man Sze) Cheng

SACC GSA **President**

in Let's Connect

Jose L Medina III

SACC GSA **Secretary**

in Let's Connect

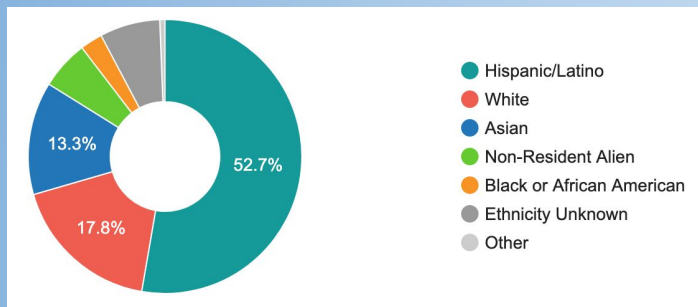**Evita Soares**

SACC GSA **Treasurer**

in Let's Connect

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Chester–Modelo University

Racial/ Ethnic Demographic:

- Hispanic/Latino — 52.7%
- White — 17.8%
- Asian — 13.3%
- Non-Resident Alien
- Black or African American
- Ethnicity Unknown
- Other

Student Engagement
52%

School Pride
41%

Community Involvement
30%
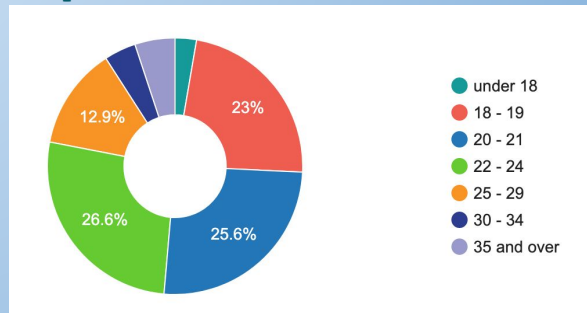
Sunny, California

- 25,326 Total Students
- 38% First-Generation
- 45% Commuters
- 25:1 Faculty to Student Ratio
- 58% Female; 39% Male; 3% Non Binary
- 63% Part Time; 37% Full Time
- 82% Working; 18% Unemployed
- Income: 54% Low; 33% Middle; 13% High

Age Group:

- under 18
- 18 - 19 — 23%
- 20 - 21 — 25.6%
- 22 - 24 — 26.6%
- 25 - 29 — 12.9%
- 30 - 34
- 35 and over

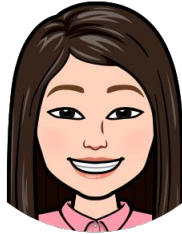# MEET THE COMMITTEE

[Committee Chair]

Nancy

**Associate Dean
Student Involvement**

Wayne
Associate Director
Student Involvement

Chad
ASI President

Ashley
Social Media
Manager

Jose
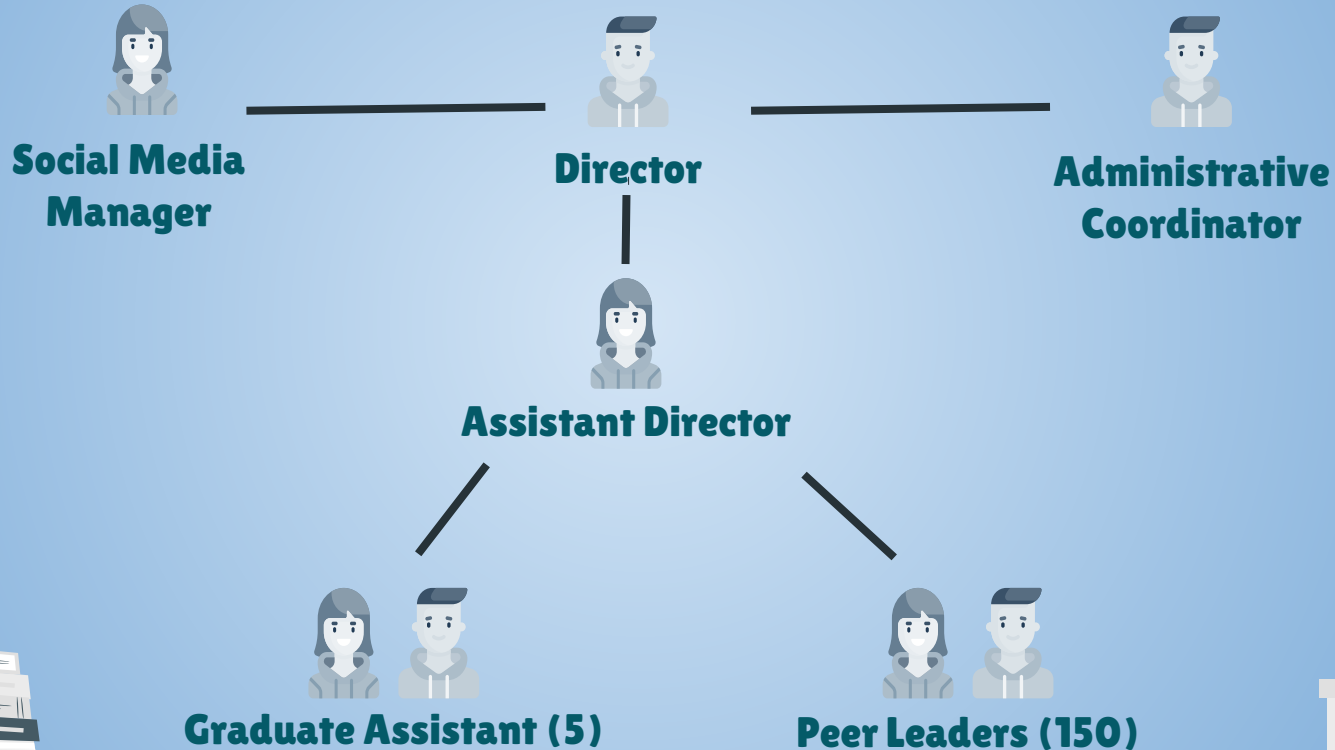Director
New Student Orientation
& Transition Programs

Brianna
Student Involvement
Administrative Coordinator

New Student Orientation & Transition Programs
[Organizational Chart]

Project Proposal

- Description
  - Welcome Week is an event by the Division of Student Affairs that brings together incoming Freshman and Transfer students along with **currently enrolled/ returning students** for virtual social engagement events. Through the virtual events, students are able to connect with extensively trained orientation leaders or their peers in order to build student engagement and connectedness. Further, the events are offered in synchronize and asynchronous methods to best meet every student's needs.

- Justification
  - "Orientation processes are important in helping students settle into academic life as they helped students to connect socially with peers, mentors and staff, to gain familiarity with the campus and to clarify expectations of academic study." (Pittaway & Moss, 2006)
  - With traditional approaches, socialization is limited to online hours focused on academics
    - Limited time for students to socialize and build connections (Ellis et al., 2020)
  - Lack of socialization leads to feelings of isolation
    - Major impact on their sense of belonging and connectedness in a college setting
  - Prolonged isolation acts as one of the catalyst to many mental health disorders
  - An individual's sense of belongingness and connectedness are a fundamental psychological human need (Halse, 2018)

Theoretical Framework

Student Development Theory #1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

"At a unprecedented time of a global health crisis, students need support from the university more than ever to help ease the feelings of isolation. Our initiative's core missions statement is to let students know they are not alone. We may not be able to promise them that everything will be okay, because nothing is guaranteed. But we are willing to try our best to meet our students needs." - Associate Dean of Student Involvement, Chester Modelo University.
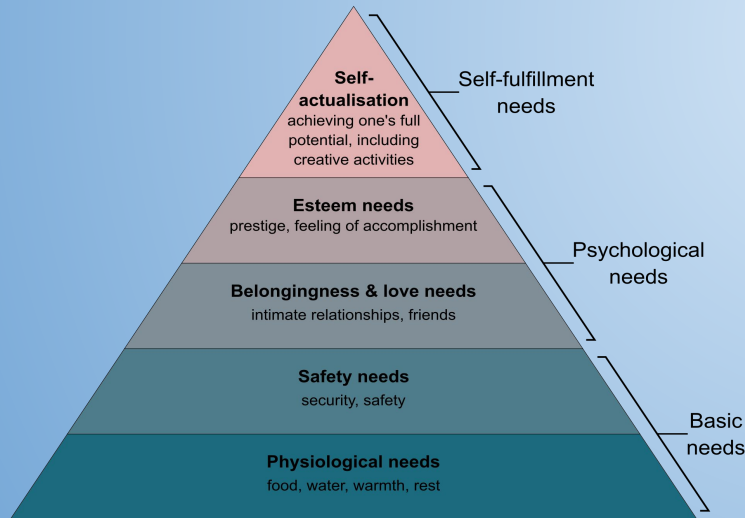
○ Johnson et al. (2007) reported that it should not be left to 'non-traditional' students to seek a sense of belonging. Rather, institutions need to adapt their cultures to meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds (Zepke and Leach, 2005).

○ The message is clear: institutions need to be adaptable, developing a culture that is welcoming to all students. (Zepke and Leach, 2010)

○ "'Minority' students in particular need help to build the social and cultural capital necessary for engagement and success in and beyond the mainstream classroom. Social and cultural capital is won with a sense of belonging, with active relationships with others, with knowing how things work around here" (Case, 2007; Gavala and Flett, 2005; Krause, 2005).

Theoretical Framework

Student Development Theory #2: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model
- ○ Bronfenbrenner argues that development is made up from the **interaction** between multiple levels of the surrounding environment, from immediate settings of family and school system to broader settings such as cultural influences, laws, and customs. Therefore, to address student development holistically, we must address the interaction between the environment.
- ○ "Student engagement involves many actors: certainly students, teachers, administrators – but also locations, structures, cultures, technologies, buildings and equipment. The relationships between such varied actants" (Edwards, 2003).
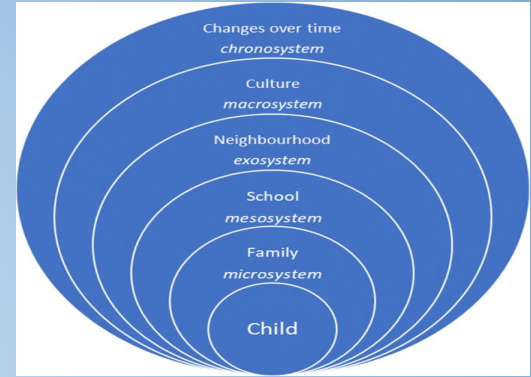
[Image extracted from Figure 2. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42322-020-00056-5]

Student Development Theory #3: Schlossberg Transition Theory
- ○ "Schlossberg's Transition Theory is an adult development theory (Evans, Forney, & Guido-Dibrito, 1998) focused on the transitions that adults experience throughout life and the means by which they cope and adjust (Schlossberg et al., 1995). Schlossberg et al. define a transition as "any event or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (p. 27). When a transition occurs, a process takes place as an individual integrates changes into his or her daily life. There are four aspects of a transition that affect how well individuals deal with change. These aspects (named the 4 S System) are situation, self, support, and strategies (Schlossberg et al.)." (Bailey-Taylor, 2009)
- ○ Our program incorporates many components of Schlossberg's strategies to help student navigate through the transition of living through a pandemic and experiencing college experience virtually.

[Image extracted from https://marcr.net/marcr-for-career-professionals/career-theory/career-theories-and-theorists/transition-theory-nancy-k-schlossberg/]

Project Goals

Create a more inclusive institutional culture that is welcoming to students from diverse backgrounds

Adapt to current social context

Adapt to students' changing expectation

Reduce social isolation

Implement programs that allow for students to develop their social and cultural capital

Increase student's sense of belonging

Traditional Approaches

Part A) Commencement Orientation
- Faculty Oriented + Faculty Lead
  - Transmit expectations from a disciplinarian
- Disseminate information on factual information about the institution
  - Business-oriented

Part B) Method of Communication
- University Website
  - Updates at slow intervals, outdated information
  - Often shows event that has already passed a few years ago

- Emails
  - Formal, rigid, intimidating
  - Visually unappealing, interface not user friendly
  - Important content goes ignored as it feels like spam

Part C): Social Collusion
- Single, isolated event
  - One time encounter at a mandatory orientation
- Monotonous events that does not require interaction
  - Ie: "Movie night", "Pizza social"
 - Can be easily done in pre-existing friend group

Traditional Approaches

Part D): Mismatched climate

- Institutions draw a distinct division
  - "Fun" reserved for out-of-class "college experience"
  - "Stress + essays + deadlines" associated with classroom settings
    - Resulting in students skipping lecture to overindulge on the stress free part of college => lack of growth + progress
    - Low graduation rate

Part E): Incentivization

- General, mass-produced, economically driven
- Poorly/ Cheaply made "swag"
  - Low reusability after a single event (ie: lanyard, plastic water bottle)
    - Hard to show off merch for school pride
- Over-focus on extrinsic motivation and obligation
  - Sets the tone of "I need to sit through this for that $5 Amazon gift card"
  - Sets the attitude of "I'm just here to clear the hold in my student account"
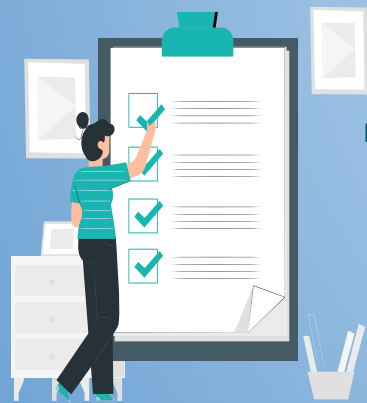
Proposed Initiative: 10 Step Action Plan

Part A) Re-Invent Welcome Week

- **Step 1: Student Lead**
  - Relatable figures and warm institutional culture that support student efforts (Zepke & Leach, 2010)
- **Step 2: Interactive activities**
  - Fosters an environment for a sense of belonging (Kulp et al. 2019)

Part B) Agile Communication

- **Step 3: Speak their language**
  - Social media or School Wide App
  - Two way communication unlike traditional marketing (Kumar & Nanda, 2019)
- **Step 4: Match their time**
  - Offer events in afternoon or evening = increase traffic because it does not feel like a chore/ obligation or get in the way of work
  - Krause (2005) found that students expect study to fit their lives; they do not want to fit their lives to institutional expectations.
- **Step 5: Bring the crew up-to-date on social media (Jackson, 2013)**
  - Offer training by the social media manager on what/ when to post to reach the most visibility, etc

Proposed Initiative: 10 Step Action Plan

Part C): Ongoing Social Collusion

- **Step 6: A variety of social events**
  - Creative, exciting, sets the tone for continuity
- **Step 7: Continual series of event**
  - Shared interest + shared space over a period of time increase the chances of initiating a friendship more so than one time encounter at a mandatory meeting
- **Step 8: Incite intrinsic motivation by appealing to cuisority/ interest/ fun**
  - Set the tone of "FOMO"

Part D): Match out-of-class climate to classroom climate

- **Step 9: Match outer environment with inner environment**
  - Staff training on agile learning + the art of discussion facilitation + collaborative learning environment

Proposed Initiative: 10 Step Action Plan

Part E): Incentivization

- **Step 10: Personalized, useful "swag" with high reusability**
  - Pandemic-specific:
    - Face masks
    - Blue light glasses
    - Screen wipers
    - Laptop charger
    - Selfie light
    - Backdrop
    - Internet subscription
    - Noise-canceling door pads
    - Self-care kits
      - Candles
      - Essential oil
      - Calm subscription
    - (Grand Prize) laptop
  - Basic needs:
    - Gift card for food/ textbook
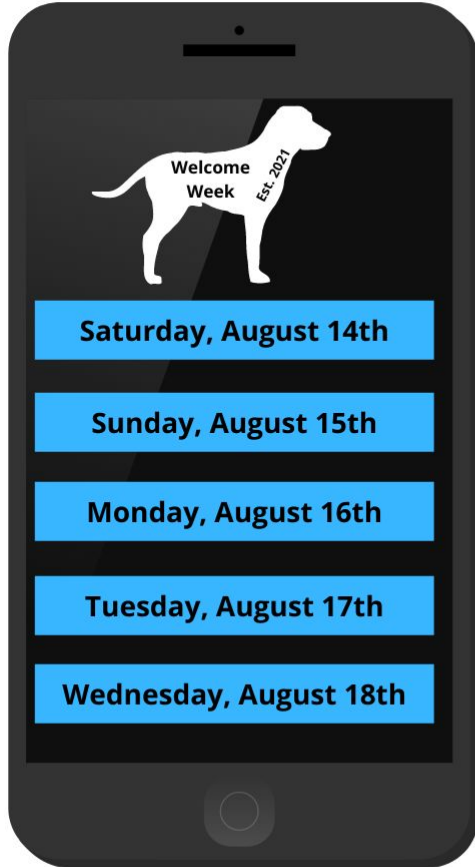   - Deodorant
    - Shampoo
    - Floss
    - Toothpaste
  - Interest-based:
    - Cooking gear
    - Rubik's cube
    - Paid subscription (Netflix, Spotify)

Welcome Week Schedule

Welcome Week Est. 2021

Saturday, August 14th

Sunday, August 15th

Monday, August 16th

Tuesday, August 17th

Wednesday, August 18th

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CHESTER-MODELO
UNIVERSITY
OFFICIAL APP

Synchronous + Asynchronous events!

Chances to make friends + win prizes!

Welcome Week Est. 2021

Saturday, August 14th

- Fall Welcome
- Meet your Group Leader
- Group Leader Power Hour
- Kick-Off Virtual Dance

Sunday, August 15th

- Group Check-in
- Virtual Resource & Club Fair
- Group Leader Power Hour
- Entertainment
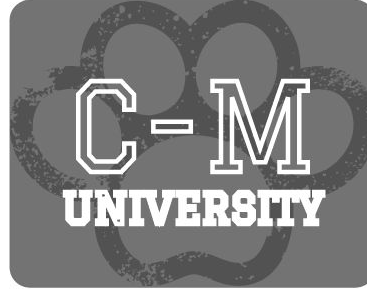
Welcome Week Schedule

Monday, August 16th

- Monday Motivation by Campus Health Center
- Virtual Resource & Club Fair
- Group Leader Power Hour
- Entertainment

Tuesday, August 17th

- TikTok Tuesday - Join in the latest trends while showing school spirit
- Virtual Resource & Club Fair
- Group Leader Power Hour
- Entertainment

Welcome Week
Est. 2021

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CHESTER-MODELO
UNIVERSITY
OFFICIAL APP

Synchronous + Asynchronous events!

Chances to make friends + win prizes!

Wednesday, August 18th

- Where are they Wednesday? - Come and meet famous alumni
- Virtual Resource & Club Fair
- Group Leader Power Hour
- Group Closing

Welcome Week
Est. 2021

Short Term Outcomes Goals

Yearly Objectives:

- 10% increase in student engagement
- 8% decrease on feelings of isolation
- 12% improvement rating of relationship between the institution and student body

- **Measured by:**
  - Event attendance rate
  - Post-Event Surveys
  - Social Media Feedback

Welcome Week Evaluation

YEARLY TIMELINE BREAKDOWN

- Crash course training on social media for staff
- Crash course training on agile learning for faculty

Set the tone instructionally
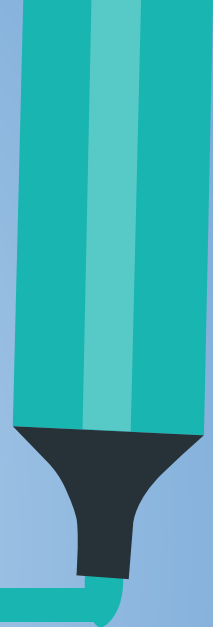
Summer

- 100 hours of training + retreat for Peer Leaders
- One event for incoming students
- One event for staff

Fall

**Welcome Week
Kick - Off**

Spring

- Maintenance event
- Student + Staff + Stakeholder feedback
- Plan for summer again

Long Term Outcome Goals

5 Year Plan

2022 2023 2024 2025 2026

- **Broader reach**
  - The institution offers events that suits the students' needs at a larger percentage
- **Expanded accessibility**
  - Students can stay connected to campus events more conveniently
- **Sustainability**
  - Our innovative student oriented approach will be realistically achievable based on operating cost, trends in the field, and social + political context in the next 5 years
- **Residual return on investment**
  - Students who attended events return as volunteers to serve events in the following year

How Will Our Program Promote Social Interaction?

Our program:
- Provides a structure space for social collisions
- Provides students with chance to interact with their peers and cultivate connections
- Provides the opportunity for students to sign up for future events
  - Increase chances for future social interaction
- Offers a sense of security to students by making them feel welcomed
  - Making it easier for them to reach out to each other/ or their mentors
- Acquaint students to the school climate and to their peers

(Case, 2007; Gavala and Flett, 2005; Krause, 2005)

- Helps lower student's anxiety and stress with entering a new (virtual) learning environment
- Provides activities for bonding and open communication
  - Setting a positive tone
- Inclusive of all students and mixes upperclassmen with lowerclassmen
  - "Matching inexperienced students with more senior students in a mentoring scheme helped the inexperienced students to engage." Dewart et al. (2006)
- Provides information on the institution along with its services, philosophy, goals
  - Establish student identity/ school pride
    - Additional identity/ increase sense of belonging
- Provides a supportive and FUN experience
  - Fun always bring people together!

How to Promote Our Program?

Social Media

- Post flyer announcements + promo videos on social media accounts
  - IG, TikTok, Snapchat
- Social media prompts/ hype
  - Ex: "What Welcome Week events are YOU most excited about???"
- "Instagram Takeovers"
- Student highlights
- Create a hashtag for Welcome Week events
- YouTube page of event recaps
- Digital trend reminders:
  - "1 day 1 hour" rule

Peer Influence

- Opt-in feature that shows when their peers have opted in for the event
- Peer Leader group chat (Whatsapp) for personal reminders
- Footages of their PL having fun during those activities for summer training

(Hendricks & Schill, 2015)
(Bednar, 2013)

How to Promote Our Program?

Faculty Efforts

- Classroom announcements from Peer Leaders
- Let faculty in on the loop
- Encourage faculty to include the link of Welcome Week events or QR code on the syllabus
- Encourage faculty to build the topic of Welcome Week into their first day of class icebreakers

Traditional Methods

- Email blast student accounts with interactive e-Invites
- Hard copy invitation and schedule/ "Save The Date" mailed to the students homes
  - QR code + link to Welcome Week registration
- Physical planner to students in First-Generation/ Access Programs
  - QR code +link to WW registration
  - Event info printed on dates

Digital Organization

- Have a "Welcome Week" class module on their student learning module account
- Google Calendar
  - One-click sync schedule
  - Google Calendar invitation automatically generated from registration

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Thanks for Tuning In!

Questions or feedback on this project?

Let us know your thoughts.

Connect with us on IG @ fresnostatesaccess !