

Stephen F. Austin State University

TEAM LEADER: Donna Fickes

TEAM MEMBERS: Lindsay Porter, Jasmine Randolph, Lydia Richardson

HANG OUT
GET ADVICE
FEEL WELCOME



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Committee



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Pineywoods Pathways helps students build lifelong connections.

Lindsay Porter

Mover, shaker,
memory maker, and
partner-in-crime



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Pineywoods Pathways keeps students focused on their health and wellness.

Jasmine Randolph

Good listener,
Candy Crusher,
and partner-in-crime



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Pineywoods Pathways offers students opportunities to enhance specialized skills for the present and future.

Donna Fickes

Avid coffee drinker,
creative problem-
solver, and leader of the
pack



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Pineywoods Pathways allows students to learn to communicate, appreciate, and understand those of varied backgrounds.

Lydia Richardson

Zoom navigator,
decision-maker
extraordinaire, and
partner-in-crime

OVERVIEW

While student learning experiences are enhanced by being close to faculty, labs and classrooms, and other students, especially those from different backgrounds, the COVID-19 global pandemic has led Pineywoods College to alter the college experience with remote living and virtual learning.

We recognize that student engagement in this environment may be lacking; in response, we have created a path forward to enhance the first-year experience for freshmen and transfer students. This experience is grounded in research and adapted from traditional, on-campus co-curricular programming.

Welcome to Pineywoods College!

Pineywoods Pathways

Pineywoods Pathways is a first-year program offering a variety of virtual spaces for students to hang out, get advice, and feel welcome at Pineywoods College.

About the Program

Grounded in research, Pineywoods Pathways capitalizes on students' multiple identities to develop sound engagement options that fit differing needs.

Program Mission and Vision

First-year Freshmen and Transfers will be guided toward ongoing campus and peer engagement to build a support network for success.

Program Components

The required, first-year program places students in cohorts of like-minded students. Together, these cohorts navigate their first-year experience, guided by upperclassmen facilitators and faculty advisors.

How it Works

Student cohorts participate in activities focused on co-curricular involvement, health and wellness, career decisions, and diversity. Activities are offered in a variety of virtual spaces for students to hang out, get advice, and feel welcome at Pineywoods College.

Why it Works

Students connect through familiar social media and online platforms while engaging in meaningful ways.

Pineywoods College



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Institutional Information:

Pineywoods College is a regional comprehensive university in a small city.

The mission of Pineywoods College is to engage our students in a learner-centered environment and offer opportunities to prepare for the challenges of living in the global community.

- Setting: Small City
- Demographics:
 - 13,000 enrolled students
 - 55% White (Non-Hispanic); 19% Hispanic/Latino; 14% African American
 - 20% first-year, degree seeking undergraduate students

Campaign Background

COVID-19 has caused uncertainty for incoming college students. The sense of belonging for first-year freshmen and transfer students, and the institution's connection with incoming students, is threatened. Pineywoods College Office of Student Affairs has been charged with the development of new and creative ways to engage students from orientation through their first-year experience. Through Pineywoods Pathways, first-year students will be able to virtually engage with their peers, their faculty, and their university three ways:

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-  **Hang Out**
Cohorts and Community Meet-ups will help build affinity and a sense of belonging while fostering peer connections.
-  **Get Advice**
Engagement with faculty and administrators will provide learning and exploration opportunities.
-  **Feel Welcome**
Virtual campus experiences will bring everyone home to Pineywoods.

Communities of Concern

First-Year Freshmen

The first year of college is a critical experience for students. Student first-year expectations and experiences affect the overall campus experience and future learning outcomes (Astin, 1998).

Upcraft, Gardner, and Barefoot (2005) determined the following achieved abilities as indicators of successful student adaptation for first-year freshmen:

- establish and maintain relationships,
- maintain physical and mental health,
- determine career direction and,
- cultivate self-identity and multicultural awareness.

Physical space provides transitional support for first-year freshmen.

First-Year Transfers

Transfer students are typically more racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse than their traditional first-year peers, but they may also be less engaged (Hughes, 2018).

Hughes (2018) found that transfer students experience "transfer shock" through their institutional transition and need the following, transfer-unique, first-year supports:

- consideration of the relationship among work, community service, and learning,
- alternative access to physical and mental health resources
- individualized messaging about career development and,
- diversity and cultural events tied to coursework.

Online environments lend well to transfer student engagement.



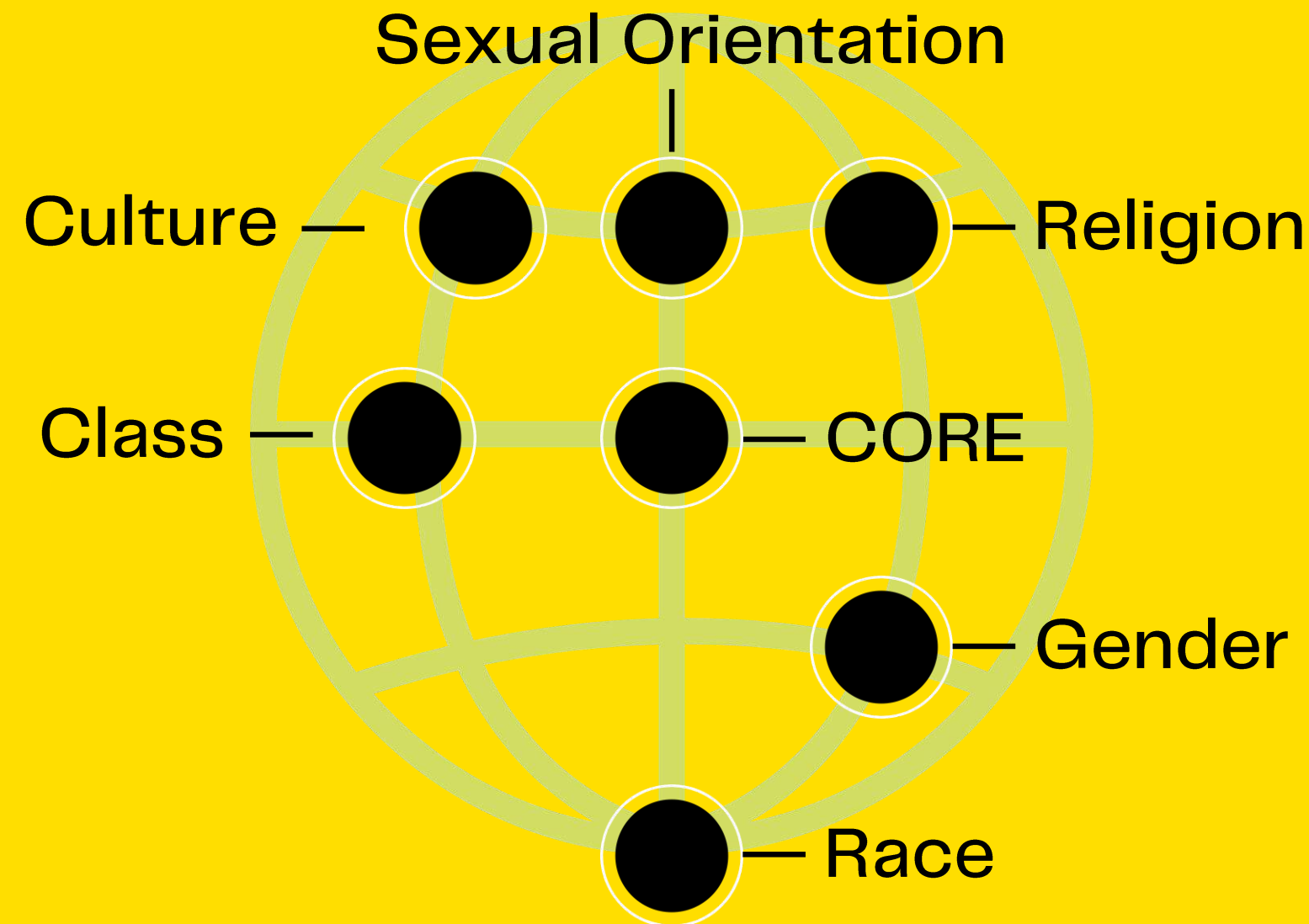
Pineywoods Pathways

Pineywoods Pathways is a virtual program designed using Jones and McEwen's Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (MMDI) as described by Abes, Jones, and McKewen (2013), and supported by Astin (1984) and Chickering (1974), to engage students through their first year at Pineywoods College.

Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity

CONTEXT

- Family Background
- Sociocultural/ socioeconomic conditions
- Career Decisions
- Current Experiences



CORE

- Personal Characteristics
- Personal Attributes
- Personal Traits

MMDI: An individual's multiple, yet different identities become more or less salient based on the context of the environment (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2013).

Consequences of Remote Living

Undergraduate students become engaged through their place of residence (Astin, 1984)

Decreased Social Interaction

Students living away from campus are not as likely to readily engage in social interactions outside of class, especially those who are first-year freshman or transfer students.

Lack of Motivation

At-home learning environments do not lend themselves to opportunities where educators can interact and motivate students as they do in the classroom .

Lack of Student Engagement

Unfortunately, remote learning environments do not allow for students to engage in opportunities across campus as easily as they could if they were physically on campus.

Lack of Supportive Learning Environments

It is more difficult for educators to recognize when students are struggling. Off-campus students are less likely to seek additional support from educators as well.

Barriers to Involvement



Digital Divide

Students, especially those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, may not have remote resources available. Students need laptops, hotspots, and learning management system support to help them connect.



Missed Opportunities

Economic downturns may cause students to disengage with their career pathway. Students need engaging experiential opportunities that are available remotely, and at any time, to allow them to connect.



Canceled Community

A lack of physical presence may be disastrous for incoming students. Students need human-to-human networks that allow them to interact amongst themselves and with their institution in order to feel connected.

Involved students from all educational, socioeconomic, and family backgrounds, especially those living on-campus during the first year, show higher levels of learning and development than their off-campus peers (Chickering, 1974).

Theory to Practice

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Environmental Context

Students from anywhere and everywhere can experience college living through virtual interactions with fellow students, faculty, and the institution.

Living and Learning Space

The backdrop may be their bedroom at home, but the immersive virtual scene connects students inside- and outside-the-classroom experiences, bringing them closer to college friends and peers from anywhere and everywhere.

Involvement Resources

Virtual, co-curricular experiences focusing on social involvement, health and wellness, career development, and diversity and inclusion and available through multiple channels engage students living anywhere and everywhere.

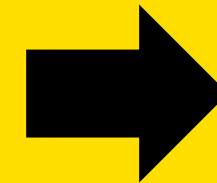


Breaking Barriers & Building Bridges

Students in the Pinewoods Pathways program will blossom and grow in their identities, increasing their developmental capabilities and helping them to succeed in school and in life!

Pinewoods Pathways

- develop confidence
- manage emotions
- move toward interdependence
- develop mature interpersonal relationships



Pinewoods Alumni

- establishing an identity
- developing a purpose
- developing integrity

Common Approaches to Engagement: Student Affairs Edition

**Approach 1:
Part of the Whole**

Student Organizations provide students with opportunities to interact with others who have same or similar interests. They also allow student to branch out and try new things. Student organization membership allows students to put friendly faces into the spaces they frequent.

Current Weakness: With students learning and engaging remotely, finding an organization may be difficult. Also, regular interactions and activities may be restricted.



**Approach 2:
Meet the Mentors**

Pair first-year students with Peer and Faculty Mentors. Mentors are engaged on campus through organizations, experiential learning, Service learning, multidisciplinary learning, and more.

Current Weakness: Remote engagement does not lend to on-campus opportunities for relationship building.



**Approach 3:
All the Events**

Welcome events, Residence Life events, Student Organization events, Major-specific events, Special events – you name it, there's an event to engage with!

Current Weakness: Physical distancing restrictions and remote engagement limit events.

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Introducing The Pineywoods Virtual Student Portal

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Pineywoods Pathways provides a variety of virtually facilitated, interactive programs focused on supporting first-year students through their transition to Pineywoods College.

Pineywoods Pathways

Mission

Pineywoods Pathways fosters a holistic collegiate experience by providing innovative and intentional co-curricular engagement opportunities that transform students and support their sense of belonging through inclusive involvement in diverse organizations and programs.

Vision

All first-year Pineywoods College students are instilled with a sense of belonging through involvement and leadership in diverse organizations and programs.

Outcomes

Through the many opportunities Pineywoods Pathways offers, we hope you will:

- Cultivate relationships with others and make new friends in the Pineywoods College community
- Blossom in your approach to personal well-being
- Grow academically, personally, and professionally with the help of campus resources and opportunities
- Expand awareness and value the perspective of people from all different types of backgrounds.

How It Works

First-year and Transfer Freshmen will receive a Pineywoods PortalPin. This is a unique username that allows the student to access the Pineywoods Pathways Virtual Student Portal.

The first time a student logs into the portal, prompted dialog will guide the student through the registration process. Registration includes inputting demographic and psychographic information. The information will generate five to nine cohort choices for each student to choose from. Cohorts are based on academic and co-curricular interests.

Student cohorts will work together through the school year to navigate the first-year experience, from anywhere and everywhere!

Get Started on YOUR Pineywoods Pathway

Log-in

Students use a Pineywoods PortalPin to enter the Virtual Student Portal.

Choose Your Cohort

A cohort is a group of like-minded students doing life together, virtually. Each cohort guided by a pair of upperclassmen facilitators and a faculty advisor.

Hang Out, Get Advice, Feel Welcome

At least once per semester, each cohort will engage in one activity or event from each of four program components:

- **Cultivate** your campus *Involvement*
- **Blossom** into a *Healthy* human being
- **Grow** into your chosen *Career*
- **Expand** your worldview through *Diverse* interactions

Participation outside of cohorts is also strongly encouraged.

Cultivate

“What students do during college counts more in terms of desired outcomes than who they are or even where they go to college ...” (Kuh, 2003, 1-2).

Pineywoods Pathways Campus Involvement Initiatives:

- Virtual **Involvement Fair** via *Zoom* to meet members of over 200 student organizations
 - Organization members stay connected through *texting* campaigns and *GroupMe*
- **Community Meetups** offer leisure activities such as comedy shows (*Facebook Live*), game tournaments (*Zoom*), and movie nights (*Teleparty*)
- *Twitter*-friendly **Student Leader Seminars**
- *You Tube* video series spotlighting **Campus Traditions**
- **Athletics'** *Instagram Stories*
- *PineywoodsPodcast*: “A Day at Pineywoods”
- *You Tube* video series: “**What Being a Pineywoods Bear Means to Me**”

Involvement

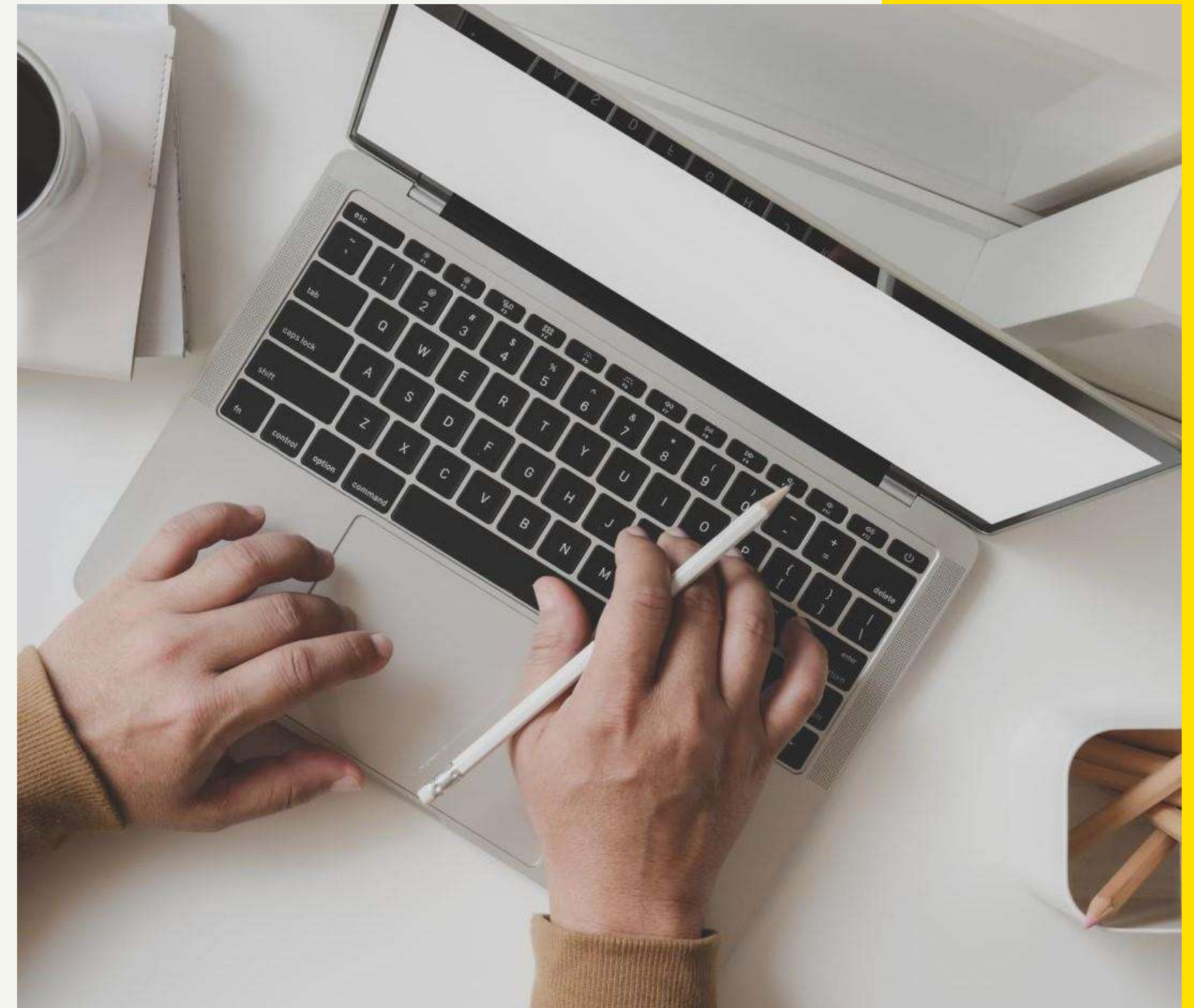
Health & Wellness

Blossom

Kuh (2002, 59) highlights the importance of an environmental perspective wherein colleges create “small, ‘human-scale’ environments [that] encourage responsible, health-enhancing behavior.”

Pineywoods Pathways Health & Wellness Initiatives

- **Pineywoods Fitness Journey**: students connect through a *fitness app*. Journey route will be auto-generated based on survey taken by each student
- *GroupMe* reminders to hold yourself accountable
- Virtual **Group Fitness** classes via *Zoom*
- **Weekly Webinars** through *social media* channels over a topic included in the seven dimensions of wellness (intellectual, environmental, physical, spiritual, emotional, career/financial, social-cultural)
- Monthly **Socials** on preferred *social media* platform
- **Instagram Wellness Wednesday Takeover**: facts, tips, and personal advice on health and wellness
- **Facebook Live Health and Wellness Q & A** with dietician
- **Mindful Meditation** sessions via *Zoom*
- **Group Fitness Classes** via *Zoom*



Career Development

Grow

Students tend to approach issues and opportunities as they arise. Baxter-Magolda (2004) capitalizes on this as a phased approach to self-authorship, or authoring one's future, something campus career professionals are prepared to help students do.

Pineywoods Pathways Career Development Initiatives:

- *Facebook Live* **"Introduction to Career Services"** sessions
- *Texting* campaign for first-year students about upcoming **Career Events**
- **Ted Talk**-inspired career exploration conversations
- *You Tube* video series spotlighting **"What Can I Do With This Major"**
- *Instagram* takeovers for alumni **"Day in the Life"**
- **StrengthsFinder** online assessment and follow-up
- *Twitter*-friendly **Q&A Internship Webinar** with current student interns
- *Facebook Live* **Resume Writing Workshop**
- Online **Resume Reviews**
- Virtual **Mock Interviews** using *Zoom*
- Virtual **Internship and Career Expo** using *Zoom Breakout Rooms*

Diversity

Expand

Schrader (1999) reports that engaged learning requires students to think more complexly about their own actions and the effect of their actions in greater society, thereby providing students opportunities to develop identities as moral individuals responsible to self as well as to larger, global communities.

Pineywoods Pathways Diversity Initiatives:

- **Welcome Programs** connecting students through *Zoom*, *Instagram*, and *Twitter* with other students, faculty, and staff of various cultures
- **Virtual Brave Space Series** events; safe, *Zoom* community space for students, faculty, and staff to come together to discuss intercultural/interfaith issues/concerns that impact our global, local, and campus communities
- **Pineywoods Peer Mentor Programs** provide students with year long virtual peer connections who are interested in issues that affect specific cultures (Black, Hispanic, Asian, etc) and sexual orientations.
- **First Generation Gateway Virtual Campaign;** first generation students get connected to resources through their own *social media* channels.

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Pineywoods Pathways Social Media Channels

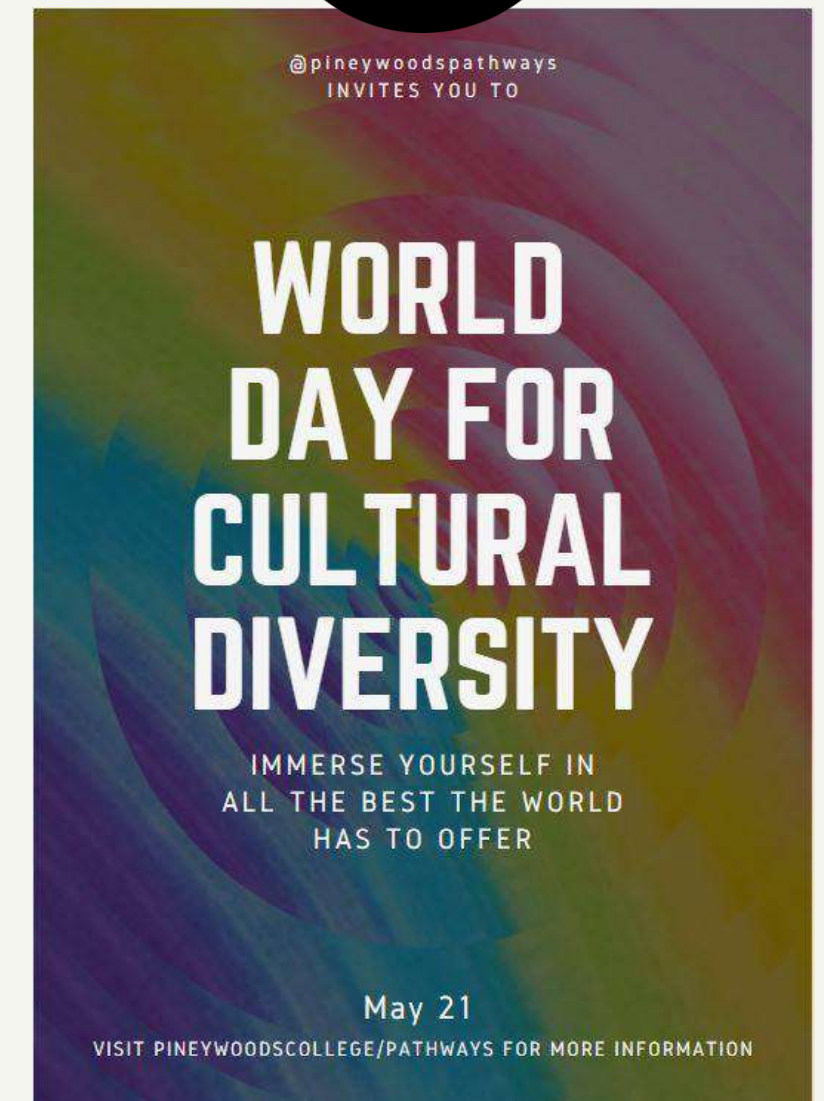
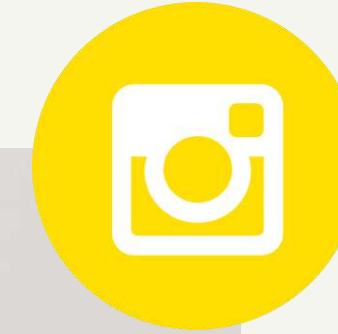
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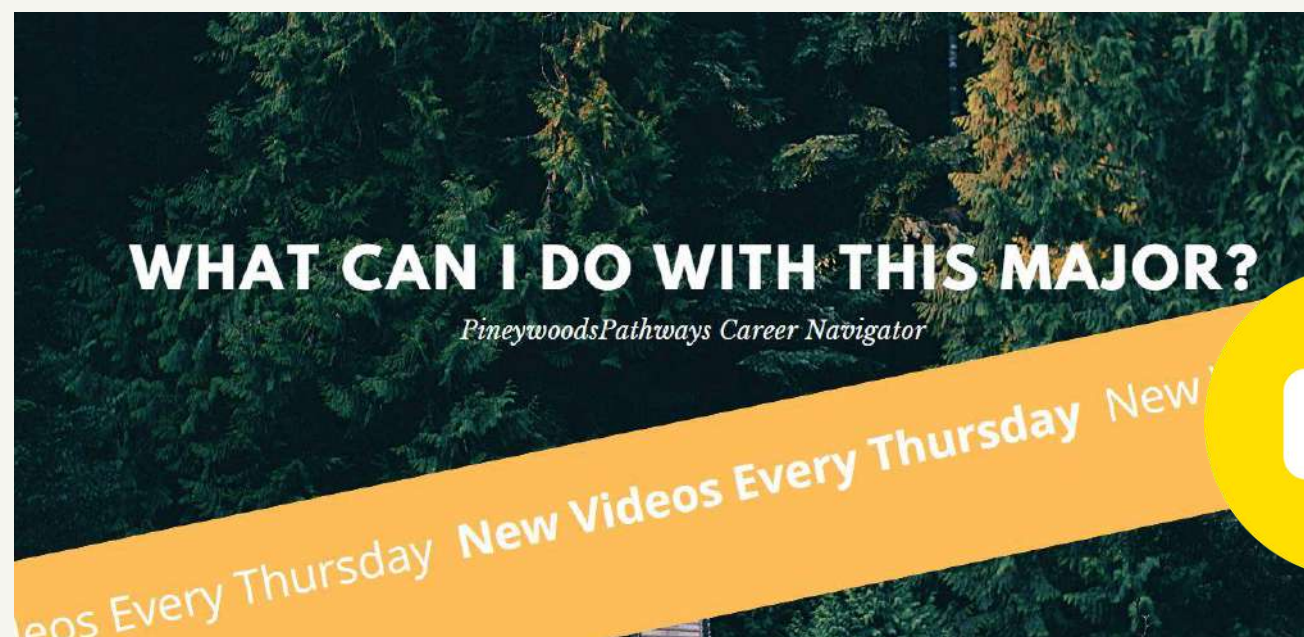
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Evaluating Effectiveness

Program Goals Defined

Through participation in Pineywoods Pathways students will:

- establish and maintain relationships
- maintain physical and mental health
- determine career direction
- cultivate self-identity and multicultural awareness



Pathway Participant Groups Identified and Surveyed

- First Year Freshman
- First Year Transfer Students



Analysis of survey results provides insight for continuous improvement

- used to establish and spread best-practice program features across units
- enhance support services for student success and engagement through further research
- enhance chances of attaining outside funding to support Pineywoods Pathways

Summary

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Cultivate

In a virtual world, students may not naturally connect with each other. This interaction needs to be cultivated through programs such as the Pineywoods Pathways program.

Blossom

The diversity of events and activities that students can participate in under the Pineywoods Pathways umbrella were strategically designed to promote the professional and personal growth of our students so they may blossom from anywhere and everywhere.

Grow

Participation in this program grow through advertising and recruiting broadly across multiple platforms, from email and texts to social media in order to impact the largest proportion of students possible.

Expand

Surveys of participants will be conducted to identify what is working well and what can be improved upon or added so the benefits of the program can expand over time with continuous improvement.

Resources

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Thank You!

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