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SEATTLE | FEBRUARY 15-16, 2023

Best Practices in Holistic Admissions and the Support for Diverse Student Cohorts in Health Professions



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Agenda



- Introduction
- Holistic Review: Framework
- Intercollegiate Collaboration Grant
 - Faculty and Staff Survey
 - Analysis of Student Focus Groups
- Questions and Discussion



Introductions



Dr. Kerry Mandulak
Speech-Language Pathology



Dr. Talina Corvus
Physical Therapy
Ph.D. in Education and Leadership



Introductions



Dr. Caroline McCarty
Occupational Therapy



Dr. Jessie Merlo
Pharmacy



Dr. Leigh Schaid
Audiology





- Private liberal arts institution in Forest Grove & Hillsboro, OR
- 3,589 total undergraduate and graduate students
- 25% first-generation; 50% graduate students
- Multiple health professions programs
- AANAPISI minority serving institution

Holistic Review for Graduate Admissions

Overview



Four Principles



Selection Criteria

Broad, clearly linked to school mission & goals

Promote numerous aspects of diversity as essential to excellence



E - A - M Model

Experiences Attributes Metrics

Applied equitably across applicants in order to create diverse selection pool



Flexible

Weigh and balance the range of criteria

Allows schools / programs / universities to meet their mission and goals



Race & Ethnicity

Considered as one of many factors

Aligned with mission-related education goals (permitted by state law)

Core Conceptual Framework (AAMC)



What's the evidence?

- [Urban Universities for HEALTH study](#)
- Student outcomes remained constant, but diversity changed
- Diversity increased when programs used MORE holistic review elements

Changes in other health professions

- Medicine championed the effort
- Nursing, dental education, pharmacy
- NOT INCLUDED: OT, PT, SLP, AuD

[Holistic Review: Strategies for Leaders](#) (Artinian et al., 2017)

- Evidence-based + what's needed to move it forward



Intercollegiate Collaborative Grant: Overview



“

Faculty experience admissions work as
politically, cognitively, and procedurally
difficult, because it positions them between
impulses, principles, and pragmatism.”

-Julie Posselt, *Inside Graduate Admissions*, p. 18

“

“INCLUSION is not bringing people into what already exists; it is establishing a NEW SPACE, a better space for everyone.”

-George Dei, Canadian Educator, anti-racism, and equity advocate

APPENDIX 1 : Theory Logic Model as a Conceptual Framework

ASSUMPTIONS

Pacific values diversity as one of the pillars of its mission and strives to promote diversity in students, faculty, and staff as a goal of the university.

There is inadequate representation of underrepresented minorities within our health profession students and the overall workforce.

Gatekeeping at the point of admissions can be modified to be more inclusive and equitable through implementation of holistic review practices.

The adoption of a core, conceptual framework of holistic review across colleges will increase diversity of student cohorts on multiple dimensions.

Retaining diverse, qualified, and compassionate students requires culturally responsive advising & support and pedagogical best practices to facilitate academic success

RESOURCES / INPUTS

In order to accomplish our set of activities, we will need the following:

Representation from multiple programs across colleges (COE – CSD, CHP – AuD, OT, Pharm, PT, COE & CHP – PhDEL)

Graduate Assistant Support (CSD – 2 GAs, 10 hrs / week, full academic year)

Stipends for travel / conference presentations for dissemination at discipline specific meetings

Honorarium : Survey development expertise

Honorarium : Focus group facilitation

Honorarium : Coding system development and thematic analysis expertise

Supplies : Transcription services, incentives for participation

ACTIVITIES

In order to address our assumptions, we will accomplish the following activities:

Activity 1 :

- Exploration of best practices in holistic review across disciplines
- Documentation and alignment of current processes across programs,
- Develop data analysis & diversity outcome reporting strategies (multiple aspects of diversity)
- Development of faculty survey regarding knowledge and perceptions of holistic admissions

Activity 2 :

- Distribute faculty survey, collect data, data analysis
- Summary report to inform future faculty trainings

Activity 3:

- Conduct focus groups of students representing all disciplines who identify as URM
- Summary report to inform advising / support efforts

OUTPUTS

We expect that once accomplished, these activities will produce the following evidence:

Submission of discipline specific presentation proposals (regional and national educational meetings)

Activity 1 :
- Publication regarding summary of holistic review practices across colleges and best practices across disciplines

Activity 2:
- Publication regarding summary of faculty perceptions / barriers to implementation across colleges

Activity 3:
- Publication of qualitative / thematic analysis of student responses

OUTCOMES

We expect that if accomplished, these activities will lead to the following changes:

Establishment of a core conceptual framework around foundational tenets of holistic review

Development and adoption of standard best practices in holistic review that are inclusive and equitable across COE and CHP graduate programs

Position ourselves as regional and national leaders within implementation of holistic review and inclusion / equity in graduate education

Faculty development for tenure-track and tenured faculty members

Collaboration with Chief Equity Officer / VP of Student Affairs (Narce Rodriguez) and Assistant VP of Graduate & Professional Admissions (Jon-Erik Larsen)

Faculty and Staff Survey



Why Survey Faculty and Staff?



- To assess **knowledge and perceptions of holistic review** for graduate admissions
- To identify **misconceptions, patterns, fears/hesitations, and perceived barriers** for implementation of holistic review
- To utilize data to **inform future training and educational sessions** designed to improve admissions processes and better meet university standards for diversity, equity, and inclusion
- To create a **unified effort across colleges** and inspire collaborative work among individual schools

What We Did



Identified survey content

- Current admissions processes within individual programs
- Theorized predictors of success in graduate school and beyond
- Knowledge of holistic review for graduate admission
- Perceived limitations/barriers to using holistic review
- Basic demographic information

Determined study population

- Faculty, staff, and administrators
- Graduate programs associated with Pacific University

What We Did



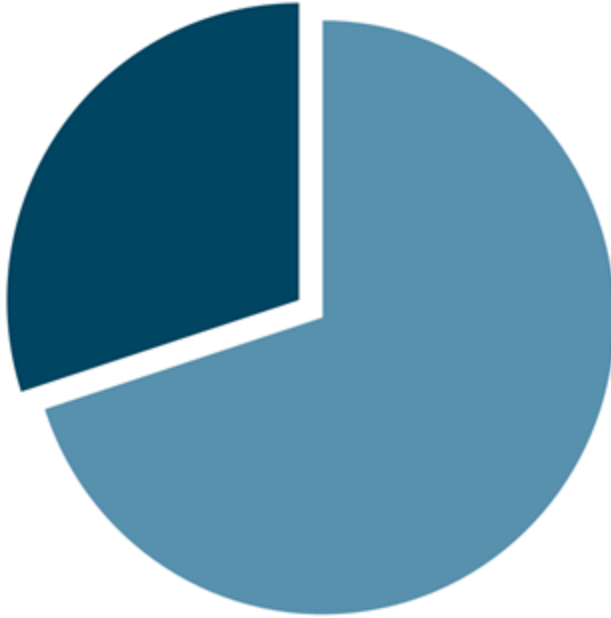
Survey Set-up

- 24-question, 10-minute survey
- Information gathered for quantitative analysis
 - “Choose top 5”
 - Likert scale
- Information gathered for qualitative analysis
 - Short answer

Respondents

- $n = 39$
- Faculty, admissions staff, and administrators
- Majority of respondents had ≤ 9 years experience with graduate admissions

What We Learned



Misalignment of **program** and **faculty and staff** values

- 70% or more of survey respondents feel that they value relevant experiences more than their program
 - Relevant work, volunteer, lived experience

What We Learned



Top 3 components that **faculty and staff** value more than **programs**

- Verbal communication skills (interview)
- Relevant lived experiences
- Written communications skills (personal statement)

Top 3 components that **programs** value more than **faculty and staff**

- Undergraduate GPA
- Letters of recommendation
- Standardized admissions exams (e.g., GRE, PCAT)

What We Learned



Perceived Barriers to Holistic Review

- Concern about **lowering standards**
- **Differing views** on what holistic review entails
- **Fear** over lack of standardization
- **Fear** of introducing bias
- Concern about **student retention**
- Concern about reliance on “**subjective**” information

What We Learned



Qualitative Responses: Barriers to Holistic Review

- Administration concerned with the **appearance of diversity**
- **High cost** of tuition
- **Added workload** supporting those who have lower GPAs and weaker writing skills
- **Lack of consensus** among faculty for *success and potential predictors of success*
- **Changing mindsets** is *difficult and takes time*

Takeaways and Future Research



Responses highlighted valid ***fears and concerns***, likely arising from **lack of information**

Needs:

- Training:
 - Regarding holistic review (what it IS and what it is NOT)
 - Address and mitigate biases
- Calibration:
 - Address concerns regarding lack of standardization and subjectivity
- Analysis:
 - Increased program evaluation regarding outcomes
 - Accreditation requirement - administrative buy-in

Focus Group Study: Overview



Why Interview Students?



Gain a perspective we do not often have access to: exit interviews vs current student perspectives...which allows us to gather information closer to the admissions process

Focus and affinity groups help us preserve nuance and gather identity-specific perspectives, and allow us to put students into conversation with each other

Justice aspect of the work; the people closest to the issue should be the ones involved in addressing it

Why Interview Students?



Mission of the work

- Retention and support efforts
The other side of admissions; we admit based on our values, but do we also act based on our values?
- Determine whether admissions and faculty goals are being achieved from a student perspective

What We Did



Focus Groups (6)

- 2 open groups
- 4 affinity groups
 - Students with disabilities
 - Racial/Ethnic minority students
 - Non-Traditional students
 - LGBTQIA+ identified students

Total Participants: 17

90-min virtual interviews

Conducted over a 4-month period

- July - October 2021

Analysis Procedures:

- Two independent primary coders
 - independent secondary coding
- Cross coding themes by stages of admissions and across theme:
 - themes across focus groups
 - themes specific to affinity groups
- Identifying and retaining implicit and isolated themes within focus groups for cross group comparison and analysis

What We Learned



General findings by **stage of admissions process across groups:**

- Application
 - Increasing accessibility and building a sense of connection
- Interview
 - Impact of structure and how the experience sets expectations
- Orientation
 - Importance of accessibility, structure, and building connection
- Early student on-campus experience
 - Ongoing importance of accessibility and connectedness and the impact of the disconnect between values and actions

What We Learned



Findings **specific to affinity groups:**

- Common experiences
 - feeling a lack of community or sense of belonging
 - negative impacts when program values and actions do not align
- The importance of ...
 - building personal connections with faculty and peers
 - accessibility processes that do not create even more barriers to access

What We Learned



Overall Takeaways

- Students view the admissions process (application to first day of class) as one continuous experience
- Students are setting expectations for their on-campus experience based on their earliest experiences in admissions
- When there is a disconnect between the admissions experience and the orientation and campus experiences, it degrades the student evaluation of their programs and the university

Takeaways and Recommendations



Takeaways and Future Research



Repeated student focus groups

- Would like to capture a larger and more balanced sample size
- Follow-up needed to account for the challenges of recruiting during the Covid pandemic
- Driving question of follow-up focus groups with students :

**Are we keeping the promises we make to students
during admissions?**

Takeaways from Survey and Focus Groups



Taken Together...

- The student's experience of the institution is continuous
 - Dissonance among admissions → orientation → on-campus experiences
 - Lack of meaningful transitions between stages
- Additional information and training are needed to create a unified knowledge base and effort across programs
 - Applying holistic admissions policies
 - Dissemination of best practices from programs at the university level

Questions and Discussion



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Thank You



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