

Sun Devils Together

Executive Summary

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Introduction

In universities, such as Arizona State, students are becoming homeless at an alarming rate. According to the Wisconsin HOPE Lab, 52% of students attending 4-year universities experience a basic needs insecurity like access to food, housing, and healthcare (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, Schneider, Hernandez, & Cady, 2018). Typically, students arrive at university campuses with most of the resources required for them to pursue a degree. However, several economic factors such as unemployment or financial instability can impact these resources which influence student's ability to stay enrolled in classes. This feature is reflected in the well understood concept of the "starving student". Despite this paradigm, the fact remains that students under this stress are attending classes and are under financial stress to do so while being unable to meet their basic needs. These intertwined elements result in ASU students becoming exposed to cyclical needs-insecurities including homelessness.

The team has collaborated with the Dean of Students Office to identify and address gaps within managing and delivering on and off campus resources to students experiencing home, food, and health insecurities. In addition, the team has proposed for ASU to create a project, called Sun Devils Together, which addresses the needs of ASU's students facing homelessness, increases the accessibility of available resources, reduces the silo effect that occurs due to lack of communication between different departments and increases faculty and staff awareness regarding the issue.

Based on the Collective Impact Framework, a systemic change model, the team addressed intervention points through translating the framework into steps such as conducting and collecting case studies on research and availability of campus resources. Drawing on this data, the team proposed and implemented strategies to help address student homelessness and aid students in obtaining needed support. The deliverables the team created were shown at meetings conducted to increase communication pathways between departments and off campus organizations. They encouraged the Dean of Students Office to develop an online platform to enhance resource accessibility to students, and developed a training program for professional staff and faculty. Currently, the Dean of Students Office is implementing this platform based on recommendations derived from our research and case study analysis. Overall, Sun Devils Together, which entails recommendations for the Dean of Students Office's future online platform, resource pamphlets,

and training, symbolizes a holistic solution which satisfies the three pillars of sustainability by addressing the root drivers of student homelessness.

Methods and Interventions

Wiek's (2015) framework was used to identify the problem of student homelessness and highlight intervention points such as creating student visibility and awareness among faculty and staff, nurturing service delivery capacity, and designing the infrastructure for collective socially responsible resource aid. Proposing Sun Devils Together utilized multiple frameworks for its creation and implementation. The Collective Impact Framework acts as the project's theory of change. The Collective Impact Framework, aids communities in forming solutions towards systems-level change (Christens & Inzeo, 2015). Sun Devils Together designed its recommendations in the three phases of the collective impact: 1) initiation of action, 2) organizing for impact and 3) sustaining action and impact (Christens & Inzeo, 2015). The intent of the framework was to create awareness and outreach, engage the various ASU resource departments and local Tempe community organizations, and continue engagement and advocacy through acting as one organization. Furthermore, during the project implementation, the team designed a training tool to educate professional staff and faculty on homelessness and the correct procedures to aid students in need. To supplement this training, the team developed a communication gap matrix and resource pamphlet to help facilitate better communication amongst departments.

To assess and evaluate the effectiveness of Sun Devils Together, the team utilized the United Nations (2019) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and Max-Neef's (1992) Matrix of Needs and Satisfiers. The United Nations (2019) Sustainable Development Goals helps to provide a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. In order to further measure the project's success, the team used the Sustainable Development Impact Assessment Tool. Within this tool, the project results were measured against each Sustainable Development Goal to determine what type of impact it has to the respective SDGs. The assessment also required the team to fill out reasons on how our project impacts the respective SDGs. In addition to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the team cross evaluated the success of Sun Devils Together through Max-Neef's (1992) Matrix of Needs and Satisfiers. Max-Neef's matrix measures human needs according to what an individual needs to survive based on a code of ethics. The Max-Neef's matrix consists of nine needs based on an individual's physical and mental well being that are matched with satisfiers under categories such as being, having, doing, and interacting. The team has created a matrix based on the nine needs and rated our project progress on a scale from 1 to 4. The ratings were measured based on how many of the four criteria (being, having, doing and interacting) are met. If our project had met all criteria, it would be graded a 4, if it only had met three then it would be graded a 3 and so on. Through this matrix, the team measured the project's effectiveness as a sustainability solution.

Project Outcomes

Sun Devils Together provided a space for discussion about homeless and at-risk students at ASU. The project highlighted significant gaps in resources and communication between departments and their processes to aid students in need. The project revealed there is missing information for students, faculty, and professional staff to direct and acquire the help they need in access to housing, healthcare, and food. During meetings and interactions with students, staff, faculty, and

department representatives, it became apparent that people were becoming more aware of the issue of student homelessness and needs insecurity at ASU and the communication gaps that exist between departments. After meetings, department representatives, faculty, and staff requested for additional training, information about correct procedures and resources, and contact information to other department representatives that they could direct students to. A pilot of the training that the team developed will be implemented at a later date this year. Meanwhile, the contents of the training, and a recorded demo, in addition to corresponding resource pamphlets will be forwarded to the Student Advocacy and Assistance Department to supplement the training that they currently have. The team saw change once they gave an executive summary of research on best practices and case studies and recommended strategies to the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office, upon receiving our executive summary, was encouraged to begin developing an accessible online platform to inform and direct students to corresponding resources and department representatives.

To measure and evaluate the success of our project, the team used the Max Neef's need and satisfiers matrix and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. With Max Neef's matrix, the project scored a total of 29 out of 36. The team also utilized the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to assess the success of our project through the SDG Impact Assessment Tool. Overall, the project positively impacted 13 SDG goals. The remaining goals were beyond the project scope and were not affected positively or negatively.

Next Steps

Sun Devils Together provides a unique opportunity for ASU to accomplish its vision for an inclusive campus while also experimenting with solutions to homelessness. Through its development, students experiencing homelessness will become more equipped with needed resources and assistance. This will lead to halting their experiences and struggles with lack of resources and the homeless experience itself. Students will have an increased focus on academics and have personal issues regarding health, housing and food decreased. Throughout the partnership with the Dean of Students Office; completion of desired research and strategies, deliverable construction, a communication gap matrix, resource pamphlet, and development of a recommended training tool were achieved.