

Division of Student Affairs
Report on Rebranding Student Connect
Draft Recommendations

The Charge

This Task Force is responsible for creating a plan to rebrand the responsibilities and services of the Student Connect Center. As we restructure the information desk in the Student Services Center to serve the Counseling Department, we will need to redirect questions and expand the services of the Student Connect Center. This may change the responsibilities and services of the Student Connect Center.

Rebranding Student Connect Task Force

The Rebranding Student Connect Task Force (RSCTF) was comprised of representatives from Ventura College. The members were:

Gaby Asamsama-Acuña
Co-Chair of Task Force
Registrar

Tatiana Lawler
Co-Chair of Task Force
Student Services Specialist

Corey Wendt
Counselor

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Interim Dean of Student Services

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Student Services Assistant II

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Program Coordinator I

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The Process

The RSCTF began its work on April 6, 2021, meeting weekly for approximately 1.5 hours, until April 22, 2021, to discuss the final recommendations. Questions were asked to the RSCTF to address important issues. In addition to the weekly meetings of the entire RSCTF, the group met and answered the mentioned questions.

During initial meetings, the RSCTF exhaustively considered how the Welcome Center can assist students more effectively and holistically. As much as allowed within our short timeframe, the RSCTF reviewed goals and services.

The RSCTF had its final meeting on June 3, 2021, to review the feedback it received and to make its final recommendations, which are presented below.

Goal: A Culture of Change

Early in its discussions, the RSCTF concluded that:

- The Welcome Center will need to intentionally create an inclusive, inviting space where students and the community have access to information and referrals about campus resources.
- The Welcome Center will be able to assist students daily with their admission applications, financial aid questions, and course enrollment.
- With the assistance of classified professionals in our Caring Campus community, the Welcome Center will serve as an essential point of contact, where students get support and gain a sense of belonging that enhances connection and ability to achieve their educational goals at VC.

Observation of Current Location and Configuration

The current location and configuration of the Welcome Center does not reflect our Guided Pathways initiative or allow our community to see the Welcome Center as an inviting "One-Stop Shop" service area. The RSCTF recommends that the rebranding of the Welcome Center must go beyond services to include an evaluation and restructuring of the location and capabilities.

A different location for the Welcome Center would establish a beneficial culture of change for students, and the Division of Student Affairs. Service rebranding may be the first step, however, location reorganization will be crucial, not only to signal the change of culture, but to truly execute cross-functional collaboration as a college.

- Currently, the space is not centralized inside the SSC building where it is housed.
- The current space is confusing and does not have proper signage to direct students to services or resources.
- With a semicircle shape and high check-in countertop, the current location is not ADA friendly and lacks accessibility. We would like to see a space that adopts universal design and is accessible to all.

The RSCTF would like to invite the Executive Team to evaluate a more holistic and inclusive space for the Welcome Center so students and the Division of Student Affairs can work together with the common goal of student success. In other words, the RSCTF is calling for a reorganization within the college so that students can easily access campus resources.

Completely revamp the Welcome Center location to expand services and visibility for the Welcome Center

The goal of this restructuring is to create the conditions for the Welcome Center to exist and function as an attractive, inclusive, comfortable space for students to access comprehensive services from caring and knowledgeable staff.

- The area should be centrally located for students and easily accessible to the diverse student population that we serve.
- The Welcome Center should have clear signage with a waiting room area and comfortable seating.
- The Welcome Center should have an open, multipurpose space to allow for events and collaboration.
- The Welcome Center should be spacious enough to house representatives from other departments in the division of Student Affairs, including Admissions & Records, Financial Aid, etc.
- The Welcome Center should have a clean, modern, freshly stocked resource wall to house brochures for every program Ventura College offers.

Services: Rebranding to Support Ongoing Services for Students

Ongoing services for students serve as the mission for the Welcome Center. Business as usual is no longer sufficient. To serve our students more holistically, we must not only rethink our structure but also reorient our practices as the Division of Student Affairs. These challenges present an opportunity to become a better College and to build a better community for our students. Moreover, our student population challenges the Welcome Center to work as a conduit so that we can serve more

effectively. However, none of this can happen unless the College reorganizes itself and refocuses its efforts to help the Welcome Center be “The Compass” of the College. While there may be other changes necessary to shift our culture, the RSCTF recommends the following to begin the process of change.

We will address each of these topics in the sections below as well as provide specific recommendations to this report.

Include a representative from other departments to be located at the Welcome Center

Early in our discussion, it was identified that the Welcome Center needs to continue working closely with other departments to ensure that messaging and practices are current. In order to have a "One-Stop Shop" service, the RSCTF recommends a representative from other departments be located in the Welcome Center. The task force felt that students should have better connections and seamless assistance, eliminating transfers from building to building. The classified professionals in the Welcome Center would play a critical role of a success team for our Career and Major Communities. The proximity of staff would allow students to complete their next steps in the comfort and convenience of the Welcome Center. In the end, not only will this allow a culture of change with the Welcome Center becoming the campus hub and place for seamless facilitation throughout the application and registration process, it will subsequently increase student access and enrollment.

Remove barriers for students by providing cross-functional awareness within the Division of Student Affairs

Having a “One-Stop Shop” in the Welcome Center will dissolve silos and enable the Division of Student Affairs to serve students more holistically. Through cross-functional training and collaboration we can create the opportunity to become a better institution.

- Rebranding the Welcome Center is the first step, but it will be futile unless the division stops working in silos.
- True change and efficiency will occur when departments collaborate on a monthly basis to allow cross-functional training and professional development opportunities.
 - Attend department chair meetings to share Welcome Center rebranding and upcoming activities.
 - The Welcome Center will participate in professional development training to streamline services that contribute to student success.

Increase Access to Campus Resources

The Welcome Center will increase access to campus resources because staff will be cross trained in Student Services, it will house the Welcome Center in addition to representatives from other service areas such as Admissions and Records, Financial Aid, and the Student Health Center. With the well-rounded abundance of resources being centrally located, the Welcome Center will naturally be “The Compass” for information and ongoing access to campus resources.

Additionally, with the help of Starfish, the Welcome Center will be able to coordinate a collaborative effort between the faculty and campus resources to ensure student success, retention, and persistence. Once a student applies for admission, the Welcome Center can help students navigate Starfish by using the online scheduling, referrals, campus resource tools and by teaching students how to connect with Counselors, faculty, and student support professionals.

VC Student Health Center Proposal for Student Connect Task Force: Resource/Support Center

The Ventura College Student Health Center agrees with the Student Connect Task Force that students would be best served by expanding the role of Student Connect into a central location where students from both Ventura College campuses would have easy access to the support and guidance offered by all student services. We believe having all available student services represented in one welcoming, safe, and inclusive space will promote both personal and academic success. As part of this joint venture, the student health center envisions having trained health center staff providing the following services at a designated central location Monday through Friday on West campus and expanded hours to fit the need on East Campus:

- Information on physical and mental health services
- Provide an opportunity to meet both medical and mental health staff
- Assist students with making appointments, setting up their student health portals and completing their forms
- Provide an opportunity to set up medical and mental health appointments
- Offer relevant health brochures and introduce students to resources on the website
- First Aid supplies

Integrate the recommendations of campus committees and workgroups currently addressing campus initiatives

Multiple factions within the VC community have expended considerable time and effort to evaluate, plan, recommend and implement service, academic, facility and operational changes resulting from the work taking place in VC workgroups.

The dedicated efforts of Caring Campus, Guided Pathways, Facilities Master Plan, Starfish Early Alert, Student Equity and other initiative groups prioritized by the VC

community should be considered and incorporated into the Rebranding process to create a more cohesive, holistic student service experience and promote a cross-functional knowledge base for all VC staff.

Change in VC Leadership mindset towards a more integrated, holistic delivery of student services across student service divisions

Student Services is currently disjointed. Redundancy is occurring among staff and it's not uncommon for student service providers in different service areas to have only a vague understanding of what each student service unit does and how that work is carried out.

In order to break down silos and provide cohesive, seamless care and support for VC students, the RSCTF recommends that VC leadership:

- Commit to regular meetings with all student service unit managers to educate, inform, discuss, evaluate, plan, trouble-shoot and improve service provision as a Student Service Unit.
- Promote cross-functional training and scaling of services, sharing of resources, information and space, ending redundancy and encouraging teamwork.
- Promote best practices, enthusiasm and competition at the state-level – let's strive to be the best student service provider in the State.
- Be timely and transparent about student service reorganizations, staffing changes, roles and responsibilities and include evaluation of the student services as a unit.
- Establish big-picture goals for VC Student services unit.

Retain the number of Student Ambassadors and Communications Assistants

The key to the success of our holistic Welcome Center will be the staffing. Having a team of highly qualified Communications Assistants and Student Ambassadors is crucial to meeting and exceeding the goals of the center. Setting the foundation for the Welcome Center, our full-service staff assists students over the phone, through email, Zoom, live chat, and drop-in, in-person support. In addition to coordinating assistance, answering general questions, providing tours, and offering a full line of onboarding training and services, the Welcome Center staff would be the liaison between the student and other service departments. Utilizing our Caring Campus model, the staff would orient the student with their next steps with a warm handoff to the student service or department as needed. With a full staff we can ensure that every student leaves the center feeling accomplished, cared for, and connected.

Summary of Recommendations

- Completely revamp the Welcome Center location and expand services and visibility for the Welcome Center.
- Increase access to campus resources by having a representative from other departments located in the Welcome Center.
- Remove barriers for students by providing cross-functional training within the Division of Student Affairs.
- Retain the number of Student Ambassadors and Communications Assistants.

Opportunity to Discuss Change

The first step in creating a culture of change begins with the Executive Team's commitment to rebranding and restructuring the Welcome Center. The rebranding process necessitates the immediate expansion and relocation of the Welcome Center to a large, open space where multiple resources and Student Service representatives can be housed, open and readily available for our students.

Guided Pathways, Caring Campus, Student Success, Facilities Master Plan, Strategic Plan and Equity Plan initiatives tie into the rebranding and restructuring of the Welcome Center. For example, The Facilities Master Plan is in the exploratory phase with an outside consultant and the participation of several factions on campus. If the recommendations of the Facilities Master Plan are to be considered, they must be incorporated in the early goals of the FMP to ensure there is an adequate place on campus dedicated and retrofitted to expand Student Connect into a one-stop, centralized student services center that houses most, if not all non-academic services in a single location. The Welcome Center will support the Equity Plan by offering targeted and specialized service while avoiding duplication of services. If needed, additional examples can be provided to the Executive Team.