Quality of Life Initiatives on behalf of Graduate Students at the University of Oklahoma

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Abigail Allums
Ebony Pope
Why Quality of Life?

- Universities are more accountable for standards of living as well as academic excellence.

- Graduate programs need to examine objective circumstances and subjective well-being.

- Support structures have improved, but the intrinsic values have changed.
OU’s 2010 survey on Quality of Life for Graduate Students

- Presented by Abigail Allums
The kind of information sought in excellent graduate surveys...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANFORD</th>
<th>UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Demographics</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Finances</td>
<td>• Campus climate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Housing</td>
<td>• Use of orientation programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social Life</td>
<td>• Use of services (e.g. recreation, health</td>
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<td></td>
<td>center, dining, career, legal)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Healthcare</td>
<td>• Commute</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Childcare</td>
<td>• Student views on issues (e.g. stipends,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>discounts, daycare)</td>
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Analyzing OU’s recent survey...

HANSEN’S MODEL on “INTEGRATIVE LIFE PLANNING”:

• LEARNING
• LOVING
• LIVING
• LEISURE

[OU’s SURVEY CATEGORIES]

• Background
• Childcare Options and Needs
• Living Situation (e.g. housing, commute, healthcare)
• Stressors and Pressures
• Financial Issues
• Extracurricular Activities and Social Events
Maximizing the data...

• To include:

  – Graduate population from all disciplines

  – Diversity variables

  – Masters and PhD students

  – International and domestic students
Understanding the infrastructure...

- Catalogue all graduate student relevant programs

- Conduct a SWOT analysis and comparative analysis

- Communicate with community and student life programs
Implementing action plans...

• Translate survey results into program initiatives

• Find cost-effective, practical, creative solutions

• Adapt existing infrastructure to promote quality of life
Q. If you have a spouse/partner, is he/she:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>A student (at OU, another institution)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>A postdoctoral student or staff member (at OU, another institution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>A faculty member (at OU, another institution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>Employed in the private sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>Employed in the public sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>In the military</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>Other</td>
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</table>

**Action:** Look into more inclusive programming on campus- how we can get families and partners involved with OU as well as the students outside of their department
Q. To what extent did your spouse/partner or significant other find it easy or difficult to adjust to the Norman area?

17.4% Extremely easy
41% Easy
19.1% Neither easy nor difficult
13.3% Difficult
4.4% Extremely Difficult
4.4% Don’t know

Action: Work with incoming students and families to help ease the moving transition - current recommendation would be a comprehensive guide to graduate life
Q. Rank your top three sources of stress from 1 (most stressful) to 3 (third most stressful).

1. Coursework
2. Time management
3. Finances
4. Research
5. Family issues
6. Interaction with adviser
7. Lack of emotional and/or social support
8. Adapting to graduate school
9. Health issues
10. Dating

**Action:** Create seminars focusing on time management, simple stress alleviators and creating healthy sleeping habits to suit the graduate life style
Q. How often does your department sponsor social events for graduate students?

3.8% Weekly
11.2% Monthly
64% Occasionally
18.5% Never

**Action:** Work with departments during program planning; work with graduate student services to improve graduate outreach and programming
Davidson’s Initial Research on Quality of Life as a Graduate Student

- Presented by Ebony Pope and Tim Davidson, Ph.D.
GUIDING QUESTION:
• “What should be measured to determine quality of life for graduate students?”

OPENING QUESTION:
• “What does quality of life as a graduate student mean to you?”
“Solution-focused” or “strength-based” interview questions

- Ideal Vision
- Obstacles/Solutions
- Opportunities
- Priorities
- Resources:
Interview questions to assess a “subjective sense of well-being”

- Satisfaction/Happiness
- Expectations/Wants
  - Balance
  - Valence
  - Future
Maslow - the link between satisfying needs and quality of life...

**HIGHER NEEDS**

- SELF-ACTUALIZATION
  - Fulfilling potential

- SELF-ESTEEM
  - Mastery of tasks
  - Status and recognition

- SENSE OF BELONGING
  - Feeling welcomed
  - Connected and affirmed

**BASIC NEEDS**

- SAFETY
  - Stability
  - Non-threatening environment

- PHYSIOLOGICAL
  - Food
  - Shelter
  - Air
Herzberg— the dynamic between objective circumstances and personal drive...

**HIGHER NEEDS**  ➔  **MOTIVATORS**

**BASIC NEEDS**  ➔  **HYGIENES**

or

**DISSATISFIERS**
Higher Needs for Graduate Students...

McClelland’s Model

- ACHIEVEMENT
- POWER
- AFFILIATION

Examples reported in Interviews and Focus Groups

- Access to the best academic product
- Cross-disciplinary exchanges
- Forums to present research
- Professional and intellectual development
- Real world immersion and application of knowledge
- Meaningful social impact
- Networking for the future
- More communication with advisors and professors
Michael Frisch’s “Quality of Life Inventory”

BASIC CONDITIONS
- Health
- Money
- Home
- Neighborhood
- Community

PSYCHOLOGICAL
- Self-esteem
- Goals & Values
- Play
- Learning
- Creativity
- Overall satisfaction with life

RELATIONAL
- Helping
- Love
- Friends
- Children
- Relatives
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>World Health Organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Quality of Life-100”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Physical Health</td>
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<tr>
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<td>[energy and fatigue; pain and discomfort; sleep and rest]</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Psychological Wellness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>[bodily image and appearance; negative feelings; positive feelings; self-esteem; thinking, learning, memory and concentration]</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Level of Independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[mobility; activities of daily living; dependence on medicinal substances and medical aids; work capacity]</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Social Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[personal relationships; social support; sexual activity]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Environment</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>[financial resources; freedom, physical safety and security; health and social care (accessibility and quality); home environment; opportunities for acquiring new information and skills; participation in and opportunities for recreation/leisure; physical environment (pollution, noise, traffic, climate); transport]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Spirituality/ Religion</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[personal beliefs]</td>
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Ed Diener’s “The Satisfaction with Life Scale”

1. Whether life is close to ideal;

2. To what degree conditions in life are excellent;

3. Overall sense of satisfaction with life;

4. Whether objectives in life are being achieved;

5. If there is an absence of major regrets in life.