

BEYOND BOUNDARIES: COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS ENCOMPASSING ALL ENGINEERING STUDENT SERVICE PROGRAMS

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BACKGROUND

The state of California is an immensely diverse state, culturally and ethnically, in which the total "minority" population has recently surpassed what had been the "majority" Caucasian population. There is an awareness that an educated workforce, reflecting the diversity of the general population of the state, does have a number of long range benefits. In recognition of the tremendous diversity and need to secure an educated workforce, the University of California has traditionally been a strong supporter of ensuring cultural and ethnic variance across the student body of their numerous campuses. Affirmative action programs on the campuses of UC have done much to move the campuses toward making these goals a reality. Many within the university feel that the work of affirmative action programs is far from complete. A setback to the efforts of affirmative action proponents occurred, however, in July 1995, when the Regents of the University of California passed two resolutions banning the utilization of race, ethnicity, and gender in UC admissions criteria, hiring, and contracting practices. Although the decision did not directly impact student outreach programs, coordinators of such programs, particularly within the College of Engineering at UC Davis (where there are a number of these programs), began to voice concerns regarding the future of their efforts. Soon after passage of the Regents' resolution, the California Civil Rights Initiative, Proposition 209, was placed on the California ballot. The purpose of the initiative was to ban all preferences on the basis of race, ethnicity or gender in the operation of public employment, public education, and public contracting in the state of California. Proposition 209 was passed by the voting public in November 1996. While this sent further shock waves throughout the University of California, an injunction was subsequently placed against Proposition 209. Although the injunction did alleviate some of the heightened anxiety experienced by proponents of affirmative action outreach efforts, the anti-affirmative action climate that swept through the state of California left many program administrators seeking to bridge strong alliances with their colleagues.

CREATION OF AN ENGINEERING PARTNERSHIP

Rising out the midst of the turbulence created by the recent events within the state of California in general, and the university in particular, program coordinators within the

IMPACTING CHANGE THROUGH COLLABORATION

1997 WEPAN/NAMEPA CONFERENCE

College of Engineering at UC Davis began actively dialoguing with one another to discuss common concerns. The representative programs within the college include: Alternate Styles of Learning (ASL), Engineering Summer Residency Program (ESRP), Mentorships and Opportunities for Research in Engineering (MORE), MESA Engineering Program (MEP), Women in Engineering (WIE), and Graduate Recruitment and Retention for Diversity (GRAD). Each of these programs, in its own unique way, seeks to build on the strengths of their students to ensure their successful movement toward graduation and future goals. One of the most pressing questions for the coordinators of these programs was: what will happen to our programs and how will we conduct business in the present and not too distant future? In the early stages, it became evident that as coordinators of student service programs, we had a number of common goals upon which to build strong partnerships. We discovered that in working more closely with one another, not only do we forge our own alliance, from which we can gather strength and build camaraderie as program administrators, we also avoid duplication of outreach efforts and more effectively serve the college and student body as a whole.

An additional area of concern was program funding. As we waded the tide of the current political climate, it is important to consider the impact that affirmative action policy changes may have on funding sources. We recognize that collaborative grant proposals do eliminate "multiple asks" to funding agencies, and that, by merging some activities under one umbrella, we might have a stronger voice for gaining support. By identifying areas of strength in our individual programs, we can create even stronger group efforts.

What emerged from this open dialogue was what we coined the Engineering Student Services and Programs (ES₂P) group. The mission of ES₂P is to *"maintain and increase the interest of students in engineering education; to provide transitional support to students, beginning at the pre-college level and continuing through their graduate education; and to provide academic and professional enrichment activities for all engineering students."*

BEYOND THE BOUNDARY: ES₂P

Formulating the ES₂P mission statement strengthened the "team" approach to ES₂P and naturally led to the development of collaborative projects. The first project was the design of an ES₂P brochure to be used for outreach and recruitment purposes, and most importantly, for use with our current students to inform them of the numerous student support services available in the college.

Essential to the maintenance of ES₂P are the monthly meetings in which the "team" brainstorms on new goals and reports general information on each unit. The current project under discussion is the development of a mentoring pipeline, extending from the secondary school level through engineering graduate school. By working together, we discovered that nearly each unit was running a mentor project, yet a gap remained within the K-12 sector. We are now working together to build the necessary links among the units to create a college-wide mentoring program that will include K-12.

Parallel with the creation of ES₂P, the college's leadership was in transition. This critical timing turned out to be an added opportunity for renewing and expanding the college's long-standing tradition in supporting student diversity under the leadership of Deans John Kemper (1969-1983) and M.S. Ghausi (1983-1996). The college's recently

appointed dean, Alan J. Laub, responded to ES₂P with encouragement and administrative support, thus creating a synergistic working relationship between ES₂P and the college's new administration. ES₂P has now recently expanded its connections to the faculty with the newly formed, faculty directed, Committee on Student Development, whereby each ES₂P unit director will serve as an ex officio member. The charge of the committee is to "provide guidance and recommendations to the student service programs; act as campus liaisons for, and assist in the coordination of new student development programs; and be available for meeting and discussing opportunities with underrepresented students considering pursuit of academic studies in engineering at UC Davis". The result is the manifestation of the ES₂P mission in the form of much needed faculty commitment to student services.

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