Sheridan Journey

White Paper

Student Experience Vision Engagement Team

Submitted To:

The Vision Transition Steering Engagement Team

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Submitted by:

Student Experience Vision Engagement Team

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A STUDENT EXPERIENCE STORY

With the belief that every student's experience should be exceptional, here is but one example of what our students are experiencing:

My journey started the day I met Jon Jones. I remember sitting on a bleacher in Sheridan's Athletic Centre feeling scared, confused but also exhilarated. I was most definitely an introvert in high school and thought I should probably just keep to myself during orientation.

"Hi I'm Jon Jones," said an important-looking man to me just as I had begun to sit down. "I'm Mike," I replied. He asked me what program I was in and I asked him what he was doing at orientation. He informed me that he worked for Sheridan. We talked for a while longer and as he got up to leave he said, "Mike if I could give you one piece of advice it would be to do well and to get involved." We said our goodbyes and orientation started. Staff began to introduce themselves and when the microphone was passed to Jon Jones, he introduced himself as an associate dean! I was shocked that somebody so high up in the Faculty of Business would take the time to speak to me.

A week later, I was heading to my Marketing 1 class and I saw Jon in the hall. I half expected him to not remember who I was but to my surprise, he waved and called me by name! This was the moment I realized that during my stay at Sheridan I would be considered a person, not a number. I thought the whole way to class about what he said to me during orientation: "Do well and get involved," and two days later I joined the Business Council.

It was not until going into my third year that I became a peer mentor. I can guarantee, beyond any doubt, that my modus operandi for becoming a peer was because of what Jon told me during orientation.

This year, on Tuesday June 12th I shook Jon Jones' hand as I walked across the stage to receive my diploma in Business Administration: Marketing-Honours.

While I understand that my pursuits will most likely take me away from Sheridan, I know that it will always be my home. Countless people just like Jon, who have enabled me to grow and develop both academically and socially, have shaped my whole experience at Sheridan. Faculty, support staff and executives who are the living soul of this institution have created an environment that will teach, nurture and help students reach their potential for years to come. Now, as a staff member at Sheridan, I am certainly glad I have been a part of it.

INTRODUCTION

What does an exceptional student experience look like? This is the research question being addressed by the Student Experience Vision Engagement Team.

The mandate of the Engagement Team is to review academic literature and best practices at similar institutions, document the differences between the current student experience at Sheridan College versus the desired student experience at Sheridan University and provide a series of incremental recommendations that demonstrate a clear pathway to the achievement of the desired state.

The Engagement Team participants represent a diverse, engaged cross-section of Sheridan community members including students, professors, support and administrative staff. Team members represent and specialize in different aspects of the student lifecycle from pre-entry to graduation and beyond, most have studied or are currently studying at a university which provides the group with a wide range of expertise and experiences on which to draw. All team members genuinely care about students and want their experience to be unique and exceptional - this is what unifies us.

It is important to note that the team operated on the consensus that:

- Sheridan's student population is diverse and presents a broad range of needs
- each student's experience is unique
- creating an exceptional experience is shared responsibility amongst the Sheridan community and students: each student has personal responsibility for their experience, level of engagement and success
- the student experience is created by factors inside and outside the classroom
- there is no 'one-size-fits-all' model to enhance the student experience
- the Sheridan universities student experience needs to be unique and distinct

The White Paper is divided into three sections.

Section I, the *Scope of Inquiry* begins by presenting the Engagement Teams definition of student experience. It then examines the existing literature on aspects which relate to the student experience including student expectations and student engagement. Finally, it highlights what different institutions are doing to enhance the student experience.

Section II, the *Strategic Imperatives* section establishes the Engagement Team's alignment to Sheridan's vision of becoming a unique undergraduate teaching university dedicated to the student experience. It also outlines our connection to the goals that will make Sheridan's vision a reality. Lastly, it summarizes how our teams work connects to the work of other engagement teams.

Section III, the *Recommendations*

SCOPE OF INQUIRY

It is important to note that before the Engagement Team could explore the research question being posed, we had to come to a shared understanding of exactly what was meant by the 'Student Experience'. As a result of initial discussions, a working definition for the Sheridan student experience was established:

> *The student experience encompasses the full gamut or breadth of the academic, developmental, creative, social and 'everyday' experiences of students and is designed to maximize student success, student engagement, pride and loyalty and reflect the soul of the institution. The student experience begins from the first connection with the institution and continues through to graduation and beyond.*

A more fulsome explanation of this definition is contained in Appendix A.

This definition recognizes that:

1. there are many variables that influence a student's experience;
2. the student is the expert on his/her own experience; and
3. if the student is tied to the institution, he/she becomes a Sheridan ambassador for life

The notion that every student will have the opportunity to enjoy a full and rich experience at Sheridan is not a new one. However, as Sheridan embarks on its journey to becoming a top-ranked and unique undergraduate teaching university, we have the opportunity to differentiate ourselves and gain a competitive edge by making our student experience the best it can be. The authors of the 2009 book entitled *Academic Transformation: The Forces Reshaping Higher Education in Ontario* spotlight that one of the key characteristics of the 'ideal' postsecondary institution will be its ability to offer a more supportive student experience, one that is not currently provided at larger research focused universities (p.180).

To develop such an experience, we may consider borrowing good business practices, as connections can be made between the customer experience and the student experience. Pine and Gilmore authors of 'The Experience Economy' argue that we are moving from a service to an experience economy (2011). In this new economy, the authors reason that Sheridan will need to provide a unique, personal experience for *each* student by orchestrating experiences that are engaging, captivating and memorable in order to differentiate us from other institutions.

Student Expectations

The student experience can be heavily influenced by students' expectations' of their experience in a postsecondary institution. As summarized by Miller, Bender, Schuh and Associates "Some will be impatient to get on with the courses in their major (decided on long ago), while an increasing number will be content to remain 'undeclared.' Some will be grateful for college efforts to engage them, while others will resist in active or passive ways (p. 20). The authors warn that a "one size fits all approach will inevitably fit some better than others" (p. 20).

It is key to learn as much about student expectations as possible. What expectations have been created through their past experiences? What expectations were derived through the recruitment process to their postsecondary institution of choice? What expectations arose as they meet their cohort of students on their first day of class? In short, if we know more about students' expectations for their experiences, we are better prepared to improve those experiences.

Miller, Bender, Shuh and Associates recommend that educational institutions utilize two avenues for learning about student expectations. The first is to gather "aggregate" data about student expectations so that the institution has an understanding of the average student expectation (p. 245). Survey tools such as the College Student Expectations Questionnaire (CSXQ) and the College Student Experience Questionnaire (CSEQ) as well as the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) are recommended as instruments that can measure and help organizations understand student expectations and experience (p. 250). The second avenue, and the one in which more of a negotiation of student expectations can take place, is in an individual interview setting, such as an academic advising session, a career counselling meeting, or one-on-one interactions with a faculty member (245).

Another important area for consideration when examining student expectations is the possible gaps in perceptions between students and faculty. As noted by Mancuso, Desmarais, Parkinson, and Pettigrew in *Disappointment, Misunderstanding and Expectations: A Gap Analysis of NSSE, BCSSE and FSSE* (2010, p.4-7) both faculty and student expectations are at play and often those expectations are not in line with one another. The authors also note that because expectations are subjective and can be influenced by a variety factors they may not be reliable. They suggest using both NSSE and FSSE (Faculty Survey of Student Engagement) to examine the gaps between expectations and experiences.

Student Engagement

Though not entirely synonymous with the student experience, student engagement is one of the most examined and researched components of the student experience. An agreement to collect measures of student engagement is now part of the Multi-Year Agreements between Ontario's Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the province's postsecondary institutions. A number of definitions and measures for student engagement exist.

Most recently, a working definition was put forth in a report published by HEQCO entitled *Measures of Student Engagement in Postsecondary Education: Theoretical Basis and Applicability to Ontario's Colleges*: The term "student engagement" has evolved from the studies of student involvement (Astin), quality of effort (Pace), and interaction and integration (Tinto), and is now used to describe the effort, interest, and time that students invest in meaningful education experiences (2009, p.14-15) Essentially, this definition brings together the theories that have been brought forward by student engagement experts during the last four decades.

Chickering and Gamson's often cited 1987 article *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education* emphasizes student-faculty contact, cooperation amongst students, active learning, prompt feedback, time on task, high expectations and respect for diverse talents and ways of learning (1987, para. 4).

Similarly, one of the most prominent measures of student engagement, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), has defined five clusters of effective educational practice:

1. **academic challenge**
   (class preparation, reading, writing, higher-order thinking skills, academic emphasis) (NSSE, 2011, p.33-34)

2. **active and collaborative learning**
   (questioning, class presentations, working with other students, tutoring other students, community interaction) (p.35-36)

3. **student interactions with faculty members**
   (discussions about grades/career paths, working with a faculty member on a committee or a research project) (p.37-38)

4. **enriching educational experiences**
   (exposure to diversity, internships, community outreach, capstone courses, independent study) (p.39-40)

5. **supportive campus environment**
   (academic support, non-academic support for work, family and social lives, supportive campus relationships) (p.41-42)

In their book *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter*, authors Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh and Whitt sought to discover what contributed to certain universities'/colleges' high levels of student engagement and their superior graduation rates. They referred to these organizations as the DEEP institutions and the authors found that they shared several things in common:

- a living mission and lived educational philosophy
- an unshakable focus on student learning
- environments adapted for educational enrichment
- clearly marked pathways to student success
- an improvement oriented ethos
- shared responsibility for educational quality and student success (p. 24)

The authors concluded that "DEEP schools know a lot about their students, who they are, and what they need to perform well" (2010, p. 125).

The research suggests that it is important to recognize the interplay between student experience, their expectations and their level of engagement. The relationship is significant

because if a student's experience fails to live up to their expectations, they will likely disengage. Students who disengage could be more likely to leave the institution.

Student Experience at Other Postsecondary Institutions

A number of educational institutions have examined the student experience and set clear courses of action for enhancing the student experience at their organizations. Reports on the student experience from the University of Guelph, York University and the University of Michigan did not reveal the process by which they evaluated their students' experiences,[1] but rather identified future actions.

In 2005, the University of Guelph released the white paper "The Lighting of a Fire: Re-imagining the Undergraduate Learning Experience." While acknowledging that learning can happen '24x7' in both formal environments (classroom spaces) and informal environments (residence halls) (p. 6), the University of Guelph identifies eleven "axes of initiative," specific areas in which progress could be made towards improving the student experience. Initiatives were outlined for each of the following axes.

● First-year experience ● Redefining contact hours ● Research-based learning ● Skills designation ● Internationalization of the curriculum ● Civic engagement and experiential learning	● Universal instructional design ● Technology-assisted learning ● Capstone programs ● Supportive learning environment ● Integrated assessment

York University's 2009 *Student Experience Green Paper* develops a useful list of questions from which an inquiry into the student experience can begin (p. 3-4). York identified five factors that impact the student experience: academic, administrative, environmental (physical and cultural), services and support, and social (both on and off campus, student and athletic organizations and the reputation of the institution) (p. 2). Similar to the University of Guelph, York honed in on the first-year experience as a critical time and identified a number of potential actions to consider taking to improve the first-year student experience (learning communities, mandatory advising, midterm grades, integration of support services into courses, etc.) Beyond first year and to improve the student experience in academic settings, initiatives that York considered included mandatory advising for second year students, pedagogy modules for instructors, encouraging faculty-student interaction, integration of research, writing and learning skills into the curriculum, experiential learning, and hybrid courses (p. 6). Outside of the classroom, York listed five ideas for improving the student experience: better integration of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities between departments and faculties, career sessions for graduate students seeking non-academic employment, pan-university peer mentoring, a more developed learning commons (and extend this model to all libraries) and increase and improve student spaces for study, relaxation and recreation (p. 6). Finally, in regards to

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1. In the process of reviewing the literature, the team identified alternative research methods to the standard survey tools normally used to measure levels of student engagement. Please see Appendix B for a summary of these methods.

improving the student experience with support services, initiatives that York considered included: professional development for academic advisors and administrative staff who have contact with students, streamline processes for academic decisions, and ensure that students understand funding supports.

The University of Michigan's "Second Chapter of Change: Renewing Undergraduate Education at the University of Michigan" (2001) recognized some of the University's accomplishments in improving the undergraduate experience. These include a program in which undergraduates collaborated on research with faculty, living-learning programs, a first-year seminar program, community engagement initiatives, inquiry-based teaching and a successful writing centre. However, the university recognized that the undergraduate experience remained disjointed and the various initiatives and programs led by the university did not always result in a completely engaged undergraduate educational experience. The following six goals were established to guide the University's future efforts around improving the undergraduate experience, each accompanied by a list of specific actions to be taken.

1. Make the campus more interconnected, integrated, and permeable (p. 12)
2. Connect students to the community and the world (p. 12)
3. Treat the undergraduate career as a life-course journey, both intellectually and socially (p. 12)
4. Equip undergraduates with good maps and good guides for their journey (p. 13)
5. Create a student community that is diverse, inclusive, adventurous, and self-reflective (p.13)
6. Provide resources and nurture practices that renew the faculty commitment to undergraduate education and enhance student-faculty interaction (p. 13)

Other reports that were read but not fully expanded on in the White Paper include:

- McMaster University (2012) *Forward with Integrity: Student Experience Task Force Position Paper*
- York University (2010) *Building a More Engaged University: Strategic Directions for York University 2010-2020*
- University of Ottawa (2010) *Final Report: Roundtable 4 on the Student Experience*

Each report reinforced the fact that Sheridan is in line with its university counterparts in recognizing that an exceptional and unique student experience can both differentiate us as university enrolments become more competitive and make for a more profitable bottom line. Overall, these reports presented the following themes to improve the student experience:

- recognize the community as a whole affects student learning
- create an engaged community (i.e. increase student engagement opportunities)
- foster closer links between academics and services
- consistently measure and monitor the student experience

The concept of the student experience cannot be examined or understood in isolation. Rather it is a web of complex connections that bind the experience of the student with the

educational organization, including the people who work there, the buildings and outdoor spaces that lend the organization, its physicality and the culture that is created through the interactions between all of these components.

Quality Metrics

Beyond the literature review and best practices research, the team gathered and reviewed internal data elements that were relevant to the student experience including KPI figures (specifically, the recent student engagement questions), program review comments, start of term surveys, College activity participation, etc. This data provides a snapshot of the current student experience, and elements of it, but does not provide a complete picture. Moving forward, quality metrics that will need to be monitored and analyzed closely include the Collegiate Learning Assessment (administered to 4th year degree students in Winter 2012 and to be administered to first year degree students this Fall), NSSE, KPI, and completion rates. The need to understand who our students are and what they expect from their experience at Sheridan is paramount to advancing that experience.

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

The student learning experience is a common thread that joins all of the Engagement Teams. Our students, their experiences and their success are our raison d'etre.

While Sheridan Leadership and the Vision Engagement Teams, in particular, are moving along a journey towards becoming a top-ranked undergraduate teaching university with passion, determination and at an ambitious speed, it is essential to carefully consider the impact each decision has on our students and their experience at Sheridan.

Important to the work of each Engagement Team to understand and consider every decision and each change they recommend directly or indirectly impacts our students and enriches the learning experience. To quote a Dean of Sheridan, the phrase "because it makes it better for our students" should help rationalize every decision we make, at every level of the institution.

The Student Experience Engagement Team submits the following as strategic imperatives to realize an exceptional student experience at Sheridan University:

The Collaborative Imperative & the Exceptional Student Experience:

"Only when everyone on campus, particularly academic affairs and student affairs staff, share the responsibility for student learning will we be able to make significant progress in improving it….it is only by acting cooperatively in the context of common goals, that our accumulated understanding about learning is put to best use".[2]

The student experience challenge that Sheridan faces, today, will not be achieved by insular efforts of individual Faculties, programs or departments. Today's challenge includes an inclusive institution-wide approach, collective problem solving and coordinated efforts that respond to the needs of a very diverse population.

Collaboration is often seen as a means to an end, a tool or method that is employed in order to accomplish a certain task. In the case of the student experience, collaboration must be viewed as an achievement, a goal that all are continually striving to reach and hold themselves accountable to. The critical imperative to an exceptional student experience at Sheridan is the pursuit of a truly collaborative culture, where collaborative behavior is natural within and amongst department and Faculty teams and with students and where delivering on the exceptional student experience is a shared responsibility.

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[2] American Association for Higher Education, et al. (1998) *Powerful Partnerships: A Shared Responsibility for Learning.* **(Online) Available:** http://www.oir.csus.edu/WASC/Resources/PowerfulPartnerships.pdf

Student Success & the Exceptional Student Experience:

To build an exceptional student experience, SEVET believes that Sheridan's Definition of Student Success[3] as a core value or guiding principle, is essential. In 2010, 550 members of the Sheridan community came together to establish a shared and unique definition of Student Success. It is a tangible and foundational tool which has been used across the college, to help each individual member of the community understand the complexity and multiple components of Student Success as desired outcomes, and recognize their contribution to it.

In these first 10 months of Sheridan's Journey, the concept of understanding and assessing the quality of the experience has lead us to looking at an added dimension to the Student Success definition, that is, the Exceptional Student Experience. Student experience adds a new layer and additional dimension to our Student Success definition, building on its strengths and allowing for even deeper inquiry, involving both quantitative and qualitative assessment which will ultimately lead to the delivery of "the best student experience" as promised in *A Vision for Sheridan*.

Developing a new layer to the model below will evolve from examining the student experience holistically. It will be a richer, more meaningful, more complete diagram. The hope is it will be something that everyone in the community can relate to and connect with.

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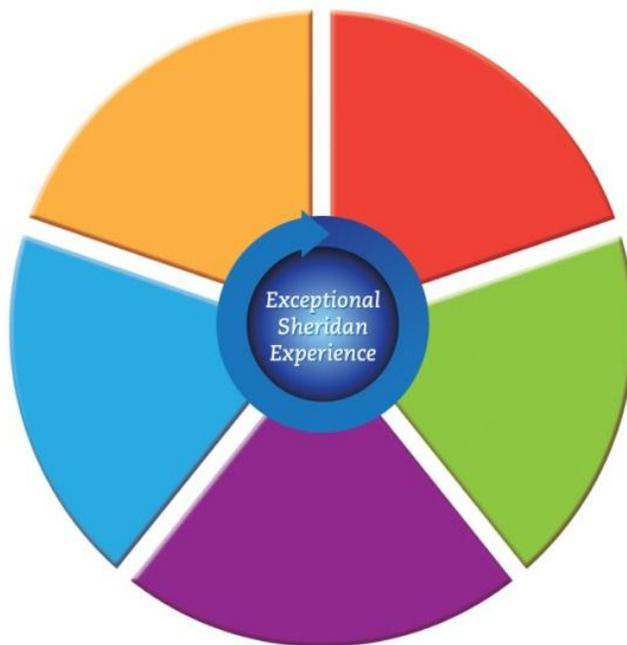
[3] See Appendix D

Teaching and Learning Excellence & the Exceptional Student Experience:

Academic excellence as a core value is at the forefront of the Sheridan experience. The commitment to this value is evident throughout the Vision Engagement Teams and more specifically in Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, PSE Quality, & Applied Research.

Critical to the exceptional student learning experience is excellence in teaching and learning practice. Essential to that, however, is ensuring that the strengths and characteristics of the student population considered and strategies to ensure engaging practices and an engaging environment are embedded in the ongoing quest for Academic Excellence.

As the Student Experience Vision Engagement Team, we focused our attention on the impacts of teaching and learning practices and the conditions that contribute to a high quality student learning experience both inside and outside the classroom. What we found is that there are many effective practices and component parts that Sheridan has in place that contribute to a very positively enhance our students' learning experience (i.e. small class size and hands-on applied learning, new collaborative classrooms, innovative programs and curriculum design and sophisticated tools and processes to support that development, etc.). However, as we aspire to move from a good to great, we are required to consider the quality of the student learning experience in all aspects of academic teaching at learning at Sheridan.

Quality Assessment & the Exceptional Student Experience:

Creating a culture of evidence based practices and a commitment to continuous quality assessment is imperative as we continue our journey to Sheridan University and in our quest to build and maintain the best student experience. The demand for quality assessment has increased at the post-secondary level; our success as an institution will be based on our capacity to collect and analyze data, measure and evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of Sheridan's programs, services, supports and systems and tied to the impact on students, their learning and the quality of the overall student experience. Ultimately, information is power and understanding data and how it connects will support the continuous assessment, improvement and appropriate resources allocation to Sheridan programs and services resulting in an enhanced student experience.

Governance & the Exceptional Student Experience:

Recognizing that students are our primary stakeholders, their active involvement in the institution's governance is critical. The student voice adds value to decision-making, planning and problem solving by bringing an 'on-the-ground' student perspective to life at Sheridan ensuring that student perspective is a part of all discussions. An inclusive process builds student pride, a student's sense of ownership within the community and ensures solutions and decisions are student-focused and made *"because it's better for students"*. Building a governance structure that appropriately allows for student participation and engagement will help us realize our vision. On that note, Sheridan is demonstrating its

value and commitment to students in governance, through the recent work of the Sheridan Academic Council.

Innovation and Creativity & the Exceptional Student Experience:

A *Vision for Sheridan* (2011) recognizes innovation and creativity as core values, values which are clearly demonstrated in the work of the Applied Disciplinary Research and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Engagement Teams. Innovation and creativity at Sheridan continues to set us apart, in terms of our Academic Programs, their curriculum content, delivery, in practices and is evident in the energy that makes us Sheridan. These elements must continue to be deeply intertwined in the student experience, not just for some, but for all.

In formal academic programming, continued emphasis on student-faculty collaboration on disciplinary research projects, in particular ones with strong ties to Sheridan's community and industry partners; improved student learning experience as a result of innovative pedagogy are examples of practices contributing to exceptional student learning experiences.

 Any College initiative related to innovation, creativity and research must simultaneously be conceived of as an initiative to improve the student experience.

Beyond the classroom, a commitment to creativity and innovation must also be encouraged and applied as we reinvent Sheridan student support services, systems and infrastructure and campus life and in order to realize the best student experience.

Internationalization and Global Citizenship & the Exceptional Student Experience:

The world is now our community. Essential to the success of our students and our institution is a student learning experience that includes (but is not limited to) the development of global competence, global citizenship and global sustainability through the internationalization of curriculum, opportunities for placements abroad and within international companies and the recruitment of international students to our campuses.

Essentially, creating a globally aware and socially responsible community will result in an enriched student experience and an essential ingredient to future student success and institutional success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations presented below are based on SEVET's research and connection to the work of the other Engagement Teams, and are designed to advance an environment of engagement and a student first culture that resonates across the institution and in all that we do at Sheridan. They are meant to move Sheridan toward its promise of offering the '*best student experience*'.

1. Develop a culture in which every member of the Sheridan community employs a student-first, 'customer' focus, understands their impact on the student learning experience and the importance of designing unique and memorable experiences for students.

2. Prioritize the student experience in all decision making.

3. Create sustainable systems and processes to support evidence informed decision making, assessment and continuous quality improvement to ensure academic excellence, effective innovation and an exceptional student experience in a rapidly changing world.

4. Foster a sense of <u>shared</u> responsibility for an exceptional student experience; facilitate stronger, strategic, collaborative and connected relationships amongst all units of the institution, accountable to work collectively, communicate effectively, share resources, and support each other to maximize their impact on students

5. Nurture a lifelong connection to the Sheridan Community.

6. Build a sense of pride in the institution by building the 'Sheridan Story' and sharing/celebrating experiences, stories and traditions that reflect the soul of the institution.

7. Foster active learning environments that provide opportunities for engagement, interactions and collaboration

8. Create channels for two-way communication between the institution and students to allow for increased student agency.

9. Facilitate, encourage and support active and meaningful student participation/ involvement in decision-making, planning, research, events, activities, etc.

10. Gain a deeper understanding of our students, their expectations, their needs and their experiences in order to educate and support diverse student population and the uniqueness of each student.

11. Build a supportive campus environment where communication, advising and services to students are student centred and supportive of student success – all should assist students to find answers, problem solve and help them to make informed decisions.

12. Create intellectual and social gathering spaces that ignite the imagination and encourage individual or collaborative contact

CONCLUSION

The notion that every student will have the opportunity to enjoy a full and rich experience at Sheridan is not a new one. However, as Sheridan embarks on its journey to becoming a top-ranked and unique undergraduate teaching university, we are collectively committed to differentiate ourselves and gain a competitive edge by making the student learning experience exceptional and unique, reflecting the soul of this institution.

All of the recommendations point towards developing a more engaged, connected and collaborative community as an essential ingredient.

We, the Student Experience Vision Engagement Team suggested the following next steps:

- To continued research related to the elements of an exceptional and evolving student learning experience within the context of a rapidly changing world.

- To be provided with opportunities for further connection, more wholesome sharing and collaborative planning with each and all Engagement Teams.

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Appendix A – Student Experience Definition

An examination of the meaning of the specific elements in our student experience definition will allow a fuller understanding of what we mean.

Academic

Academic and professional achievement and a sense of personal accomplishment effectively prepare students for their adventures beyond Sheridan. Academic success is a critical factor influencing the student experience as it ensures students have access to the best instructors, effective resources and creative and modern teaching and learning methods.

Developmental

A student's personal growth as a human being is a priority for the student experience as it helps shape the next generation of citizens who will be charged with making the world a better place. Fostering a holistic environment that encourages students to engage in discourse relevant to society and examine critical issues such as diversity, oppression, and local and global challenges will encourage students to develop into active and participating global citizens. Students who become involved learn skills such as how to collectively solve problems through collaboration and cooperation.

Social

We must reach a point where students do not separate "academic" and "social"; the most powerful results will come from making education a social experience. If we can encourage students to really collaborate and engage with others, without physical boundaries, their overall college experience will be full of richness. To achieve this goal, we must maintain and improve an outstanding academic reputation, and Sheridan must also boast a strong name for social experiences that cover a range of student interests and backgrounds.

Creative

Today's knowledge economy demands creativity and innovation. We need a learning environment that can meet that challenge. For Sheridan, meeting this challenge means providing interesting, well-equipped, and comfortable learning spaces for students; more diverse and active learning opportunities; and ample resources designed to stimulate creative thinking and collaboration. For students, it is a vital that they encounter an inventive learning atmosphere that initiates a life-long passion for learning, a desire for boundless wonderment, and the allowance for self-directed learning in order to follow their interests and passions.

Everyday Experiences

This final pathway encompasses everything that is remaining and essential to the full

educational experience. In a day-to-day capacity, the same physical place can be mundane to some while challenging and exotic to others. The experience represents different things to different people and these are linked to who you are, where you are, where you have been, where you are from, and what you are there for. Moreover, this experience is lived, hinged on sensory engagement with the location – what is seen, heard, felt and tasted – as well as how one comprehends and internalizes these things. While it could be argued that sight is the dominant sense, what you see and how you comprehend the sights in a place are influenced by your expectations and the feelings these evoke in you.

Appendix B – An Exploration of Research Methods

To date, many investigations of student engagement, a component of the student experience, have been completed through the use of surveys: e.g. National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), Ontario College Student Engagement Survey (OCSES), and the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE), to name just a few.

A less explored avenue to understanding the student experience is the use of observational, ethnographic and qualitative research methods. Indeed a number of studies exist, each usually focusing on a particular component of the student experience or on a small slice of a student population. Below is an exploration of a sample of these studies to provide an overview of the different types of research methods used. Most of the following studies used a sample size of approximately 40-60 students.

Andres, Andruske and Hawkey (1996) emphasize the importance of the voice of the student in studies of student experiences and utilized qualitative research methods such as focus groups, interviews and student journaling exercises in an attempt to better understand the student experience. Employing "active research" methods, they identified participants as co-researchers who "participate collaboratively in the project based on their interests as first year students" and identify " issues that concerned them about their personal lives and/or the institution, program practices, resources and the policies that hindered or enhanced their experiences" (11). In addition, the researchers interviewed administrators and faculty members as part of the study.

Cashmore, Green, & Scott (2010) collected data about the student experience using "free-form" video diaries and complemented this data with focus groups to fill in missing details. Students were asked to record 5 minutes each week and share their experiences as students. "The project represents a unique example of a student-led multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1998) and thus transcends the methodological limitations of conducting research into the student experience in institutional settings" (para. 4). Rather than answering a series of set questions (decided upon by educators and administrators), in this type of research, the student sets the agenda and shares the information that THEY feel is important about their own student experience. Since the students recorded video diaries weekly (in reality sometimes less frequently), the result was a longitudinal picture of their student experience over an entire year.

Larkin & Harrison (2011) asked first-year undergraduate psychology students first to complete a questionnaire, expressing their future goals, expectations for the time they planned to spend studying and their plans for concurrent employment (alongside their studies). Participants were then asked to write daily journals describing their academic routine, social activities and employment over a sixteen week period, their first semester at university.   The authors then compared the questionnaire data with the diary data to assess engagement.

Jefferies & Hyde (2009 & 2010) used video and audio diaries and had their participants record a week-long diary every six months for an eighteen month period. In between, researchers conducted telephone interviews to clarify points about the previously collected

data. In addition, focus groups were convened at different points throughout the studies. Qualitative data assessment included colour-coding the transcripts of the diaries by research theme and the creation of concept maps for each of the participants, representing their insights on their learning process.

Though not itself a study of the student experience, Cotton, Stokes and Cotton's 2010 article, *Using Observational Methods to Research the Student Experience* offers a number of examples for observational study. Traditionally used in anthropology as a method to study "foreign" cultures, observational research (where the researcher neutrally observes) or participant observation (where the researcher engages to some degree in what they are observing) usually takes the form of field notes and recordings of a certain population of people over time. The authors emphasize that "a crucial part of observation [...] is to make the familiar strange" (464). Simply put, this means that unless the researcher makes a concerted effort, key actions and observations can go unnoticed because the researcher simply takes them for granted.[4] The authors suggest a number of areas in which observation or participant observation methods could be employed including a holistic, ethnographic[5] study of the day-to-day lives of the people at an educational institution or in a certain department (464),

Another method which could shed light on the everyday student experience is the service blueprinting technique originally designed by Schostack in 1984 (as cited in Baranova, Morrison & Mutton, 2011, p.123). Baranova, Morrison & Mutton describe a service blueprint as "a detailed map of the service process which allows for in-depth analysis of the customer experience during each stage of the service delivery" (2011, p. 123). By examining and documenting everything from exactly which actions a student takes (filling out a form, searching for information) to who they deal with throughout the process (frontline staff) to what the noise level is like in the building or room in which they are physically located, an image emerges about what the overall student experience is like. According to Palmer, this technique also provides the "fail points" (e.g. excessive wait times, unfamiliar jargon, etc.) which are barriers for the student and in turn impacts the perception of quality (as cited in Baranova, Morrison & Mutton 2008, p. 125). Ultimately this technique aims to put the student at the centre of service design or service change.

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[4] Consider the example (not from Cotton et.al) of subway commuters in Toronto, Ontario. Most commuters understand the social convention on the escalators that you "ride right" and "move left". If you wish to ride up the escalator, you stand to the right side and if you wish to continue walking up the escalator as it moves, you walk to the left. This is very familiar practice to subway commuters and if a researcher studying commuting behaviour in Toronto is familiar enough with this practice he/she may fail to note it, even though it is a hallmark behaviour of this particular population.

[5] Referring to the study and systematic documentation of a particular human culture.

Appendix C - A Student Typology

In attempt to capture the diversity, complexity and individuality of the student experience, Jary and Lebeau (2009) utilized Dubet's student typology developed by studying French students in the 1980s and 1990s. According to Dubet (as summarized in Jary and Lebeau 2009)

The student experience can be understood through the following three dimensions:

● the nature of the personal project (e.g. pursuing a profession, getting a degree)

● the degree of integration in the university life

● the level of intellectual engagement with the subject

Jary and Lebeau adapted Dubet's typology and constructed eight student types (701) summarized in the table below. Different combinations of both positive and negative values on each of the three dimensions serve to define each student type.

Type	Definition + / -	Example
Archetypical Student	Project + Engagement + Integration +	The "ideal" student has a clear project and is both engaged and integrated. Likely involved in campus life, interacts with instructors and is both interested and motivated by studies. Deep learners.
The Engaged Non-Traditional Experience	Project + Engagement + Integration -	Mature students with high expectations and standards for their project/subject may experience low integration and at times, may feel like giving up.
Two Forms of Strategic Engagement	Project + Engagement - Integration + or -	Motivated by career aspirations (project) but not necessarily the academic subject (engagement). May or may not be involved in campus life. Surface learners.
Open Minded Engagement	Project - Engagement + Integration +	Engaged with subject and integrated in department/campus life but does not have a particular project. Does not have a clear career path. Deep learner.

Detached Engagement	Project - Engagement + Integration -	Engaged by subject matter but marginalized. Critical thinkers.
Brand Seeking Orientation	Project - Engagement - Integration +	Influenced strongly by the university brand, but has no clear project and has low engagement with field of study. Strategic surface learners. Interested in doing well and getting a degree from a "good university."
Case of Anomy	Project - Engagement - Integration -	The opposite of the "ideal" student. Likely to drop-out. May have made a wrong choice or be experiencing "socio-cultural barriers" (709)

APPENDIX D – Sheridan's Definition of Student Success

Sheridan recognizes that Student Success is unique to each individual student.

Our shared definition encompasses the following:

Academic and professional achievement and a sense of personal accomplishment; effectively prepared for next steps beyond Sheridan

Identifying or discovering career and personal goals and direction

The mastering of skills and capabilities within the student's chosen discipline

Student Success at Sheridan

Experience a positive journey, filled with incremental milestones and successes

The development of the whole person which includes intellectual, personal, creative and social development

An ignited passion for learning

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