

Student Affairs Committee
BMCC-CUNY Academic Senate
End of Year Report for 2019-2020

July 23, 2020

Chair: Maureen T. Matarese

Representative to the Executive Committee: Maureen T. Matarese

Secretary: Laurie Lomask

Members: Arthur Cain, VP Marva Craig, Benjamin Haas, Erik Freas, Maureen Matarese, Laurie Lomask, Serine Ndiaye, Colin Persaud

This report will summarize

- 1) Existing initiatives
- 2) New initiatives
- 3) Recommendations for future initiatives and attention

1. Existing initiatives carried over from AY 2018-2019:

A. Starfish-Early Alert

The Student Affairs committee continued to facilitate feedback on the Starfish Early Alert system. In the fall, we contacted Assistant Dean for Academic Support Services Janice Zummo regarding the roll-out of the Starfish Early Alert system. Dean Zummo, John Huie, and Marcos Medina attended our September 4, 2019 meeting, and they reported that after last year, there were changes made to the system based on faculty feedback. This semester began a campus-wide rollout of Starfish. During the fall and spring semesters, we worked with their team and encouraged faculty to provide feedback to the team. We look forward to continuing our work with them this year.

B. First Generation/Panther Partner program

At the October 2nd 2019 meeting, Rahana Belle-Jerome from New Student Programs spoke to committee members about the First Generation/Panther Partner program that pairs first-semester students with professional staff mentors. The program intends to increase support to first-generation students, and they sought Student Affairs for help in recruitment. Professor Lomask wrote yet another email to BMCC faculty and staff inviting them to participate. We were informed that this email generated nearly 200 responses from faculty, administration, and staff! We look forward to continuing our work with Rahana and the Panther Partners this year.

C. Islamophobia in at BMCC.

Prior to my becoming chair two years ago, the Student Affairs Committee was made aware of instances of Islamophobia on campus, and then Senate Chair Sangeeta Bishop and the Executive Committee tasked the Student Affairs committee with addressing these issues through an event. When I became chair, the Student Affairs committee invited

members from the Muslim Student Association (March 6, 2019) to several committee meetings to discuss the larger issue and to come up with ways to help the community together. We also met with members of the Equity Task Force, Professors Soniya Munshi and Patricia Mathews, and Counseling faculty Jim Blake, who originally informed the college about the discriminatory actions. The committee and the students decided there was a need to create an event that would both draw in and educate non-Muslim students while also supporting the Muslim student body. November 4th, 2019 we held the event: *Kismet, Ms. Marvel, and the Evolution of the Muslim Superhero* with Professors A. David Lewis and Ameena Ghaffar-Kucher. Students from the MSA reported feeling that the event was supportive and interesting. They particularly valued the contribution of Professor Ameena Ghaffar-Kucher, a Muslim professor-of-color from University of Pennsylvania. Colleagues who attended also reported that they learned a great deal from this event.

Many thanks to Erik Freas, Benjamin Haas, and Laurie Lomask for all their hard work on this successful event.

We continued to hear from and work with the BMCC MSA on various issues over the course of the academic year, and we look forward to continuing that work.

2. New Initiatives

A. Probation and Retention of Students:

Dean Christopher Shults attended our December 4th, 2019 meeting to discuss the issue of probation and retention. We were so grateful for his time, and we hope to continue working with him and his team. He informed us that cohort programs are second-highest indicator of student success, and we discussed the possibility of a proposal for a cohort program for students on academic probation as well as how to reach out to Black and Latino men early-on in first semester. We had hoped to meet with Dean Shults again after Designing for Success recommendations were finalized; however, given the slowdown with Covid, we were unable to meet with him and his team prior to the semester ending.

That said, Benjamin Haas took leadership on developing a panther-partners-like cohort group for students identified as “at promise” before entering BMCC. We drew up criteria as a team, which was sent to the appropriate Designing team via Catarina Mata.

B. Free menstrual supplies for all menstruating individuals on BMCC Campus

In our August 29, 2018 meeting we discussed providing free menstrual supplies to all menstruating individuals. VP Craig and Scott Anderson worked with the Student Affairs committee to ensure that supplies extended beyond the Women’s Center. They are now freely available in multiple places across the main campus, including the Women’s Center, the Health Center, Single Stop, and the BMCC Food Pantry. However, they appear to only be available on an emergency basis, which some faculty members feel does not appropriately mitigate the stigma of having to “out” oneself on campus for emergency menstrual supplies.

D. Fighting discrimination against Asian students (and faculty and staff)

In our February 5th, 2020 meeting the committee was made aware that some of the Asian students on campus were reporting discrimination due to the emerging Covid-19 pandemic. The committee rallied together to coordinate an event on March 4th, 2020 that drew faculty experts together from Allied Health, Health Education, Nursing, Science, Ethnic Studies, Linguistics, and Counseling, all of whom presented on aspects of the pandemic. The Students Affairs committee would like to especially thank Marva Craig, Jennifer Delfino, Judy Eng, Jose Fernandez Romero, Everett Flannery, Neda Hajizadeh, Nurse (Penny) Penelope Jordan Lesley Rennis, Linta Varghese, and Erwin Wong for their hard work in putting together this event. Thanks also goes out to Media services who provided tech support and recorded the event and to Manny Romero's team for getting the video posted for our students. Students and faculty alike found the event useful and supportive.

E. Student issues during quarantine:

Our meetings in the Spring consisted of being apprised of student concerns such as: technology issues (some software not working on certain computers, students without technological skills, likewise Chromebooks and iPads may not be sufficient for certain assignments), privacy issues when using major corporate software, pedagogical concerns of online learning (such as no interaction or spontaneity), workload increase from some professors, students' varied home situations, lack of quiet study space, the learning curve for students when their professors use too many different platforms for distance learning, and screen fatigue.

Dean Zummo joined our April 29th, 2020 meeting, and she informed us that while faculty would receive the "in danger of failing" option on Starfish, when that flag is checked only the advisor is informed of the severity of the concern. We wondered whether this change, which surely reduces stress on the students, could be made permanent, particularly given what we know about trauma-informed pedagogy and the traumatic experiences and challenges our students face daily.

3. Recommendations for next year's Committee:

1. Will we curate/sponsor a student event this year, and if so—what?
 - a. Covid-related?
 - b. Tech/distance-related?
 - c. Black-lives matter, Pro-Black, Anti-Racism focus? Over the summer Jim Blake mentioned our collaborating on Anti-Racism, Pro-Black events for students, so I encourage the next chair to get in touch with him early in the semester.
2. Follow up on the retention "at promise" cohort program
3. Follow up with Dean Shults on Designing for Success recommendations for student success
4. Follow up on the necessity of security free menstrual supplies on campus for all menstruating people
5. Follow up with Dean Zummo and the Starfish team about this Academic Year
6. Follow up with Rahana Belle-Jerome about Panther Partners

7. Concerns that student workload online is more substantial than in person workload. How will they cope? Are will still pushing 15 to finish during this?
8. Registration: it appears that registering students for classes did not work smoothly this summer/fall. How can we improve this situation for the spring?
9. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of having a dedicated student from SGA attending our meetings. We strongly request for a speedier process of assigning students to committees and more dedicated student attendance to the committee.
10. We intend to push for the committee size we had last year

This committee accomplished so much this year. Boundless gratitude to Arthur Cain, VP Marva Craig, Benjamin Haas, Erik Freas, Laurie Lomask, Serine Ndiaye, and Colin Persaud.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen T. Matarese
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