

Introduction and Background

Century College holds student success to be core to our mission. To best assist our students, Century looks to develop the whole person, which includes many facets. This concept paper is designed to address how Century College might develop the whole person by recognizing, supporting, and developing students, employees, and providing community enrichment and social sustainability.

The college's focus and definitions of student success means that we must consider many factors that impact that success – economics, childcare, housing, mental health, racial inequity, etc. Developing the whole student is not just activities in the classroom, but also considering what barriers they may face outside of the classroom that impact their ability to succeed. In addition, developing the whole person also suggests we consider not only the specializations in each of our degrees, but the 'breadth' of these degrees – ex, the quality and numbers of liberal arts courses, how technical, liberal arts, sciences, arts, and extra-curricular events combine to create an experience for our students that engages them through multiple avenues and work with common purpose to educate together.

Developing the whole person also includes understanding and supporting opportunities (public events, extra-curricular and curricular programming) for students and community to discover and share their individual stories and create and explore their unique narratives inside the classroom, and throughout the college community. Discovering, cultivating the creation of, and sharing one's unique narrative helps to build resiliency, give agency, and builds an open culture of respect, inclusiveness and support so crucial to student success and thriving.

Another factor to student success is recognizing the need to adequately support faculty, staff and administration. This may be through employee development and support. Rummel and MacDonald (2016) "approaching student retention in a holistic manner suggests that the focus of universities should be on adequate training for all support staff that have interactions with their student population. This training is not just on the knowledge of the job, but also on the interactions with their "consumers", the students" We must invest in the development and retention of our employees. This investment in employees will also drive employee engagement thus driving work performance.

"You cannot pour out of an empty cup" is a widely used phrase to communicate the importance of self-care in order to continue helping others effectively. Many professionals in higher education find themselves feeling overwhelmed and stressed out trying to fulfill the demands of their jobs. As a result, self-care seems to be less of a priority among faculty and staff in higher education (Lo and Herman, 2017; Mark and Smith, 2012). Stress in the workplace has been studied extensively and research shows that stress affects job performance and job satisfaction, which in turn is costly to organizations (Lo and Herman, 2017). Helping staff and faculty manage stress effectively could contribute to student success, increased productivity, and overall job satisfaction.

Lessons Learned

Student attrition, staff/faculty turnover, competition from other higher education institutions and technological advances are higher education realities that Century College faces on a daily basis. To

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impact those factors, it is necessary for employees to be at their best. Although a review of research shows that wellness of employees in higher education institutions is not extensively studied (Lo and Herman, 2017), workplace wellness programs are more commonplace in corporate organizations (Melnyk, Amaya, Szalacha, & Hoying, 2016). These wellness programs are designed to address the physical health of employees (Lo and Herman, 2017). However, addressing stress requires a holistic approach that considers the multidimensional aspects of wellness, teaching coping strategies and using interventions provided (Herman and Lo, 2017; Meyers and van Woerkom, 2017).

Over the past five years, overall employee headcount at Century College has declined by 19.5% (164), with most of the positions being in the service/support staff area. In addition, Century has seen an increase in employee turnover, from 8.6% in 2014 to 12.7% in 2019. Century College has felt the impact of the changing demographic of its employees and recognized the need to improve its onboarding process with new staff, faculty and administration, as well as improving its employee development as employees absorb roles previously held by others. It is believed that building continuity for faculty and staff can have tremendous impacts on student success.

Student attrition can be caused by a wide variety of reasons. The first year of college can be very stressful to students due to changes in their social life (separation from family, friends and familiar social settings) and their academic challenges (more advanced coursework). If left unaddressed, these changes may lead to greater mental health challenges such as depression and anxiety, as well as physical – unhealthy change in diet and lack of sleep. For the focus of developing the whole person, Century College attempts to provide supports to improve student's ability to succeed. Resources are needed to fulfill those support needs, including reducing or eliminating concerns surrounding housing, childcare, mental health, racial inequities, etc.

Trends

Employee Data

Minnesota State provides data on employment trends within the system. Overall, Minnesota State has seen an increase of 2.4% employee turnover from 2014 to 2019, while Century College's trend has been an increase of 4.2% for the same period.

Student Data

Demographics

Demographic data regarding Century College students reports a decline in student enrollment, peaking in 2011 with 7,879 full-year equivalent (FYE) students to its lowest in 2017 of 5,978 FYE and remained steady through 2019. Though there has been a decrease in total student headcount and FYE, the distribution of students by age has remained relatively steady over the past ten years. The largest student population continues to be students under the age of 25 (64%), with students ages 25-39 making up 29%. Century has seen a decrease of students ages 40-59, from 10% in 2010 to 6% in 2019.

As population grows it is likely that the demographic makeup of Washington and Ramsey county will continue to change based on past data, indicating a different student make up than what is currently at Century College. Even with reasonable stable/small growth in the college age population there is a high

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percent of non-college goers while the percent of HS grads enrolling at Century is stagnant (MN Demographic Center).

Based on demographic data and various surveys conducted, we understand the following about Centry students:

- **Working Students** – from a survey in 2019, approximately 72% of Century students work at least 11 hours per week in addition to going to school.
- **Childcare Needs** – from a survey in 2017, approximately 62% of Century Students find it difficult or very difficult to find adequate childcare.
- **Online Education** – The number of students taking online courses has increased steadily from 3,957 students in 2010 to 6,531 in 2019
- **Food Insecurities** -
 - A 2018 college student health survey report from Boyton Health at the University of Minnesota reports “More than one-half (53.4%) of students at Century College fall within the overweight or obese/extremely obese category. This is based on self-reported height and weight”
 - “Nearly one in four (23.1%) Century students report worrying about whether their food would run out before they had money to buy more. Nearly one in five (19.1%) report experiencing a food shortage and lacking money to buy more within the past 12 months”
- **Mental Health & Wellness** –
 - A 2018 college student health survey report from Boyton Health at the University of Minnesota reports, “Among Century College students who have obtained non-emergency mental health service, 3.4% received that care at the college.”
 - “Among Century students, 40.1% report being diagnosed with depression within their lifetime, and 14.1% report being diagnosed with depression within the past 12 months. Females report being diagnosed with depression at higher rates than males.”
 - “Among Century students, 52.5% report being diagnosed with at least one mental health condition within their lifetime, and 22.8% report being diagnosed with at least one mental health condition within the past 12 months. Females report being diagnosed with a mental health condition within their lifetime and within the past 12 months at higher rates than males.”
 - “Approximately two-fifths (41.7%) of Century students report that they are unable to manage their stress levels”

Mental Health and Wellness National Trends

This section examines areas related to the mental health of college and university students. Recent research shows that young adults in the United States have relatively high rates of mental health problems compared to other age groups. Among 18- to 25-year-olds, 22.1% have had a mental illness (i.e., a diagnosable mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder of sufficient duration to meet diagnostic criteria specified within the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV) in the past year, 5.9% have had a serious mental illness (i.e., a mental illness that results in functional impairment), 10.9% have had a major depressive episode, and 8.8% have had serious thoughts of suicide (CBHSQ, 2017).

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Approximately one in eight (12.9%) young adults ages 18–25 have received treatment for a mental health problem in the previous year (CBHSQ, 2017)."

Strategic Themes

Student Experience & Support (how we support students – address non-academic risk factors: childcare, transportation, work issues, mental health)

- How can Century maintain current resources and implement additional resources (financial and structural) for students and community? Search for methods, processes, or ideas that are high impact and low cost. It is possible that we discover some methods that actually save money in the long run.
- Can Century build community partnerships to share the responsibility in presenting a ‘whole person’ philosophy and working model to our community? If this can work in our College Community, can this work in other communities of people i.e. businesses, civic groups, etc.?
- Online classes and scheduling, effective strategies and success assessment of those offerings
- Century College values an open culture of respect and inclusiveness that is built on empowering students to discover, cultivate, and make decisions and express themselves in ways that their individuality can be incorporated into a unique college experience.
- Responding to the changing demographics of our students (high school graduates, single parents, adult learners), including being prepared to support their needs.
- Developmental reading/writing skills for incoming students of color.
- Continual assessment of the changing characteristics of incoming students – academic preparedness, economic circumstances, support systems outside of school, mental health, etc. to be responsive to those factors in student success.

Employee Retention, Development, & Success

- Value and invest in employee development through financial and other resources.
- Create opportunities for shared (student, employee, community) experiences – college-wide events, convocation?
- Create opportunities for employee advancement and contributions – that may or might not be extra-contractual.
- Review how Century College advances and recognizes leadership, talent, and innovative thinking in employees.
- Increase employee engagement and decision-making with a focus on retention and success

Community Enrichment & Social Sustainability

- Discover other similarly sized colleges that do ‘whole person’ philosophy well, then research, partner, or model our processes/philosophy after those ‘role model’ institutions.
- Support the value of equity through better understanding and respect for the individual circumstances that each of our community members originate from, and how that impacts their success.
- A student success as well as employee success models good practice in our broader community.

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- Work to transform Century College into a community leader in the application of wellness practices for our community (all people of Century College).

Short-Term Tasks

A number of short-term tasks can be accomplished to support developing the whole person concept.

- **Mental Health** - create or enhance existing resources to support mental health of our students, employees, and community
- **Class Scheduling** – evaluate class scheduling to meet the needs of existing and future student populations. An existing Strategic Schedule workgroup has been working on guidelines to improve scheduling.
- **Engagement Impact Analysis** - Impact analysis of extra-curricular programs, creative fields, arts (writing, fine art, music, theatre, etc) on student success, or campus climate of inclusiveness and support - the arts empower students to discover and cultivate their own experiences. This in turn provides a unique story and when shared creates an awareness of diverse cultures, points of view, and the broadness of the Century College experience – often helping marginalized students and employees claim a voice. This facilitates inclusiveness and reveals diversity and can break-down barriers to student and employee success.
- **Employee Retention** - Analyze factors of employee turnover to develop resources and strategies to reduce turnover, as well as analyze structures to create opportunities for employee growth and advancement.
- **Student Retention** – analyze factors of student attrition to develop resources and strategies to reduce attrition.

Long-Term Tasks

Long range tasks to develop the whole person include:

- Childcare, transportation, food options
- AASC, Unions, Student Senate/Leaders/Clubs - cooperation toward mission and data gathering for success.
- Create metrics to measure the impact of liberal arts classes, and electives within programs and degrees on student success in those fields.
- Find institutions that are practicing what we hope to accomplish – identify promising practices that may be replicated or adapted
- Importance of onboarding and professional development available to all employees
- Implement strategies to support students, employees and community for the development of the whole person