Stony Brook University
The President's Council of Student Advisors
Report Summary for 2016-17

Revised Methods for Understanding and Improving School Spirit and Pride at Stony Brook University

While studying at the collegiate level can be a rigorous and stressful experience, it can offer great opportunities for students to develop meaningful relationships with peers, mentors, and other members of the university community. Particularly, a student's perception of their college experience may be assessed by their level of school spirit or pride, with a broad definition across individuals. Thus, academics have worked for years to develop evidence-based methods to study school spirit and pride. While the Council identified a lack of consistency in the literature addressing the topic, some authors in the field were useful in clarifying the aspects of student life most likely to correlate with school pride, such as athletics, social interactions, and the relationships between faculty and students.

This project tried to understand factors contributing to or detracting from school spirit at Stony Brook and to develop novel methods to promote such spirit. There were three principle areas of focus: **1)** defining school spirit in the context of the Stony Brook University community, **2)** identifying spirit-driving campus events and traditions requiring development, **3)** formalizing tangible and feasible plans to improve school spirit.

For our analysis, we polled student opinions on athletics to see if it is a proper measure for school spirit. The overwhelming response from students in focus groups and surveys indicated that they were not interested in athletics. Instead, they believed that school spirit stemmed from their participation in extracurricular activities and attending other events held on campus.

Students were also polled on their opinions on how to improve school spirit by seeing what additional events they would likely attend. Some ideas that gained traction with many of the respondents included inviting guest speakers, holding additional cultural events, and having competitions and carnivals. A majority of students agreed to pay a larger fee if it meant hosting a bigger event on campus.

One important implementation for creating more school spirit on campus is utilizing an app, which can be utilized on smartphone devices that is convenient and accessible to all students. There is currently an app called Corq that can be used by students in a similar manner. It uses GPS navigation from your smartphone device to track your location. Users select the college they attend, sign in using their college accounts, and can access all of the upcoming events on campus. Another suggestion is to host a school spirit symposium where students, faculty, and administration are invited to attend in order to create an integrative environment for increasing school pride. This can be a useful tool in raising the school spirit of the students attending Stony Brook by providing

an opportunity to network and develop a sense of belonging in the university through relationship building with other students and faculty. This symposium would be a retreat with both faculty and students where issues surrounding the campus are addressed by faculty and students. Both sides work together to find solutions that would be beneficial to everyone on campus. Lastly, we believe that departments across the country should make it a priority to establish standards for collecting, storing, and sharing data. A campus-wide central repository where departments could deposit de-identified data for accurate back-logging and easy future-use would facilitate data use across the campus. This data could be used for an array of investigations and would have been useful for projects such as that pursued by this and previous COSA cohorts, importantly to assess how the university has changed over time. Not only would this help inter-departmental collaboration on data analysis (allowing investigators to know what data already exists, to guide future questions), but could also represent an impressive showing of transparency with student data.

Overall, school spirit for students seems to be largely defined by how they are able to affect the campus and what activities they participate in. By providing more outlets for participation in their specific interests, we can increase students' perspective of school spirit to help promote a unified community.