

## DEPAUW STUDENT GOVERNMENT

WHITE PAPER NO. 3

*A white paper outlining concerns with the current Sophomore Experience model, recognition of improvements, and suggestions for further consideration.*

### **Introduction:**

In accordance with the trend of other leading universities across the nation, DePauw University has taken substantial initiative to improve the “Sophomore Experience.” With the introduction of the Sophomore Institute in 2012 and the Hubbard Center for Student Engagement’s advising bar, DePauw has made a considerable effort to help students develop concrete means of networking, both on campus and with alumni, as well as encouraging students to maintain concrete learning goals and sustainable four-year plans. Throughout the past two sessions of the Sophomore Institute, the program has grown to incorporate other concerns besides networking, such as resume development, exploring majors, “off-campus and community service opportunities,” and interview tactics. The Hubbard Center for Student Engagement has also expanded to meet student needs and demands pertaining to the aforementioned growth. Despite this collaboration, DePauw’s new Sophomore Experience model is still met with apprehension and concern.

In response to these student and faculty concerns, DePauw Student Government met with Dean Raj Bellani, Director of Experiential Learning and Career Planning, in order to discuss pressing issues with the current model and tangible ways to immediately address these issues. This white paper is the culmination of this dialogue and will serve two purposes: it will address the changes that are “in-the-works” and will be implemented in the next few weeks, and it will also provide an outline of further concerns students and faculty would like to see addressed in the long-term.

We would like to extend our thanks to Mr. Raj Bellani for his initiative, enthusiasm, and cooperation in addressing these concerns, as we recognize his commitment to DePauw University’s values and mission.

### **Sophomore Year: A Turning Point in the DePauw Experience**

For DePauw students, sophomore year is a time of great change, growth, and personal development. Students are encouraged to explore different areas of study and are required to declare a major during spring semester. This is the time many students begin planning off-campus experiences such as internships, independent studies, and study abroad experiences while others ambitiously choose these opportunities to be executed during this year. Students begin to think about employment, and actively pursue summer internships and job experiences. Resources should be made available through the Sophomore Institute and the Hubbard Center for Student Engagement to aid students in these various pursuits. In accordance with student and faculty concerns, Mr. Bellani has agreed to the following changes, which are either “in-the-works,” or will be implemented in upcoming weeks:

- Make the Hubbard Center advising more accessible to students. This will include implementing an “Ask the Hubbard Center” system modeled after the successful “Ask a Librarian” live chat function of the Roy O. West Library website. This will be powered by Simplicity, the company that runs TigerTracks and Horizons. Implementing a general Hubbard Center email address is another way to address student questions and concerns.
- Send out updated newsletters and checklists to students participating in not only the
- Sophomore Institute program, but also internship, externship, and study abroad programs. It is often difficult for students to access a clear-cut checklist for their particular plan, and this information should be generated and shared with students as soon as possible.
- Update the Hubbard Center website with clearer announcements and checklists that allow students to find information like deadlines more easily.

### **The DePauw Experience: Networking and Balanced Initiative**

As reiterated by Mr. Bellani, DePauw students tend to be “major-centric,” meaning that most students believe that the selection of a major will largely dictate which jobs and graduate opportunities will be available post graduation. This is not usually the case, as liberal arts students across the nation are prepared for and do take jobs that may not directly relate to the content of their major, but may rather pertain to particular skills developed through the liberal arts experience. With that being said, it has become increasingly important for DePauw students to create polished resumes, to develop interview skills and tactics, and to participate in multidisciplinary programs that combine a variety of interests. As stated before regarding the Sophomore Institute and the Hubbard Center for Student Engagement, DePauw Student Government recognizes that several programs already exist to address these concerns. We also recognize the administration and faculty’s concern that DePauw students may not be taking advantage of these opportunities due to a lack of student initiative, but after meeting with Mr. Bellani, we feel that improvements can be made to these programs that will address the concerns of all parties involved. Regarding these concerns, Mr. Bellani has agreed to work with DePauw Student Government towards the following goals:

- Create virtual resume, interview, and alumni workshops. In this online forum format, students will be able to access the resources they need for both creating polished resumes and networking in a convenient setting for students. Students would be more willing and enthusiastic to participate in these sessions if it would not conflict with their already hectic schedules.
- Have academic departments hold events inviting students to explore the different majors available in each department. This would include conversations with recent alumni from the department, discussions about career options, and handouts explaining the requirements for each major represented. Academic departments will now hold receptions for recently declared majors in order to welcome them into the major and help them get acclimated.
- Academic departments should have handouts and information available

regarding study abroad programs and other off-campus learning opportunities for students to engage in that pertain directly to the student's field of study.

- Rework the Sophomore Institute program so that it is a more sustained initiative. There should not only be one Sophomore Institute forum before classes begin in the Fall semester, but rather a sustained series of events for students to attend throughout the entire sophomore year. Events could include but not be limited to forums, lectures, and workshops. With these sustained programs, there may even be a way to award students academic credit for their Sophomore Experience.
- Allow students access to the Alumni Mobile Directory app for mobile phones. This will open up alumni contact information for students to use for networking purposes. Seniors will have access in March and all other students will have access around April.
- Implement a Management Accelerated Program in conjunction with the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University. This program will be designed specifically for liberal arts students, not just economics or Management Fellows and will offered Winter Term 2015.

#### **Further Suggestions:**

Mr. Bellani, those in charge of the Sophomore Institute, and the Hubbard Center for Student Engagement have been cooperative in addressing DePauw Student Government's concerns with the Sophomore Experience. We look forward to further discussions with the faculty and administrators on the Sophomore Year Experience Committee that has been formed. In an effort to continue this discussion, DePauw Student Government would like to outline suggestions for long-term further consideration:

#### ***The Hubbard Center for Student Engagement needs to increase its staffing.***

As students are expected to generate polished resumes, participate in a multitude of off and on campus programming, network with current students and alumni, and develop crucial interview skills, they need the resources to accomplish these tasks. Students should not feel lost or misguided in these processes, and the same quality of counseling should be available for every student. For example, one student should not have his/her resume reviewed by a trained student reviewer whereas another student, who may have stopped by for advising at a different time, has the opportunity to have their resume reviewed by a professional. Discrepancies of this nature need to be addressed.

#### ***Scholarships need to be enhanced for off-campus programming.***

As DePauw students are expected to engage in a variety of activities to complete their college experience, they are often barred from participating in valuable off-campus activities due to a lack of funding. As DePauw reassesses department programming, it is our hope that scholarships for such funding are made accessible to qualified students, and that each academic department develops a straightforward system for advertising these programs and

informing students of their financial options upfront.

**Conclusion**

DePauw Student Government would again like to extend a warm thank you to Mr. Raj Bellani, the faculty, staff, and administration involved with the Sophomore Year Experience Committee, and the student body for approaching us with their concerns. In beginning the process of reassessing the Sophomore Experience model, DePauw University has already made meaningful progress in addressing student concerns. We look forward to continuing with this initiative, and know that it is imperative for students to voice their concerns so that DePauw's Sophomore Experience, in addition to the DePauw student experience, can become a model for other colleges and universities across the nation.

Motion by:	Clark Edwards	Seconded by:	Ashley Poole
Aye:	14		7
Nay:	0		0
Abstain:	0		1

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Walker Chance, President

Attest:

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Colleen McArdle, Secretary