

California State University Northridge

The Tseng College: *Graduate, International and Midcareer Education* Graduate and Professional Education Programs and Services Unit (GPE)

Basic Principles of Engaged and Achievement-Focused Student Support – *Communication and Relationship-Building*

- *(Proactive student support focused on student achievement, reflected in student retention and on-time graduation.)* Managers and coordinators responsible for working with students enrolled in self-support degree and certificate programs provide proactive student support focused on student achievement, as reflected in student retention and on-time graduation.
- *(Serves as primary point of contact.)* Managers and coordinators work in teams to provide backup for one another so that student support is not interrupted by the absence of one manager or coordinator. However, each cohort of each program (or each year's entering group for programs not offered in a cohort format) has one manager or coordinator assigned as the primary point of contact.
- *(Must have advanced and strategic communication skills.)* Building and maintaining relationships are fundamental components of the work of managers and coordinators. In that light, advanced and strategic communications skills (written and oral, formal and informal, individual and group, digital and traditional) are essential capabilities for manager and coordinator roles.
- Among the relationships each program manager and coordinator is expected to build and maintain are the following:
 1. *(Establish a relationship between individual student & cohort/entry group.)* The relationship between students (individually and as a group) in each cohort/entry group and the assigned manager or coordinator is of great importance. Each student should feel he/she knows the assigned manager or coordinator well enough so that contact with them is easy and natural. This enables the manager or coordinator to help each student navigate the university. Students should feel comfortable asking questions, and know someone representing CSUN cares about their success and is available and responsive.

2. *(Establish a relationship between the student and cohort/entry group and program.)* The relationship between students (individually and as a group) and the program: The manager or coordinator provides information about the program that helps students understand and appreciate its distinctive and valuable features.
3. *(Establish a relationship between faculty member or instructors.)* The relationship between the manager or coordinator and each faculty member or instructor ensures solid ground for easy communication and collaboration for each course. The manager or coordinator assigned to each program provides administrative and logistical support to the faculty, and uses effective communication to help faculty engage with students and understand self-support programs.
4. *(Establish a relationship with the academic lead.)* The manager or coordinator works in close collaboration with the director of GPE (who in turn works in close collaboration with the College's associate dean) and the academic lead for the program. Coordination and communication among these roles is important to ensure cohesive flow of information to students. Generally, the manager or coordinator should be the primary point of contact for students. The manager or coordinator engages the academic lead when students have issues or questions related to the academic content, expectations, the instructor or instructional strategies, or academic work.
5. *(Establish a relationship between the student and academic college.)* The relationship between the students (individually but primarily as a group) and the academic college that is home to the program: It is important that students feel they are a part of CSUN and the academic college and department. The manager or coordinator has responsibility for fostering this relationship throughout the program. This builds connections and engagement between students and CSUN that contribute to persistence during the program, and ongoing connection to CSUN and the college/department after graduation.
6. *(Establish a relationship between the student and CSUN.)* The relationship between students (primarily as a group) and CSUN overall: The manager or coordinator has responsibility for ensuring that students come to know CSUN during their program of study (particularly for degree programs). This adds to a student's sense of engagement with the program and the university.

7. *(Establish a relationship between colleagues from the Tseng College and the University.)* The relationship between the manager or coordinator and colleagues in the Tseng College and in key roles in CSUN overall ensure that the manager or coordinator can easily access and engage colleagues to help resolve student issues and problems quickly and accurately.
 8. *(Establish a relationship with students as alumni.)* After students complete the program and successfully graduate, the program manager or coordinator plays a role helping them understand the ongoing value of programs and services to them and to their companies/agencies and communities. The purpose and general content of this communication for each program is developed collaboratively between the manager or coordinator and the director of GPE who, in turn, works with the Marketing and Communications director to craft the communications plan and materials.
- *(Knowledge of the assigned program.)* Each manager and coordinator is expected to know the program assigned by the director in full detail and to have command of the relevant CSU and CSUN policies and Tseng College principles and processes. This ensures that students are given accurate information and that the manager or coordinator knows the right path to develop a solution to student problems.
 - *(Development and implementation of communication strategy.)* Managers and coordinators work collaboratively with the full team of managers and coordinators in the unit and with the director of GPE who, in turn works closely with the associate dean. Each manager and coordinator is expected to contribute to developing a communication strategy and implement it with specific adaptations for each cohort assigned, beginning before the cohort starts, and continuing through graduation. Each student should have ample opportunity to get information needed for success in the program at the appropriate time and as a direct communication from the manager or coordinator.
 - *(Communication as personable and unique to the program manager/coordinator.)* Communication between the manager or coordinator and students has a personal touch and is ongoing and direct. Other communication tools used by the Tseng College include web sites, marketing materials, formal announcements and the like. The communication from the manager or coordinator assigned to a program complements these other forms of communication, but has a separate character that is relationship-building and ensures a person-to-person link between CSUN and each student. Communication is expected to be

timely, with the manager or coordinator responding to any contact from a student within an hour whenever possible, and no later than one working day.

- *(Direct and indirect assessment of the program manager/coordinator.)* Data on the retention levels in each program provide valuable information, both about the effectiveness of a manager or coordinator and with identifying best practices that can be shared and refined by the full group. Surveys of students once during the program and again at the end also provide valuable information about the effectiveness of each manager or coordinator's relationship with each student, and the effectiveness of the support and problem-solving provided. The director of GPE (working in close collaboration with the associate dean) develops communication and relationship-building strategies for the full GPE group of managers and coordinators and with individual managers and coordinators to ensure refining and strengthening of communication and relationship-building strategies. The director of GPE may also periodically provide guidance and feedback to help each manager and coordinator develop his/her communication and relationship-building capabilities, style and strategic purpose.