

## College Project

### **1. Briefly describe your College Project and who from the chapter and the college administration was involved in determining it?**

The words behind Alpha Nu Sigma's College Project, Building, Leading, Unifying and Engaging (BLUE) painted a picture of our goal for students at Horry Georgetown Technical College (HGTC). We wanted students to feel more connected to our college and be proud to attend. BLUE committee members met with Associate Vice President of Student Success and Support, Dr. Batten, to discuss how our College Project can best support the college's mission, "to provide a student-centered environment and inspire lifelong learning." Dr. Batten suggested we collaborate with the Director of Student Affairs (DSA) to develop ideas for our project. Further meetings with two additional Vice Presidents helped us prepare the canvas for BLUE.

### **2. Summarize your objectives for the College Project and the process by which the chapter and college administration set these objectives.**

Chapter officers brainstormed ideas during officer training to prepare for our meeting with Dr. Batten. We drafted a script prior to our meeting to ease our nerves. Dr. Batten suggested advising and retention were major concerns at HGTC and asked for our ideas. We proposed creating community through a connections initiative because we believed our students needed to feel a sense of pride in our college. Ultimately, Dr. Batten asked us to consider which project would be best from a student perspective. After much discussion, everyone decided BLUE would most benefit our student body. Soon after meeting with Dr. Batten, committee members brainstormed ideas with several administrators and finalized our objectives:

- Conduct a gap analysis of engagement resources for students
- Develop and conduct a student engagement survey
- Provide students with games on all campuses
- Make Thursdays "It's All About the BLUE" T-shirt day

While conducting the gap analysis, we met with the Associate Vice President of Libraries and Learning Resources. We discussed adding engagement resources to campus libraries, specifically three jigsaw puzzle tables, and this became our final objective.

### **3. Describe the planning process and strategies developed to complete the College Project.**

Dr. Batten suggested we coordinate our efforts with the DSA. He enthusiastically welcomed our ideas and we discussed ways to accomplish them. BLUE members decided to have weekly meetings for the duration of our project and use the online project management tool, Trello, to keep ourselves organized and delegate responsibilities to committee members.

To conduct the gap analysis, we contacted several staff members who provided us with a surprisingly short list of available engagement resources. To bridge this gap, we created a list of

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board games to engage students. The DSA approved our recommendations and purchased games. Our final objective of constructing three puzzle tables proved to be quite challenging. We contacted the HGTC Engineering Department chairperson to discuss designs. His students created a Computer-Aided Design for us, but they did not have the facilities to construct tables. A committee member had a contact at a local high school, Academy for Technology and Academics (ATA). When the DSA approved the design and construction of our tables, we met with the ATA Building Construction instructor who agreed to have his class build our tables. We struggled with misunderstandings about the design and miscommunication of payment requirements for three months before we could move forward with construction.

We created a survey to assess the level of student engagement and what activities would encourage students to feel more connected to HGTC. We decided to survey students on paper instead of online because our advisors learned from a previous project we would get more responses this way. One strategy was to use different colors of paper for each of our three campuses. To ensure a representative sample of our student population, we purposefully targeted students in all curricula by asking faculty members to distribute surveys in their classes.

One of our goals was to create a T-shirt specifically for this project. The DSA challenged us to create a logo using the letters BLUE. Committee members brainstormed and determined Building, Leading, Unifying and Engaging best represented HGTC and our project goal. A committee member designed a graphic using Scrabble blocks; however, the DSA chose not to use it because it did not match our college brand of "It's All About the BLUE." He used our words for the acronym on the T-shirt and agreed to purchase them for distribution during Welcome Week.

Faculty and staff wore blue HGTC shirts on Thursdays and the Human Resources department gave out prizes in a prize patrol. We brainstormed ideas on how we could encourage students to wear their blue T-shirts on Thursdays to show their sense of pride. We decided to create our Blue Patrol to similarly reward students. We met with the Associate Vice President of Human Resources to discuss how they conducted their prize patrols to help make our Blue Patrols successful. A committee member created a flyer advertising Blue Patrol which did not comply with the college brand. We were guided to meet with the Print Shop Manager to design acceptable flyers. The revised flyers were posted on social media and campus bulletin boards.

#### **4. What were the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of your project, including the lessons learned by your chapter members and others?**

BLUE's connection initiative helped students feel more connected by providing student engagement opportunities, bridging the gap between students and HGTC. With the assistance of the DSA, we successfully provided 15 games and jigsaw puzzle tables are near completion. We administered a student engagement survey to 803 students on three campuses. We coded and input the results into an Excel spreadsheet. Fifty-two percent of students surveyed

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responded they would feel connected to HGTC if more activities were offered to them. A member met with a Business Statistics professor to learn how to integrate the statistics into an executive summary for administrators. We met with Dr. Batten to share our survey results and were excited to learn our sample closely matched the college's student population demographics. She was thrilled with the work we accomplished and informed us of her intention to share the information with additional administrators. She also said, "This information could feed the Quality Enhancement Plan baseline data" for reaccreditation. We experienced a challenge when Student Affairs staff gave a different shirt to students on one campus during Welcome Week. Also, no sizes were ordered above XL which excluded a significant portion of our student body. We successfully overcame these challenges by organizing two T-shirt blitzes and handing out over 600 BLUE T-shirts to students on all three campuses. To alleviate the size issue, a member procured 50 larger sizes of HGTC's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary T-shirts from administration which we handed out during the blitzes. To encourage students to wear their T-shirts, we conducted two Blue Patrols on all campuses and gave prizes to students wearing their T-shirts. We were excited to hand out 17 prizes during our first Blue Patrol and 16 prizes on the second.

Chapter members grew as scholar-servant-leaders through completion of this project. Reflecting on her experience in BLUE, a member said, "I truly believe we helped give students the resources needed to feel more connected to HGTC." Our communication and public speaking skills flourished from our interaction with administrators, professors and students. We learned lessons in leadership, chain of command protocols, time management and how to overcome challenges.

### **5. What is left undone or what opportunities remain for the future?**

Our next step would be to do a follow-up survey to ensure the success of the project. Collaborative efforts are continuing with Student Engagement to keep Building, Leading Unifying and Engaging at HGTC.