

An Ohlone Story

International Programs and Services Office

Submitted by Eddie West

Overview

Throughout most of its 40-year history, Ohlone College did not have formalized processes in place regarding the recruitment, admission and servicing of international students. Neither did it possess a centralized body to help catalyze and develop international education opportunities and partnerships, and integrate these in a systematic way into the life of the College. A few years ago, interest in prioritizing international education began percolating at Ohlone. In 2004 President Doug Treadway led a reformulation of the College's strategic priorities. Chief among those was the expansion of international education offerings and exchanges at Ohlone. In 2006, a major milestone was reached as a first-ever formal office of International Programs and Services was created at the College, and a Director of this office was hired. Today, the newly created International Programs and Services office serves as a one-stop admissions, recruitment, retention, and services "shop" for international students. It is also advancing an array of pre-existing and new international education objectives of the College.

Relationship to College Values

We promote teamwork and open communication

The process by which Ohlone College came to create its International Programs and Services office relied crucially on teamwork and frequent, open communication. Shortly after becoming President in 2003, Doug Treadway convened a campus-wide Planning Symposium. The entire campus and leaders in the local community were invited to participate in the formation of the College's 2005-2010 Strategic Plan. An estimated 200-300 people – faculty, staff, managers, external community leaders and student government representatives – participated in the session. It was held in January 2004, in the Epler Gymnasium, one of the few campus buildings large enough to accommodate a gathering this size. The session jump-started the articulation of the College's Goals, including Goal #1: "Promote appreciation for and understanding of diverse races and cultures by expanding the diversity of college personnel, international education offerings and exchanges, cross-cultural curricula, and ethnic/cultural events."

A series of planning retreats followed, involving the Board of Trustees, administration, community leaders and the newly formed College Council. In May of 2004, the Board of Trustees approved Goal #1, along with six others of strategic importance to Ohlone. A survey taken in early Fall found that upward of 45 Ohlone faculty and staff had traveled or worked overseas during the summer. This was testament to the level of interest and expertise in international exchange already present, if diffuse, at the College. Around that same time the College Council formed Task Forces related to each new College Goal. College Council charged these new Task Forces with developing measurable objectives for each new goal, and with setting forth strategies and major activities designed to reach these objectives. This was the beginning of the International Education Task Force. The Task Force met regularly over the ensuing year and documented meeting minutes so that others could learn about their discussions.

The formation of the Ohlone College International and Programs and Services office exemplified an effort of sustained teamwork and open communication. Abundant different constituencies were involved throughout the process, representing different stakeholders on and off-campus. Frequent and open communication was key to the coalescence of this broad-based group effort.

We promote diversity and inclusiveness

Today, as many as 15-20% of Ohlone College students are originally from another country. This owes largely to a sustained wave of immigration to the greater Silicon Valley area that occurred during the latter decades of the 20th century. An influx of engineers and computer scientists from China, Taiwan, India and other countries made their way to the U.S. to work for Silicon Valley firms during this period, thus dramatically altering the demographics of Fremont and Newark. Over time, the ethnic composition of the student body also began to change, commensurate with these broader immigration trends. Sons, daughters and other members of immigrant families began attending Ohlone in increasing numbers.

Although the campus community had become more ethnically and culturally diverse, F-1 Student Visa-holding international students as a percentage of total enrollment nonetheless remained well below the U.S. average. Nationally, this figure is roughly 4% of higher education enrollments. At Ohlone the figure was less than 1%. In absolute terms Ohlone's international enrollment also significantly lagged that of some of its peers. While Foothill College, De Anza College and City College of San Francisco each boast more than 1000 international students, Ohlone's international enrollment as of Fall 2003 stood at just 52 students. Most of those few international students who found their way to the College did so via word of mouth from former students. Ohlone did not engage in active outreach and recruitment of new students. Further, the servicing of this community was a peripheral activity not considered a part of the real fabric of the College. To wit, no dedicated staff person existed to provide this specific population support.

Ohlone staff and faculty recognized that F-1 Student Visa-holding international students were an underrepresented population on campus. They also understood that enlargement of this group would bring a new element of diversity to the Ohlone learning environment. Many of these students are brand new arrivals to the U.S., and so have not yet assimilated into American life and culture. Consequently, they bring fresh, non-U.S.-based perspectives to their studies and classroom discussions. This in turn benefits Ohlone's larger student population and faculty alike.

It was clear to all involved that to increase Ohlone's F-1 Student Visa-holding population, concerted attention needed to be given to international student admissions, recruitment, retention and support. Via the strategic planning process, the International Education Task Force advocated for the creation of a new - and historically unprecedented - position at Ohlone: Director, International Programs and Services. The vision was for this position to oversee Ohlone College's emerging International Programs and Services office. Today, it does just that, and the new office serves as a one-stop admissions, recruitment, retention, and services "shop" for international students, among other functions. In its efforts to create the Director, International Programs and Services position as well as the office the Director oversees, Ohlone demonstrated its commitment to promoting diversity and inclusiveness - a key Ohlone College value.

In January 2007 the Ohlone International Programs and Services office launched the English Language Institute (ELI.) The ELI serves international students who don't currently possess enough English proficiency to qualify them for regular Ohlone degree studies. International students who would otherwise be denied admission to Ohlone on the basis of their limited English ability are now Conditionally Admitted to the College. Conditionally admitted students first study in the ELI until their English skills improve enough for them to succeed as degree-seeking students. In the past such students were routinely turned away from Ohlone, because the college did not have a suitable program to accommodate them. Today, however, Ohlone can welcome and serve these students in the ELI. In this way Ohlone provided access to a sub-community - international students without the English skills required for Direct Admission- who hadn't previously been represented on campus. This demonstrates the promotion of diversity and inclusiveness.

Contribution to Achieving College Goals

Promote appreciation for and understanding of diverse races and cultures by expanding the diversity of college personnel, international education offerings and exchanges, cross-cultural curricula, and ethnic/cultural events.

The College recognized that an office of International Programs and Services would be instrumental in reaching this College Goal. For one thing, the office would serve as a centralized source of support of existing international students, and thus enhance their experiences at Ohlone College. For another, it would serve to centralize international admissions functions, and thus help streamline these comparatively complex processes. Also, it would serve as a base from which to launch Ohlone's first-ever sustained international outreach and recruitment efforts. The success of these related endeavors has already resulted in an increase in international enrollments at Ohlone College. Greater numbers of satisfied international students at Ohlone helps promote appreciation for and understanding of diverse races and cultures among the larger campus community.

Following the launch of the International Programs and Services office, the aforementioned International Education Task Force was reconstituted as an International Programs and Services Committee, with a broader membership of approximately a dozen different faculty, staff and administrators. The Committee helps the College prioritize the myriad international education opportunities available to it. It also guides the pursuit of chosen international exchange objectives. Via these mechanisms, Ohlone is actively broadening the pool of international education offerings and exchanges available to both its students and those of its partner institutions.

The International Programs and Services office also leads the development of new international education programs for the College. Ohlone's developing study abroad program in India is one example. A strategic relationship with a large university preparatory school network in Japan is another. In these ways the College continues to make sustained strides toward increasing international education and exchange opportunities for both American and international students of the College. The International Programs and Services office also assists in the coordination of existing international partnerships, such as those with the Shanghai Theatre Academy and the Taizhou-Ohlone Sister College relationship, respectively.

Demonstration of the Meeting of One or More of the Accreditation Standards

Accreditation Standard IIB: Student Support Services

The institution recruits and admits diverse students who are able to benefit from its programs, consistent with its mission. Student support services address the identified needs of students and enhance a supportive learning environment. The entire student pathway through the institutional experience is characterized by a concern for student access, progress, learning and success. The institution systematically assesses student support services using student learning outcomes, faculty and staff input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of these services.

The stakeholders who developed the Ohlone College International Programs and Services office recognized that formalizing the office and hiring a full-time professional to run it were necessary steps to support greater numbers of international students. Vice President of Student Development Ron Travenick and the International Education Task Force took the lead in formulating the Director, International Programs and Services Position Description. In it the key responsibility of developing the student support infrastructure necessary to ensure that current and future international students would be properly served was emphasized. This was also highlighted during the hiring and interview process.

After joining Ohlone in October 2006, the Director set about identifying international student support services that required further development, as well as those that did not yet exist but were needed. A new full-color 12-page brochure was created, to illustrate and explain Ohlone College to prospective students

and their parents. The international student application process was streamlined, and made more user-friendly. In order to increase international student access, the new office and Director's contact information were highlighted on an enhanced International Programs and Services web site. Signage directing visitors to the new office was also displayed in appropriate campus locations. A commitment was made to return phone calls and e-mails to the new office promptly, and to provide helpful, thorough responses to inquires from prospective students. In these and related ways Ohlone has significantly improved international student access to the College.

Additionally, the creation of the new office has resulted in an enhanced level of support provided to existing Ohlone College international students. Students now have a dedicated office to turn to in order to obtain advisement regarding immigration regulations and their F-1 Student Visa status, Travel authorizations, advice regarding regulations governing on-campus employment and so-called Optional Practical Training, and a host of associated questions. Similarly, applicants now have a centralized point of contact to help them navigate the international admission process, the obtaining of their Student Visas, orientation, assessment testing and course registrations.

Expression of Accreditation Themes

Institutional Commitment

At the strategic Planning Symposium it had been determined that individual Task Forces should be established to work on the fulfillment of emergent College Goals. Soon afterward Ohlone Administration funded the International Education Task Force. The Vice President of Business Services approved the allocation of seed money for this newly created group. The group was comprised of the Director of Admissions, the Dean of Language Arts and Social Sciences, the Dean of Counseling, Professor of Speech and Communication Studies Kay Harrison, a number of other Ohlone faculty with interest and experience in international educational exchange, and students. The Task Force met regularly to work on articulating the international objectives Ohlone ought to pursue, and to develop metrics by which the advancement toward those objectives would be measured. It also devised and implemented strategies toward these ends. For instance, it agreed to make the College's first-ever foray into international advertising, and worked with a prominent publisher to create print and online advertising aimed at international students in Asian and Latin American countries.

The Task Force unanimously agreed that the College could only reach its new international education and exchange goals by dedicating more institutional resources and attention to them. It laid the groundwork for the formation of the new International Programs and Services office, and for the creation of the new Management-level position to lead it. Importantly, the Task Force and the College Business office also set about formulating a financial model for the creation of the office and the initial Director position. The Vice President, Business Services approved a model whereby the annual budget allocated to Ohlone's new International Programs and Services office would increase commensurate with gains realized in non-resident tuition revenue. Further, whereas non-resident tuition revenues were not historically disaggregated into separate categories based upon student payee type, the Business office committed to henceforth isolate and identify non-resident tuition paid by international students, as a means of ensuring the sound fiscal management of the new office. Meanwhile, the Vice President of Student Development worked with the Dean of Human Resources to advertise and recruit for the new Director position.

Collaboratively, and as an institution, Ohlone College faculty and staff worked effectively on expanding access to its student learning opportunities to a previously underrepresented constituency: F-1 Student Visa-holding international students. The result of these efforts – the new Ohlone College International Programs and Services office – has increased the attention paid to current and future international students alike. In Spring 2007, a few months after the office opened in earnest, Ohlone witnessed a jump in international enrollments of nearly 20 students. It also launched its new English Language Institute for international students who wish or need to study English as a Second Language full-time prior to

engaging in Ohlone degree studies. Ohlone was successful as an institution in committing to the fulfillment of a shared, new College Goal, and turning words into the actions needed to deliver results.

Evaluation, Planning and Improvement

The Accreditation Theme of Evaluation, Planning and Improvement is also evident in the process by which the International Programs and Services office came to be. The Planning Symposium initiated the institutional planning process with respect to the newly emergent Ohlone College Goals. The formation of the International Education Task Force marked the important second step necessary for the continuation of momentum toward College Goal #1. The Task Force engaged in a regularly held series of planning meetings, in each instance coming closer to a clearly articulated action plan to be submitted to the President and his Cabinet for review. Ohlone administration quickly ran with the most salient of the Task Force's recommendations: it approved the steps necessary to hire a Director of International Programs and Services, and thus officially launch the newly created International Programs and Services office.

Following the creation of the International Programs and Services office and the establishment of a first-year budget, additional one-time budgetary monies were earmarked to the office. This was to further enhance its financial viability in the short-term and to enable it to develop key new programs, such as the English Language Institute. Additionally, the President, the Vice President of Business Services, the Vice President of Academic Affairs, and the Vice President of Student Development committed to establishing a metric by which future budgetary increases for the new office will be concretely linked to international student enrollment growth, thus establishing the financial infrastructure necessary for the sustained, long-term success of the office.

The new Director of International Programs and Services interviewed a dozen current international students of the College. Each interview lasted one hour, and was audio-recorded and later transcribed. Also, each of these 12 Ohlone international students were asked to complete student satisfaction surveys. The Director then analyzed the results of the interviews and surveys, in an effort to ascertain which international student admissions and support areas deserved priority attention and development. The results of this qualitative research directly informed the ensuing actions taken by the Director regarding the development of an international student services infrastructure at the College.

In the formation of the office, the creation of the financial model upon which it is based, and the actions taken to develop international student support services, the structured processes of evaluation, planning and improvement were employed. These efforts helped ensure that an important new College Goal did not languish as a mere statement on a piece of paper, but was instead reached. Ohlone's commitment to systematic evaluation, planning and the improvement of its International Programs and Services office moving forward is expected to foster its future, sustained success.