

SEAHO 2014 Case Study—New Professionals

Topic: Increasing School Spirit

Setting

Traditions University is a rural campus of 8,000 students (with 3,000 living in the residence halls) located in the Southeastern region of the United States in the middle of several large high schools, known throughout the state for their football programs. The campus demographics are split between Lower SES Students who are happy to be in college, in general, and upper to middle class students who are planning to transfer to the flagship institution after they have established their GPA.

Characters

Lewis Gilbert is the President of Traditions University. This is his first time being in a President position and he is entering his 2nd year in that position. Previously, he was a faculty member at Northeast University, a school known for their school spirit and longstanding traditions. President Gilbert speaks often about his desire to have more students living on campus and have school spirit/pride in the university. President Gilbert, though, focuses on initiatives for faculty to lead as opposed to students or staff.

Emily Solkoff is the VP of Student Affairs and she has been at Traditions University for 10+ years. She believes that there is a way to harness student pride/school spirit through the student body but several attempts over her time at Traditions University have not made a significant impact.

Elliott Cross is the Director of Housing & Residence Life Director Cross at Traditions University and has been there just as long as VP Solkoff. Director Cross hasn't usually put much stock into school spirit but due to a recent spike in crisis situations and conduct cases, he has a renewed interest in this in the hopes that it will help diminish issues in the halls. Director Cross has charged his Residence Life staff with addressing this issue.

Rachel Oxford is the Director of Alumni Relations at Traditions University. Director Oxford has been appointed to chair Homecoming this year with the pressure from President Gilbert and VP Solkoff to make this the "best one ever". Director Oxford went to State University for undergrad and completed both her Bachelor's and Master's degree from there.

Residential Coordinator (entry level live in staff)—THIS IS YOU! You are new to Traditions University and you are one of 5 Professional staff members who live in the halls. You and the other 4 staff members directly report to Director Cross. In your short time on-campus, you've noticed that students wear apparel from institutions other than your own and they talk constantly about transferring to a different school once they've improved upon their GPA. Finally, you oversee 12 RA's for a freshman community of 300 residents.

Case

August 19th (a little under 3 months before Homecoming)

Director Cross enters your office to discuss with you about a meeting he just came from. He hands you a packet of information about Homecoming events that include only:

1. Community Golf Tournament
2. Community Fundraiser downtown (located 3 miles from campus)
3. Homecoming Kick-off
4. Sidewalk Chalk Competition
5. Pep Rally

Director Cross, frustrated with the lack of explicit Residence Hall based events, informs you that you are going to be the Housing representative for this Homecoming committee made up of VP of Student Affairs Solkoff, Director of Alumni Relations Oxford, members of the Greek Life staff, members of Student Life and representatives from Athletics. He says that he's fine to attend with you but would rather not.

August 26th

You enter the Homecoming meeting and introduce yourself. VP Solkoff immediately remembers you from your interview and comes to shake your hand. As the meeting gets started, VP Solkoff announces "We have a new rep from Housing and I'm sure they will be more open to putting on events with us this year." Quickly, Director Oxford states that she remembers when "we used to all decorate the dorms and make floats for the parade." Members of the Greek Life staff and Student Life staff inquire about getting more student involvement on the committee which VP Solkoff reminds them that "last year, they didn't show up when we tried so let's just keep this to us to plan." Near the end of the meeting, President Gilbert walks in, apologizes for being late but he had a Faculty Senate meeting and then asks for a re-cap of everything. After hearing about the events from the packet (listed above), he states that he would "like some events like he's seen on Youtube – flash mobs, foam parties and...OOH, I saw once there was a dorm that was lit up like with projectors to make shapes. Could we do something like that?" No one responds. President Gilbert says "Let's make it happen!" The meeting ends.

September 2nd

At this week's Homecoming Meeting, everyone comes in and starts chatting about the football team's 2nd win in a row but they immediately follow it up with comments on how empty the stands were. They take this time to inform you that last year they went to the Div. 2 playoffs but lost in the first round. VP Solkoff jokes that more people in town know the High School football players than they do the college ones. At this time, President Gilbert comes walking in and wants to know where we are at. The question of budgeting comes up and his answer is that "I can cover it but I need ideas...anything is possible, people!"

September 9th

Director Cross asks you into his office. He asks for an update about Homecoming. As you relay that no real progress has been made, he states “if they won’t come up with something for us, then let’s do it for them.” He asks you to come up with a plan for 3 events for Homecoming. He asks that within this plan you include ways for students to take the lead on this and not just staff. He highlights to you that your plan will be presented to the President so take into account what he’s wanting but also make it feasible for us to pull off by Homecoming on November 11th.

Guiding Questions

How would you work to enhance school spirit amongst the student body, specifically the residential population?

How do you go about this in order to instill pride/spirit in the student body population?

How would you work to collaborate with the offices present on your committee?

Your plan is to be presented to the President of the University. Feel free to draw on any personal or campus experiences, student development theory, or external resources.