

2020-2021 Department of the Year award winner: Dean of Students Office



Nomination Text:

The Dean of Students Office oversees some of the most complex processes and initiatives on campus. Specifically, Cougar Care Network, Student Conduct, New Student and Family Programs, and the Civility Campaign. To say that this past year has stretched all of us individually and as a department is an understatement.

CCN has experienced record numbers of referrals, seeing a consistent 30% increase from the year prior (note: the year prior also showed extensive growth with almost 1,000 referrals in April 2020 alone). The CCN team has partnered with ASI in the management of the Student Emergency Fund, a fund that has also seen exponential growth in the utilization by students. Bonnie Campbell, Care Manager, oversaw the creation and implementation of CSUSM's first emergency housing program in partnership with CSUSM Housing, CSUSM Corporation and the

Staples Foundation. A program so highly successful that it has been given funding through the 21-22 AY. The CCN team has worked with thousands of students who have experienced significant impacts from COVID-19 including housing insecurity, job loss, death of loved ones, mental health, and more. This team handles complex and difficult situations on a daily basis yet shows up every day with positivity and a willingness to do all in their power to support and advocate for our students. CCN has conducted a number of trainings and provides ongoing consultation with CSUSM faculty and staff to assist in the campus wide care our students receive.

The area of Student Conduct, overseen by Leslie Rockwell, Associate Director of Student Conduct, has been hit with a number of changes requiring fast learning, adaptation, and creation of processes. The world of student conduct since Spring 2020 has primarily consisted of Academic Integrity and COVID-19 compliance cases. Student Conduct at CSUSM has risen to the challenge by staying up to date with local, systemwide, state, and federal guidelines and, many times, has created processes from the ground up. There has been significant partnership and outreach with Academic Affairs to help empower our faculty to navigate the challenging process of referring students for academic integrity issues. With the caseload doubling from last year, the student conduct team remains in high touch with students, continues to meet compliance by concluding investigations within the required timeframe, and consistently provides students with intentional and reflective conversations and opportunities.

New Student and Family Programs, like many, had to quickly pivot their programming to online. This included transitioning weekly Orientation Team training to zoom, implementing an online Orientation module with recorded sessions and materials, and offering 21 live Orientation sessions via zoom for First Year, Transfer Students, and their families. Additionally, programming for families of our students has grown in number and quality. A family webinar series was launched for the 20-21 academic year and covered how to prepare their student for academic success, coach them through challenging times, navigating financial aid, and getting involved. The critical nature of the work NSFP offers for our students and families required a lot of intentional planning to ensure the same level of connection and access to information.

Next, the civility campaign and its mission were needed this past year. This team, led by DOS and the Cross-Cultural Center, has provided opportunities for members of the CSUSM community to engage in conversation around free speech, the election, the events of January 6th, and more. Even being virtual, the programming and relevancy of the topics didn't skip a beat and provided the community with the space to engage in complex dialogue.

While Housing and Residential Education is not physically housed within DOS, as they are within the DOS org structure, it would be remiss not to highlight the work they have done this past year. As with all of us, they have had to pivot very quickly to meet CDC and local health guidelines while also building and maintaining a sense of community among our residential students. They have been thrust into the world of emergency housing and COVID-19 compliance, and they have done it tremendously.

Lastly, this team remains on the front line for all campus and local crises. Our office initiates contact with students needing immediate support, serves as the point of contact in the unfortunate event of a student passing away, advocates for students experiencing any barriers to their education, and, truly, is the “first stop shop for all things student.” We will ensure that students get to where they need to go, we will take the time to answer questions and listen to their concerns. This team, with the leadership of our Dean of Students, Jason Schreiber, has taken our role incredibly seriously this past year especially. We have committed to remaining accessible, up to date, and collaborative with the overall mission of student support and care at the forefront. And, you know what, we do still manage to do all of this with extreme laughter, silliness, and care for each other.