



Saint Francis University
Student Government Association Assessment
Spring 2008

“Leadership, Service, Community”

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Student Government Association Mission Statement

The mission of the Student Government Association is to serve as the voice of the student body by providing Saint Francis students with representation, services, and advocacy within the University structure. It is our purpose to cultivate strong individuals who will serve and lead with character and values, to build connections between students, faculty and administration, and to better our campus community.

Purpose

As students of Saint Francis University and members of its Student Government Association (SGA), we are performing this assessment to ensure that SGA is operating in an appropriate and effective manner in the University community. This critical look at SGA will shape SGA's future and help SGA promote the following ideals: leadership, service, and community.

Methodology

Phase 1: Purpose

- State problem/reason assessment of Saint Francis Student Government Association (SGA) is necessary
- Appraise current SGA
 - o Create concise Strengths/Weakness/Opportunities/Threats analysis of SGA
 - o Create list of stakeholders
 - Internal
 - External
- Develop plan for complete SGA assessment
 - o Create list of peer institutions and perform benchmarking
 - o Develop questions for Phase 2 interviews

Phase 2: Research

- Present plan for assessment to Senior Staff/President's Council
- Conduct interviews with stakeholders
 - o Administration/faculty interviews
 - o Town Hall meetings
 - o Student focus groups

Phase 3: Recommendations/Implementation

Statement of Problem

Presently, SGA primarily acts as an organization that provides on-campus activities for students, hears residence hall issues, and allocates money to student organizations.

The Saint Francis University Student Government Association is not serving the Saint Francis community in the functions for which it is designed.

These functions being:

- 1) To make students aware of upcoming decisions and proposals at the University that may directly or indirectly affect the student body
- 2) To act as a liaison between the student body and the faculty, staff, administration, and Board of Trustees (when relevant to the student body)
- 3) To provide representation to all members of the student body including international, minority, Greek-life, student-athlete, commuter, continuing education, non-traditional, and resident students to ensure a diversity representation of student needs
- 4) To provide resources for quality student programming that promotes academic, cultural, athletic, and recreational enhancement while maintaining accountability for distributed funds and ensuring expenditures fit with outcomes aligned with SGA's mission
- 5) To establish a partnership between SGA and the student body, giving students the opportunity to serve, lead, and grow through academic, educational, social, recreational, community-oriented and spiritual experiences at Saint Francis University
- 6) To promote a vibrant Saint Francis community as presented in the current Saint Francis University Strategic Plan

SWOT Analysis

Internal

Strengths

- Knowledgeable Senate
- Diverse representation of student interests
- Advisor
- VP of Student Development engaged
- Financial Resources
- Size of Senate
- Leadership development opportunities for student organizations
- Strong record keeping

Weaknesses

- SGA not high enough priority for enough Senators
- Not fully voicing student concerns/out of touch with student body
- Scope of membership does not cover the diverse needs of the student body
- Poor training/formal training of Senators
- Student body and SGA have insufficient communication
- Low student representation at faculty committee meetings
- Constitution is not adhered to
- Lack of prestige of membership
- Senate meeting attendance not high enough
- Inadequate division of labor
- Limited faculty/administration knowledge of Senate business
- Not spending enough SGA funds
- Limited visibility of SGA on campus
- Have not utilized Franciscan values
- Little consistency of meeting business
- Budgeting process needs more controls
- No attendance policy
- Ambiguous, cumbersome, financial handbook

External

Opportunities

- Administration's value of student opinion
- Fr. Gabriel Zeis's openness to ideas
- Future University concepts/growth
- ILead program
- University's Franciscan Orientation
- ASGA benchmarking
- Board of Trustees representation
- Loretto Borough
- Judicial branch expansion

Threats

- Apathetic student culture and community
- Possible administrative abuse
- Lack of knowledge of additional factors
- Too much cash in low-interest bearing accounts

Assessment Phase (Findings)

Administration

- Stronger more consistent representation of student voice
- Better attendance of Faculty-Senate Committee meetings
- Discussing more important issues
 - More online course, summer intern credits, academic calendar, importance of “green” buildings, scholarships, more University policy in general
- Better communication channels
 - Students to faculty/administration
 - Faculty/administration to students
- University’s Strategic Plan needs to be in the interest of the students
- Facilitating communication with faculty/administration
- More vital SGA with more work/issues
- Try to be pro-active not reactive
- Becoming more aware of commitments as student representatives
- Becoming bigger part of the community

Student Groups

- Greek-life students
 - More assistance to Greeks
 - Difficulty of hosting events- both entertainment and philanthropic
 - Help with trip expenses to conventions, conferences, etc.
 - Develop better relationship with faculty/administration
 - Disavow negative stereotypes and common misconceptions within town, faculty, and administration
 - End policy discrimination against Greeks
 - RA’s and athletes not allowed to pledge
 - Overcoming biased, lack of knowledge, and lack of communication
 - University’s “trophy” mentality
- Residence Life
 - Lack of leadership responsibilities especially amongst freshman
 - Unwillingness of students to accept/own up to responsibilities
 - Res Life budgetary problems- too small of budget for number of students
 - Lack of communication with Senators
 - Issues not communicated back to students
 - Struggles of getting high quality students/leaders in RA and Senate positions
 - Quality v. quantity of student body
 - Generates apathy, poor academic departments, turnover, etc.
 - Loosing identity of small school
 - Higher expectations/responsibility on fewer students
 - “Student leaders are pleased with the growth of the University, but are unhappy with the direction of the student body”

Desired Outcomes

When considering desired outcomes, SGA must transform itself from the current role it is serving as an organization. This requires a critical look at the constitution, membership and recruitment, officer transition, promotion of the organization, leadership training, and other areas.

- 1) The SGA Constitution
 - a. Ensured that SGA Constitution is more closely adhered to
 - i. New Senator orientation
 - ii. Enforcement of attendance policy
 - iii. Use of Executive Board Handbook in order to assist in Executive Board officer transition
 - b. Listed the mission statement of SGA in its constitution
 - c. Modified Senate membership to maximize representation of student stakeholder groups
- 2) Financial Handbook
 - a. Created guidelines for finance committee membership
 - b. Clarified trip funding language
 - c. Clarified language regarding donations
- 3) Senator Accountability
 - a. Increased Senate meeting attendance
 - b. Increased Faculty Senate committee attendance (reach 85%)
 - c. Increased prestige of membership and congruence of Senator ideals with SGA objectives
 - i. Changed SGA from a transactional to a transformational organization
 - d. Redistribution of Senate workload
- 4) General
 - a. Increased role in University decision making process
 - b. Enhanced communication channels with administration, faculty, and student body
 - c. Improved campus leadership development especially through the ILead Program
 - d. Increased SGA marketing efforts
 - e. Generated greater consistency of agenda business
 - i. Created more significant agenda business
 - f. Explored the feasibility of creating a judicial function
 - g. Benchmarked SGA against other institutions