

California State University, Northridge

The Tseng College: *Graduate, International and MidCareer Education*

Basic Principles of Support Service Excellence with a Focus on Student Achievement

California State University Northridge's (CSUN) Tseng College: *Graduate, International, and MidCareer Education* (the Tseng College or, College) is committed to working with other CSUN colleges and departments and CSUN faculty and staff to develop and offer programs that are academically excellent and distinct. In keeping with CSUN's focus on student success, the Tseng College is also committed to developing, offering, and supporting programs that lead to high levels of student achievement (as evidenced by high on-time graduation, career beyond graduation, the commitment of graduates to ongoing learning, the cultivation of advanced conceptual skills; and breadth and depth of the students' understanding -- enriching in career, community, and personal life). Currently CSUN degree and certificate programs offered through the Tseng College have an average on-time graduation rate of 85.5%.

The Tseng College also recognized that regardless of the excellence of any program, student achievement also relies heavily on the excellence, scope, responsiveness, and effectiveness of all of the support services provided from first contact through program completion and beyond.

The Essential Components of Service Excellence in the Tseng College

Effective, Clear, and Accurate Communication from the Start of the Relationship between CSUN and the Student/Client: Starting from first contact (be that virtual, in print, or in person), a prospective student must be given access to accurate and timely information. The Tseng College is committed to providing this kind of information about CSUN programs offered through the Tseng College in all printed and digital program marketing/information materials and through direct conversation between each prospective student and members of the Tseng College staff. The ongoing focus of communication is student retention and student success.

Student Support Services Focused on Student Success from Program Enrollment to Program Completion: The Tseng College is committed to providing excellent, responsive, and consistent student support from the time a student enrolls in a CSUN program offered through the Tseng College until that student successfully completes the program in question. For example, for CSUN degree and certificate programs offered through the Tseng College, the College assigns a program manager or coordinator to work with each student in a given program from the time each student first enrolls in the program until the student completes the program. For CSUN programs offered through

the Tseng College for international students and international groups, program-specific student support services also begin with the enrollment and continue through each student's successful completion of the program in question.

Support Services that Reflect CSUN's Educational Values and Commitment to Student Success: The Tseng College understands that as each College staff member interacts with a student (or client), that staff member represents CSUN, the Tseng College, partners colleges/departments, and the program in question as well as the faculty that program comprises. In any direct or indirect interaction with a student (prospective, current or graduate), a CSUN partner, or a CSUN client, College staff members are shaping that individual's (or organization's) relationship with CSUN and, in turn, with the educational options and possibilities CSUN offers. The Tseng College understands that its approach to service excellence and caring student support, whether through brief interactions or support over time, impacts each student's feeling of being welcomed at CSUN (the feeling that they belong at CSUN) and that they are fully and thoughtfully supported throughout their educational experience with CSUN and its colleges, departments, and faculty. The focus must always be on supporting the success of each student -- the highest possible levels of student achievement.

Recognizing That the Roots of Service Excellence are in Effective and Open Communication: In large part, service excellence is rooted in strong and regular communication. Recognizing the importance of communication for service excellence, the staff of the Tseng College are expected to share (regularly, clearly, and effectively) information about the service and/or process initiatives, challenges, changes, refinements, and successes so that all in the College know about shared challenges, innovations, models, and strategies and can, in turn, both contribute to further refinement and use new models/capacities across unit lines to streamline and expand services overall. The Tseng College also recognizes the importance of clear, effective, and ongoing communication with students, clients, and partners about CSUN, its programs, and its academic excellence and distinctions for building relationships and ensuring student success. The Tseng College also recognizes that clear communication with students/clients about accessing services and navigating CSUN and College requirements is the foundation for service excellence. With this in mind, the Tseng College's senior staff are expected to work regularly and collaboratively with the director of Marketing and Communication to craft communication strategies and material as needed.

The Balance of Technology and Personal Contact: The support services in the Tseng College are designed to balance the use of technology and the personal contact and communication between a student/client/partners and the staff member assigned to be the primary support service resource and/or relationship manager for the student/program or client/partner in question. Both technical systems and services and personal contact and care are important components of developing and providing excellent and effective support services focused on student success and maintaining relationships with clients and partners on behalf of CSUN.

The Link Between Student Support Service Excellence and Smart and Sensible Administrative Processes: The Tseng College understands that part of providing excellent student support services is having administrative processes that are well-designed – necessary, simple, sensible and easy for both staff and student/clients to use successfully.

Innovation in Support Services is Essential and Should be Continuous: Innovation in support services is important. The Tseng College is committed to regularly looking for ways to streamline and improve support services and administrative processes. The Tseng College works collaboratively across unit lines within and outside of the College seeking to engage multiple perspectives and a wider range of knowledge and skills in the ongoing refinement and improvement of administrative processes and support services. Whenever the Tseng College makes a change in processes or practices, the focus is on the needs of those the College serves (students/clients/partners) and whether or not the innovation/refinement/change being considered is required and/or an advantage for those served.

Engaging the Talent and Expertise of Others to Refine and Innovate Support Services and Administrative Processes: The Tseng College has considerable expertise within and across unit lines. The College recognizes that engaging this broader experience to develop/design solutions, responses, and/or refinements to ongoing and emerging administrative, marketing and communications, data, record keeping, program support, and student support services challenges, changes, and opportunities is an essential component of purposeful innovation and effective implementation. Working collaboratively with the associate dean, executive director, or dean (depending on to whom they report), unit and work group leads in the College are able to convene (or engage virtually) cross-unit groups to explore options and solve problems and develop implementation strategies for such changes/refinements.

Being and Remaining Policy and Process Minimalists: The Tseng College strives to be minimalists in all aspects of College processes and procedures to ensure that the College is and remains agile in administrative systems and support services. The Tseng College must work in keeping with all relevant CSU, CSUN, State, and Federal policies but the Tseng College itself tries not to create additional policies unless it is truly essential to do so. The Tseng College works to ensure that all administrative processes work smoothly so that the student's/clients experience working with the Tseng College is easy and positive. The Tseng College is committed to making smart and innovative use of technology whenever possible to streamline and simplify administrative processes.

Ensuring That CSUN and CSU Systems and Services Work for Those the University Serves Through Its Tseng College: The Tseng College works to develop approaches to interacting with CSUN and CSU systems and service units that help to ensure that those systems and services work well for the students/clients/partners CSUN serves through its Tseng College (including, but not limited to, midcareer/working adult students, online students, matriculated students, non-matriculated students,

California resident students, out-of-state students, and international students). The Tseng College recognizes that the needs of such students/clients of CSUN are often atypical of the students matriculating at CSUN in more traditional state-funded programs and that, in turn, systems developed to serve more traditional students may need to be refined, augmented, or enhanced to work well for those CSUN serves through its Tseng College. The Tseng College works collaboratively with CSUN administrative units to find the best ways to achieve this goal.

Identifying the Need for More Systemic Policy, Process, or Practice Change:

Occasionally, improving Tseng College services requires changes in policies or practices at the CSUN or CSU levels. The first step in approaching such changes is to identify specifically a policy or process that is regularly the source of service complications for those CSUN serves though its Tseng College. Once a CSUN or CSU policy or process that may need refinement/change is identified, the Tseng College unit lead in question should discuss options with the associate dean, the executive director of business operations and finance, or the dean (depending on to whom the unit lead in question reports) who will then lead any initiative to advocate for needed policy and process changes or refinement at the CSUN or CSU level working openly and collaboratively with CSUN colleagues across CSUN divisional lines.

Data Driven Decisions: The Tseng College works to ensure that its decisions about services and service improvement are based on accurate data. The Tseng College has refined and expanded its data gathering resources through the development of data dashboards that provide current and longitudinal data about programs and services. These data resources will be continuously refined and expanded as changes in the College's programs and services and/or changing technological capabilities warrant. The Tseng College also works closely with CSUN's Institutional Research unit to access additional data to guide decisions about programs and support services that link to student success across different programs offered. The focus on any refinement or change in support services or administrative processes is increasing and supporting student success.

Essential Relationships: The Tseng College has a number of key working relationships with service units within CSUN, with other colleges and universities, with leading regional economic development and community development groups (such as, LAEDC, LACI, Coalition for the Economy and Jobs, and others), professional association regional and national, international groups, higher education accrediting and regulatory groups/agencies (WASC, DOE., and the like), industry groups, and more. To maintain and expand positive and productive external relationships on behalf of CSUN and the College, the Tseng College is committed to being thoughtful and strategic in identifying Tseng College and CSUN senior staff who serve as the primary College representative to manage and grow the relationship in question. The Tseng College has an external relations team that plays an important role in initiating new relationships and helping to maintain ongoing relationships but, at the same time, all Tseng College senior staff play a role in the external relationships work that is an important component the College's work on behalf of CSUN.

All Challenges and Opportunities are Shared: Defining and solving problems in the College is done with open and supportive collaboration within and across unit lines with a focus on data and designing an innovative and effective solution. The senior staff member(s) in the Tseng College closest to the issue in question is expected to work collaboratively with colleagues to gather enough information from a variety of perspectives, to do some research into the issues in question to provide the College with a more comprehensive view of the issue/problem/concern at hand before the College moves forward to consider options and craft solutions. In the Tseng College even narrower more unit-specific issues are considered across unit lines at the College level (often starting with a conversation between the unit lead in question and the associate dean, executive director, or dean depending on to whom that unit lead reports) before refinements, changes, or innovations in support services and/or administrative processes are finalized and implemented to ensure that such changes do not have unintended consequences and/or that the advantages of the proposed change/refinement can be used to advantage across unit lines as appropriate for enhancing support services for faculty, clients, partners, and students.

All Hands on Deck – Keeping the College Agile and Responsive: The Tseng College must always be agile and responsive in ways that are often challenging in the context of a large institution. Senior staff members are expected to look for ways to streamline practices with a focus on service excellence and ease for students and/or for internal and external clients. Further, senior members are expected to always be ready to pitch in and work on solving a problem that emerges and/or providing needed support for a new promising College initiative that moves ahead suddenly or changes direction midstream in response to student/client/partner needs. Senior staff in the College understand that they have both a stake in and a role in each of the programs offered and services provide by the College overall, in the success of each student, and in the evolution of programs and services over time to enhance excellence, distinction, and student achievement.

Building Capacity: Each senior staff member in the Tseng College is expected to regularly consider the differences between what the College does today and what the College must aspire to do in the years ahead in light of the ongoing evolution of higher education and in keeping with the College's Five-Year Vision; the Statement of Mission, Purpose and Values; the multi-year plan, and the yearly goals of the College. Each senior staff member is expected to work to build the College's core capacities which are and/or will be essential to do the core work of the College today and as that work is envisioned for the years ahead. This may include systematic review and restructuring of a unit or a work group to provide a better and more targeted level of support to a changing portfolio of programs, delivery modes, and markets. It might also include redefining positions that are vacant to focus on new skills and abilities needed and on investing in focused professional development for ongoing staff. It may also include changing policies and procedures, working within the University and the CSU to expand options and remove barriers, and the like. Capacity building and contributing to strengthening the College for today and tomorrow are a part of each senior staff member's role. The Tseng College is not a static organization and its success depends

on its ability to move forward with strength and imagination, which requires senior professionals committed to a proactive and creative approach to support service leadership.

The Developing and Sustaining of a Reputation for Service Excellence for CSUN and the College: While excellence in support services and administrative processes makes an important positive difference in the educational experience of those CSUN serves through its Tseng College, building a reputation for service excellence and, in turn, exceptional levels of student success gives CSUN and the College an enduring competitive advantage that extends well beyond any individual participant or client. Similarly, faltering in the College's support services and/or the College's care for the success of those students/clients/partners the College serves on behalf of CSUN may adversely impact their educational experience and success. Often above and beyond the Tseng College's marketing efforts, a major source of enrollments in CSUN's programs offered through the College is "word of mouth" (the endorsement and recommendations from fields and/or colleagues). The positive (or negative) regard that prompts others to recommend CSUN's self-support programs to colleagues is based as much on an individual's experience with the excellence and distinction of each program offered, the student success in those programs, and with the quality and responsiveness of the College's support services that support program excellence and student success.