Student Support Services – HyFlex and Remote Work Groups

Due to operating framework similarities for Student Support Services in both the HyFlex and Remote models, the work groups have collaborated on the development of the recommendations contained in this update. These recommendations are largely applicable to both operating frameworks and have taken into consideration survey responses compiled by the remote work group from multiple directors.

Description from the CCSU Fall 2020 Campus Opening Plan:

Remote Framework: Some staff and faculty will work on campus on staggered schedules (on-campus hours reduced). Students will be able to receive on-ground administrative/student services on a limited basis (may be by appointment only).

HyFlex Framework: Some staff and faculty will work on campus on staggered schedules, but total on-campus hours should be reduced. On-ground administrative/student services will be available to students though some services may be by appointment-only.

For the purposes of this report, Student Support Services was defined as encompassing:

- Admissions & Recruitment (and all other units in Enrollment Management), New Student Programs
- Academic Advising (school-based advising centers, Explore Central, Academic Center for Student Athletes, and advising activities conducted by faculty)
- Learning Support (Learning Center and any programs housed in any of the advising centers)
- Student Services Departments (including, but not limited to large university-wide service providers such as: Registrar, Bursar, Financial Aid, Card Office, etc. and smaller/focused service providers such as: Student Disability Services, Victim Advocacy and Violence Prevention, Veterans Affairs, etc.)

Student Support Services Fall 2020 HyFlex and Remote Work Group Recommendations and Considerations.

Staff Scheduling & Departmental Operations

1. Office operations for virtual and on-campus services for Student Support Service units.

   Recommendation: Student Support Services areas should maintain remote standard operating hours of Monday through Friday, 8am – 5pm with full accessibility available remotely during this timeframe via: phone (using staff using Jabber or IP Communicator software); departmental and individual email; and one-on-one live virtual meetings using MS Bookings & MS Teams. Secure drop boxes should be installed outside of each department to permit students or other visitors to drop off documents, paperwork, checks, etc. A schedule of limited in-person service hours office hours should be maintained on as-needed basis, as determined by the Director in consultation with the applicable Division Head, to provide access to services that cannot otherwise be conducted remotely.

Beyond limited in-person service hours, departments may wish to permit staff to work from their physical office space on campus on a limited or rotational basis if there are specific non-student facing “back-office” tasks that cannot be easily conducted remotely. Examples include accessing incoming/outgoing mail, high volume processing, printing, using/obtaining office supplies, scanning, and faxing.

Consideration: While campus tours and recruitment activities are discussed in greater detail later in this report, attention will have to be given to managing the expectations and needs of prospective students who visit campus during the fall 2020 semester. For example, if a prospective student participates in a campus tour and would subsequently like to meet with a Financial Aid Counselor there may be some coordination of office hours and appointment availability for on-campus operations or advance communication about services that are available in-person vs those that are available virtually, such as virtual meetings with counselors or other department staff.
2. **Process and procedures for rotational staff schedules to maintain social distancing.**
   **Recommendation:**
   When departments that offer limited in-person service hours for services that cannot be offered remotely, the scheduling of staff shall be determined by the Director, in consultation with the appropriate Division Head. The first attempt to staff in-person hours should be voluntary. Directors should take into consideration employee preferences wherever possible and any Human Resources authorized accommodations that may prohibit an employee from working on-campus.

   Where appropriate and technologically possible, student employees, including Graduate Assistants and Graduate Interns, should be provided with opportunities to work remotely. If student employees must work on campus, departments should use a voluntary method wherever possible. Supervision, in both a remote and on-campus environment, remains critical. If student employees are working on campus there must be a supervisor also working on campus.

3. **Communication plan to students about how the campus will operate in fall 2020 at both a university-wide and departmental specific level that clearly makes available the current operational model and availability of services for each department.**
   **Recommendation:** The operating model of the campus should be communicated as soon as possible by way of mass communication to campus community, social media and the university website. From the COVID or CentralPipeline web pages, a virtual “one-stop shop” website should be developed with each office’s contact information and a summary of how their services are accessible.

   Each department should also ensure that their own website clearly and prominently list their operating hours, the ways their services can be accessed, and all the ways that students can interact with them, both virtually and in-person. Appropriate signage should be installed outside of each office that specifies their operating model, contact information and availability of virtual and in-person services.

4. **Procedures for internal in-person meetings of CCSU employees, such as staff and committee meetings.**
   **Recommendation:** All meetings should be held remotely when feasible via MS Teams. If a business need requires meeting in-person, all social distancing protocols must be followed, and cleaning of space coordinated with Facilities. Because many departments lack a physical space large enough to meet social distancing protocols, we recommend the creation of a few spaces on campus that could be used for required in-person meetings, such as a temporarily converted unused classroom space that could accommodate groups of six – twelve people.

5. **Implementation of virtual meetings between rotational staff to ensure effective communications between on-campus and remote staff.**
   **Recommendation:** Student Support Services areas should conduct internal departmental meetings remotely using MS Teams on a weekly basis, at minimum. Meetings should include staff who are working remotely and on-campus.

**Physical Space Considerations**

1. **Departments often have small and/or densely arranged workspaces with limited walls or privacy dividers where many staff and students have traditionally worked in proximity of each other. Limited on-ground activities or alternate delivery methods may continue to be necessary.**

   Ultimately each unit will have to determine what works best within their physical space configurations.
   **Recommendations for consideration by the unit:**
o Rotation of staff schedules is suggested, but not required based on staff size and ability to distance appropriately.

o Take an inventory of what services can be done well remotely and continue to do so to limit the number of people on campus and to avoid disruption if another campus shutdown is necessary.

o Consider ways to offer in the moment services remotely (drop-in office hours on Teams, Chatrooms, etc.)

o Alternate remote and in-person appointments to stagger visitors and allow for disinfecting.

o Dedicated entrances and exits.

o One-way hallways.

o Common areas and procedures for these areas (microwaves, copiers, etc.)

o Student use spaces within departments (computer, printing, etc.)? Cleaning implications.

o Consider a solution for receiving outside vendors that normally enter office areas for pick-ups and deliveries (I.e. Infoshred, B.W. Mason)

General Recommendation: All reception areas should have plexiglass barriers and hand sanitizing stations. Waiting area furniture can be removed or arranged differently to discourage guests from lingering. Each office has the discretion to operate on an appointment only basis and limit guests. Offices can explore remote check-ins similar to doctor’s offices for appointments. In addition, consider guidelines for safe social distancing while in line.

General Recommendation: Create reservable spaces that can be used for in-person meetings with appropriate physical distancing such as unused classrooms. This would allow for a neutral, bookable space, which would be maintained by facilities. Unused classroom spaces could temporarily be converted for this purpose.

Technology Considerations

1. Inequitable or insufficient technology deployments. Identify any additional technology & hardware needs.

   Recommendation: Several Student Support Service Departments have reported having insufficient CCSU technology to support fully remote operations or a combination of remote and on-ground work. This issue is more prominent for part-time (UA) and student employees, including Graduate Assistants and Graduate Interns, who perform critical tasks for departments. For example, Academic Coaches in The Learning Center who were provided with Chromebooks that lack the capabilities necessary to perform the required responsibilities of their positions. The work group recommends setting a baseline technology standard for all employees (full-time, part-time, student) of a CCSU issues laptop or desktop that supports access to university technological resources and supports communication through supported CCSU software such as Jabber and MS Teams for video conferencing. Specialized or unique hardware may be necessary for departments that carry out specialized tasks. Given the likelihood that employees will be, on varying levels, working both remotely and on-campus this fall semester, the work group also recommends the deployment of laptop docking stations. IT should implement an immediate review of the level of technology deployed to university departments and provide a process for departments to address current technological limitations prior to the start of the fall 2020 semester.

2. Adoption of standardized tool for interactive or synchronous web-based video/audio communication or between staff/departments or with students with a goal to provide a common system that student use with all student support service units.

   Recommendation: MS Teams is Information Technology’s preferred platform for administrative functions at CCSU and should be deployed and fully used by all Student Support Services departments. MS Teams is integrated with Office 365 and provides access to video conferencing, audio calls, chat, and file sharing along
with connections to many other Office 365 products. While MS Teams has some limitations, largely limiting the display of the number of video call participants to nine, forthcoming enhancements to the software by Microsoft will significantly increase this number to forty-nine. The workgroup recommends that MS Teams users keep the application open on their computer during their workday, much like users do with MS Outlook, in order to make the most of the available chat and phone features that Teams offers.

3. **Electronic means for students to conduct many student-facing business processes to reduce in-person visits to departments across campus for signatures and approvals**

   **Recommendation:** To reduce in-person foot traffic in many departments, implement the Hyland Unity Forms workflow product prior to the start of the fall 2020 semester to enable electronic approval, routing, status confirmation and electronic processing of student forms.

4. **Offer an appointment-only model for critical in-person services and offer virtual appointments using a standard appointment scheduling system that can be deployed to all student serving departments and provide consistency in the student experience.**

   **Recommendation:** MS Bookings is Information Technology’s preferred appointment scheduling system and should be deployed and fully used by all Student Support Services departments. MS Bookings is integrated with Office 365 and MS Teams where a URL for a live video chat is automatically sent to the student upon booking. MS Bookings and MS Teams can also be used for “drop-in” office hours. Additionally, faculty advisors and Department Chairs could leverage MS Bookings and MS Teams for academic advising appointments. The work group also strongly recommends the implementation of chat-bot AI solutions that service departments could make available to students 24 hours a day 7 days a week for common questions.

5. **Deploy kiosks throughout campus that offer virtual office visits to frequently visited service departments. The kiosks would provide the equivalent of a virtual video meeting with real time answers from appropriate staff members.**

   **Recommendation:** Kiosks to be placed around campus (such as in the WD Atrium) for immediate virtual face-to-face contact, similar to the Achieve Credit Union model currently in the bookstore (see https://www.alicereceptionist.com/features/greet/ for example). CCSU Information Technology should evaluate how the kiosks could integrate with department phone systems, department websites, MS Bookings/Teams, and chat-bot AI solutions.

6. **Develop and publicize additional technology training for staff that focuses on optimization and deployment of existing IT resources, computers, phones, software, etc., with a goal of standardizing student-facing administrative technology that individual departments use, where appropriate.**

   **Recommendation:** Student Support Services Departments should reference Appendix 1 that provides an action-oriented checklist for each department head to consider and/or implement in preparation for Fall 2020. Technology recommendations make up a considerable portion of this checklist and links to available training resources, such as videos and instructional documentation are included.

7. **Develop additional web-based content, such as short instructional videos or interactive tutorials, for common student-facing processes/procedures. Consider consolidating instructional resources to a student virtual one-stop web presence with quick links to web resources from multiple offices/departments.**
**Recommendation:** In connection with the Kizer’s Corner initiative (J. Tully) include links on this website, Central Pipeline and departmental webpages to currently available instructional video for common student processes identified by each Student Support Services department. Videos can be created using the Teams record meeting feature or Kaltura Capture software. Videos can be posted to CCSU Mediaspace site at https://mediaspace.ccsu.edu and linked to on various CCSU webpages or included in correspondence sent to students.

8. **Establish a university-wide student technology standard for students that clearly identified the needed baseline technology to be successful in and out of the classrooms and to interact virtually with CCSU. To address unmet student technology needs, a process should be implemented where both incoming and continuing students are made aware of technology needs and provided with low cost or no cost options to acquire or use the needed resources or services (hardware, software, high-speed internet access).**

**Recommendation:** The work group recognizes the importance of communication with students prior to the Fall 2020 that clearly identified the technology needs for the upcoming semester - hardware, software, and internet access. For students who are unable to easily obtain any required technology, CCSU should make available low-cost or no-cost options. Technology training should be provided to students prior to the start of the fall 2020 semester that encompasses many of the commonly used academic and administrative tools at CCSU – WebEx, Teams, Blackboard, Banner Web-Web Central, etc. Accessibility standards for ADA requirements, such as captioning options on Teams and WebEx should be included with any student training. For new incoming first year and transfer students, there are opportunities to include much of this training as modules in the new online orientation system. From an academic perspective, there may be software that is used by some faculty and not others, such as Proctorio for online assessments, that individual faculty or departments may need to provide additional training for their students beforehand. Faculty are encouraged to include as much information about the technology platforms they will be using in their syllabi. Student Support Services departments should include details about their software, including links to training material, screenshots, videos, etc., on their websites whenever possible.

**Campus Events & Participation in External Events**

1. **Campus tour program limitations or guidelines that may be necessary to continue operations.**

**Recommendation:** The ability to host campus tours during fall 2020 is still possible for prospective undergraduate students. The Office of Undergraduate Recruitment and Admissions have developed routes that allows groups to enter through one entrance and exit through another at most tour stops; this method of entering and exiting buildings can be implemented at all stops during the tour. Information Sessions and group tours should be limited in number as deemed appropriate by the Governor’s guidelines for both indoor and outdoor gatherings. The Paul Gianaris Welcome Center, used for undergraduate admissions information session, will need to be modified to keep within social distance guidelines. The Center should have sanctifying equipment for both guests and staff usage and will also need to be properly cleaned after and before each use. Admissions should consider which outside location might be feasible to hold an information session presentation.

All staff, tour guides, and guests must wear face coverings on campus, including at the information session and on the campus tour. Face coverings can be provided to those who do not have one. The Graduate Admissions Office does not currently offer a formal campus tour program; they can continue to meet with students on an individual basis.

Utilizing virtual tour options for both undergraduate and graduate prospective students to compliment the on-campus tour opportunity. As a result of limiting number of tour options and number of people on a tour, the virtual information session and tour can assist with highlighting Central to a greater audience. Undergraduate Admissions does provide a virtual tour option; potentially looking to upgrade the virtual tour and placing it in a more prominent area on the website can increase visitors. The Undergraduate Admissions office has been
providing virtual information session since April for prospective students. The Graduate Admissions office does not offer a virtual campus tour for its prospective students. Both departments need to increase their video libraries to use for recruitment.

**Consideration:** Provide tour guides with gloves in order to open doors at each stop. Is it possible to have touchless doorways as tours enter and exit buildings on our campus, including at the welcome center?

2. **Events that typically occur on campus – large events such as recruitment open houses or new student orientation, and smaller events such as trainings, speakers, etc.**

   **Recommendation:** Effective June 17, 2020, limits on all social and recreational gatherings are raised to 25 people indoors and 100 people outdoors, subject to safety restrictions and existing orders and business sector rules. ([https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Coronavirus/COVID-19-FAQs.pdf?la=en](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Coronavirus/COVID-19-FAQs.pdf?la=en)). These guidelines make it difficult to host on campus in person recruitment events such as Open House, Accepted Student Days, and Orientation. Although restrictions might be lifted as we draw near the start of the fall semester, these recruitment events will need to be reimagined.

   The ability to host these events virtually is possible. During the spring 2020, Undergraduate and Graduate Admissions held virtual Open House and Accepted Student Day events. This summer 2020, New Student Programs is hosting orientation virtually. The offices will need support for technological needs in order to ensure a quality program for prospective students, staff, and faculty.

   **Consideration:** Smaller events are possible as long as guidelines are strictly followed. Whenever possible, utilize a virtual environment for speakers, presentations, professional development, committee meetings, and other smaller events.

3. **Local and regional travel or participation in off-campus events, with a focus on recruitment events and community events.**

   **Recommendation:** All departments should adhere to the guidelines of the CDC, State, BOR, and Central Connecticut State University as it relates to traveling outside of the state of Connecticut. Department heads should be able to determine which off campus events are essential for their departments. Some recruitment events have already been moved to a virtual program for fall 2020. In addition to the face to face interaction that takes place between a university representative and a prospective student, these recruitment events allow the university to collect prospective student information and share publications that highlight Central. A plan to collect this data and share relevant information virtually should be developed and, in most cases, enhanced.

   **Consideration:** Provide any equipment that will make the virtual events as secure and well run as possible from a virtual environment. Look at opportunities to open offices on campus after normal working hours to limit at home distractions and more secure internet usage.
Appendix 1 – Fall 2020 Student Support Services Department Operations Checklist

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

❑ Choose a communication method for your department to receive and provide important updates, using one or more of these methods: Group email messages, Telephone, Remote Meetings (MS Teams or WebEx), Online Chat (MS Teams).
❑ Document your internal communication plan and ensure all members have access to the plan.
❑ Assign responsibilities to individuals and include contact information. Include clear instructions for everyone’s responsibilities.

DEPARTMENT OPERATION LOGISTICS

❑ In consultation with your ExComm VP or Chief Officer, define your office hours:
  • On-campus office hours and available services
  • Virtual office hours and available services
❑ Determine staffing:
  o On-campus staff (rotational schedule to ensure social distancing)
  o Virtual staff and availability methods (remote meetings, phone, online chat)
❑ Determine staff call-out, coverage and operations continuity procedures
❑ Update your department web site with hours of operation and services offered in virtual or on-campus formats
❑ Paper mail delivery – register for ScanOptics (mail scanning and e-delivery): Mail Scanning Opt-In
❑ Determine usage protocols for shared spaces within your office suite (copiers, breakrooms, hallways, meeting spaces, service areas) in collaboration with Facilities Management.

TECHNOLOGY

❑ Configure access to CCSU office phone numbers:
  • Jabber – any employee with a CCSU extension, may be installed on computers and mobile devices.
  • Cisco IP Communicator/Softphone – departments with Contact Centers for main phone line routing, may be installed on CCSU-issued computers only.
❑ Implement an Appointment scheduling system (virtual appointments or in-person appointments):
  • Microsoft Bookings (recommended) – any employee with a BlueNet/Office 365 account. Departments may designate employees to manage a departmental appointment calendar, and all employees may also create their own. Online meetings integrate directly with Microsoft Teams.
❑ Leverage Tools for Departmental Communication/Collaboration:
  • Microsoft Teams (recommended)- any employee with a BlueNet/Office 365 account. Conduct video/audio meetings and use for online chat. Teams also offers a file share solution for departments.
  • WebEx – any employee may request an account. Conduct video/audio meetings.
❑ Deploy Web-Friendly eForms:
  • Adobe Acrobat DC - any employee with a BlueNet/Office 365 account. Create fillable forms with a standard digital signature field to be posted on web sites or emailed.
  • Adobe Sign - any employee with a BlueNet/Office 365 account. Create fillable forms, request signatures via email routing.
❑ Request Secure Enclave access for ERP Systems (Banner/Hyperion/BlueTrack) when off-campus:
  o Direct access when using a CCSU-issued computer (no additional access request needed)
  o Request remote desktop access when using a personally-owned computer off-campus
❑ If needed, discuss and request additional IT equipment needs with IT.
Appendix 2 – Recruitment Event and Campus Tour Plans for Area Colleges

1. Southern Connecticut State University
   - SCSU will continue to host large events as scheduled for the fall with a maximum of 250 students (including guest), with tours of no more than 10 so that we can continue to provide social distancing. We plan on not only having masks available for folks that come without – as well as to have the face-shield for the tour guides.
   - SCSU will also simulcast the event via our online PlatformQ/Social Media – so that others can join in for the larger events.
   - SCSU will provide General Information Session – offered online with the virtual tour
   - SCSU considering two sessions per day Monday through Saturday (5 students with 1 guest) – based upon room availability – given that we will probably have to repurpose some of our spaces to deliver on ground courses.
   - SCSU interviews will be conducted by appointment only; will allow for students to request in person sessions or via WebEx, Teams, and or Zoom.
   - SCSU Group tour request at this time has not been considered – but is not off the table.

2. Western Connecticut State University
   - West Conn will not host Large events this fall
   - West Conn is considering small events, such as mini Open House
   - West Conn is planning for on campus tours; most tours are smaller in number – limiting guest should not be an issue
   - West Conn will also utilize virtual tours and events this fall

3. Gateway Community College
   - Gateway’s Open House will be virtual for fall 2020
   - Gateway currently has no plan to do on campus tours for fall 2020

4. Goodwin College
   - Goodwin provide individual tours – this could continue to happen, however, currently no guests will be allowed on campus for fall 2020.
   - Goodwin does not host an Open House. They are working on developing a virtual campus tour.

5. Sacred Heart University
   - no decisions made yet for Fall tours

6. Albertus Magnus College
   - Albertus will not change their daily tour – they only do individual tours.
   - Albertus might have smaller mini Open Houses; instead of one large event.