



Students of Coeur d'Alene

Underserved &
Underwhelmed

Brittany Shands
Rebecca Pratt
J. Lyon

Keoni Harrison
Crystal Carney

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Abstract

At the University of Idaho's Coeur d'Alene location, the Harbor Center, English students have experienced a lack of involvement and connection to the main campus in Moscow. This disconnect can be illustrated by several specific problems that are discussed at length in this paper. These problems do not encompass the entirety of issues Coeur d'Alene English students face, but they are the ones we feel are most important and the easiest to remedy. There is a lack of student opportunity to become involved in extracurricular activities and groups on campus, limited professional opportunities, and inadequate skill-building experiences. This paper contains several ways these problems can be addressed with an emphasis on improving communication between the two campuses.

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Introduction

In the following pages are the problems within the University of Idaho that directly affect its Coeur d'Alene (CDA) English students, as well as the Coeur d'Alene student body as a whole. The problems are not without solutions, and just as the issues are highlighted by Coeur d'Alene students, the solutions are proposed by students with first-hand experience of campus life in CDA. With these proposals, this team hopes to benefit students finishing their four-year English degrees, as well as new students just joining the UI-Coeur d'Alene family.

Problems

1

New-student orientation

Because students in Coeur d'Alene are not attending any classes on the Moscow campus, they may often feel a sense of disconnect from the larger student body and the institution itself. Many who were new to the university reported that they were ill-informed of the resources available to them through the university. Based on what information we could find, it appears that the Harbor Center does not offer an official orientation event—group or otherwise—for new UI students. Since many CDA students are transfer students from NIC, this introductory phase to a new university is apparently skipped entirely. Because of this, students may miss out on the opportunities and benefits that Moscow students have easy access to such as having a clear outline to the steps in their program, events throughout the year, and opportunities to explore. This can cause excess stress, feelings of being overwhelmed, negative impact on grades, and even affect their physical health. Students going through all of these things need support to help them conquer their struggles, and they need to feel a sense of belonging.

2

Club opportunities

Clubs are a way for students to connect outside of class, especially with those with whom they share a common interest. For CDA students, however, this isn't quite so feasible. Not only is it difficult to find clubs online, but they aren't readily accessible. We were able to find online, three campus publications (The Blot, The Argonaut, and Vandalism) that were available to varying degrees to the CDA English students who were motivated to find them. There seems to be only one English-related club listed on Engage UIdaho that is available to undergraduate English students—an independent creative writing workshop called Independent Creative Writing Workshop—whose meetings are currently held in person only.

If there are any unofficial clubs, they are impossible to discover without the help of online marketing. Information regarding these groups might be relayed by word of mouth on the

Moscow campus, but CDA students do not have access to such casual means of communication. All staff and faculty members that were contacted relayed that they had no information to share about official or unofficial clubs.

Faculty members were difficult to communicate with regarding these extracurricular opportunities, and Harbor Center staff seemed at a loss as to what our options might be in CDA. Despite the existing partnerships between the University of Idaho and North Idaho College, NIC clubs are strictly for NIC students and those concurrently enrolled. The absence of student organizations hinders what many consider a core part of the college experience. It can eliminate a student's ability to socialize—especially with other students in the same program—as well as learning and growth opportunities gained from healthy discourse.

3

Professional events

Students on the Moscow campus have access to professional resources throughout the school year that simply are not available to UI-CDA students. Resources like networking opportunities, welcome events and orientations where students meet faculty and staff who can help them through their college career, or faculty office hours where students may go for help or to talk more casually. According to the UIdaho Events calendar, an official welcome event (Convocation) is hosted in Moscow as well as other recurring events like Homecoming, Innovation Month and Parent and Family Weekends. The UI English Department also hosts its own welcome party at the start of the school year, and more specialized events like the Undergraduate Invitational Reading, which have traditionally been hosted in Moscow without a means for CDA students to become involved, indeed, without knowing they're even happening. Not only are there opportunities for academic recognition at these events, but they also present professionals in the CDA English student's field of study for networking opportunities that could prove invaluable.

UI-CDA students are generally restricted to what happens in their virtual classrooms. More often, UI students reach out to NIC faculty they might have already met or staff at the Harbor Center to help them with their registration issues, academic and professional advice, and networking opportunities. This method has its restrictions, however, as students work to find information without the support of the University to guide them or open doors that may be closed. If UI-CDA students had access to events like those held on the Moscow campus (or are at least made aware of them), they could resolve part of the disconnect issue and make professional connections likely needed upon graduation.

4

Honor Society

The English Honor Society, Sigma Tau Delta, is an organization on the Moscow campus that does not reach students in CDA. As graduating seniors, it's only because of the virtual classroom environment that we have even become

aware that such a thing existed. Even if we had known about the campus chapter, paid membership dues, and joined remotely, we would have been unable to participate in the club's activities due to their in-person meetings. This is another opportunity missed by qualifying CDA students because we didn't know to ask for it. UI-CDA students are fairly resourceful given their circumstances but still struggle by inadvertently being left in the dark.

Solutions

1

Consistency

While this problem is multifaceted and complicated, there are some things the University of Idaho can do to better help students on satellite campuses around the state.

- The first step is to guarantee that every incoming student is informed of the benefits at their disposal as a Uldaho student, even if they're not located on the main campus in Moscow. This could be accomplished a number of ways with virtual events, specialized communications (i.e. email, Harbor Center-specific marketing, etc.), one-on-one orientation options, and a version of Moscow's convocation and orientations made available on a smaller scale. (The Harbor Center's grab-bag style Week of Welcome is a nice thought, but its execution feels even more disconnected from the student population.)
- It would also be helpful if a checklist were made that outlined what staff should cover with each new student to ensure they were made aware of every available resource and that everyone got the same information every time.

2

Connection

A lack of information about, and access to, clubs currently exists at the CDA Harbor Center. We propose some or all of the following actions be taken to alleviate the invisible stresses this causes many CDA students.

- Give clubs access to a classroom with telecommuting capabilities. They currently meet wherever they choose, but with a Zoom-capable classroom, they could allow CDA students to easily join the discussion, could even allow students who can't physically attend to still be present. If unofficial clubs do exist, CDA students should be informed of their existence.
- Create a virtual bulletin board space where all English Department events are posted. This allows students and alumni from outside the Moscow area to know what is going on.
- Require English related clubs and organizations to make available an officer position for CDA students.

- Revisit the contractual partnership between UIdaho and North Idaho College to determine whether CDA-based clubs and organizations might be able to include UI-CDA students in their meetings and events.

3

Events

One of the biggest hurdles (and one of the easiest to overcome) is communication. CDA students don't know which questions to ask to find opportunities that may not be advertised to them.

- One possible solution to this could be a virtual bulletin board on a website where student organizations, as well as UI, could post relevant flyers advertising events and opportunities. Email notifications are easily missed or lost and having information available in one place would be beneficial to a student searching for opportunities.
- It's feasible that UI could arrange transportation for interested students who may not be able to get to Moscow on their own.
- Virtual attendance is also an option for events held inside office hours and smaller events that could take place inside a virtual classroom.
- Invest in technology that allows virtual participation in all English events, including (but not limited to) the following:
 - Sigma Tau Delta meetings
 - Student Welcome Events
 - Group Orientations
 - Undergraduate Invitational Reading
 - Club hosted events
 - Campus performances

4

Marketing

Targeted marketing is an easy way for the UI English Department to communicate resources and opportunities to CDA students. We propose that the following steps be taken to improve student awareness of the existence of an English Honor Society.

- A possible solution to the Sigma Tau Delta problem is to advertise to UI-CDA students specifically with marketing material at the Harbor Center and distribute it at the Welcome Week of every new school year.
- Sigma Tau Delta could easily maintain an officer position which is filled by a CDA student representative each year.
- Members of Sigma Tau Delta can move their meetings online, as we've witnessed this past year. When asked directly, the 2021 President of the English Honor Society, Sigma Tau Delta, did say they were willing to work with CDA students to ensure their future

involvement by offering virtual meetings via Zoom, though there has never been an offering like that in the past.

- The work of publishing *Vandalism*, the student-produced magazine, can also all be done remotely. In fact, many professional publishers are moving their work to an online format given the ease of communication and immediacy of the produced work.
- For in-person meetings and events like public readings that take place off-campus, UI could provide transportation to and from campus for interested students.

Conclusion

These issues and their solutions have been analyzed by students who have experienced confusion or a lack of support from the University of Idaho. Feedback from current English Department faculty and staff was requested by this team as they developed potential solutions for these specific problems, but none was provided. The key issue identified was a lack of community building between those in Moscow and satellite campuses.

The community on the Moscow campus is arguably one of the best in the state. This team believes the Coeur d'Alene campus is capable of achieving this same success if given the proper resources and support. A few simple changes can make all the difference. A shift from focusing on managing students from afar to connecting with them and getting them involved will create a chain reaction, improving the lives of all.

We believe that if these issues are acknowledged and addressed by the university, the result will be improved success rates, growth of the student body in Coeur d'Alene, and an overall betterment for UI-CDA and Moscow.