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Student Needs Assessment Tool

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WMU Mini Grant 2021: Student Needs Assessment Tool

General Description

This project aimed to create a catch-all survey to address information sharing silos between support services across Western Michigan University (WMU). Collaboratively led by the directors of Autism Services Center and Student Support Services, this team created a 5- to 7- minute survey that can be used by entry-level support staff as a preliminary intake document. This document uses a mix of behavioral self-assessment questions and dichotomous yes/no questions to evaluate the severity of need across the various categories of the student's "wellbeing wheel". The grant team achieved its goal of designing and testing a survey that could be used and shared by various departments.

While designing this survey, the grant team was careful to include only those questions which were (a) appropriate to ask incoming students and (b) could be shared across other departments without violating the student's academic and medical privacy. Furthermore, only the questions with actionable solutions or next steps were included. The survey considers (a) the probability of incoming students sharing private information, (b) the possibility that the accuracy of student self-report is limited, (c) the effect of lengthy surveys on survey completion, and (d) the distinct components of the wellness wheel for which student support services at WMU are qualified to offer support.

Specific Outcomes

Students who matriculate through WMU may be exposed to and benefit from several student support services, often simultaneously. This survey will serve as a baseline between these services and can be used to locate any academic or personal "red flags" early into student-service relationships. This survey will be used as a low-effort and short conversation starter that can direct service staff to areas of need and concern efficiently and organically. Furthermore, this survey will be shared with other departments that can use the information when designing individualized student support. By sharing existing data, WMU's student service providers eliminate waste and redundancy in their process while also allowing students to avoid repetitions of potentially stress-inducing conversations.

Summary

This assessment has the potential to reduce waste and eliminate redundancy across student-serving departments at WMU. Locally, this assessment helps to formalize the student intake process and concretize required intake data. This assessment will help our department establish a common baseline and evaluate aggregate effects over time.