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Section: News

Target WC: 250-500

Actual WC: 536

Long Headline: Optimism for the MSU student

Short Headline: Why do students attend MSU?

Pull quotes: "...as a community, though we are all headed in different directions, we can help one another realize our talents and ability to impact the world."

Photo/Illustration Needs:

Tags: MSU, bobcat, student,

MSU is a school tucked in a small valley in the Rocky Mountains, with a small city life and cold winters. So, why do so many students choose to attend? A research team lead by Tricia Seifert came together fall of 2016 and created an online survey for a random sample of incoming freshmen. On Feb. 7, those results were presented in a participatory seminar called "Why Students Become a Bobcat." The purpose was for the team to relay their findings and contemplate through group discussion what this means for MSU and how faculty and staff can support students to the best of their ability.

The first-year sample included about half in-state and half out-of-state students. At first, when asked to define success, the majority of students named three things: satisfaction in life, being able to support themselves and expanding their horizons beyond college. They were also asked what reasons they decided to attend university. The team divided these answers into internal and external reasons. Internally, many of them felt it was their life goal, led them to their chosen career path or seemed like their best choice of school. Externally, some felt that college was an expectation from their families or society, or felt they could not be successful unless they got a college degree.

It was suggested to implement developmental advising rather than just transactional advising. Transactional advising is helping students who have goals in mind, while developmental advising focuses on students who need help determining their career paths. The group decided that might mean helping students through showing them the realities of each career after graduation.

David Henderson, faculty member for the Department of Education, talked about how we need to help people realize their goals before they slip out of school, typically between their first and second semester of college. "What is success for a kid coming from a remote town in Montana that has high poverty?" Henderson asked the group. "Could finding success that mean that we help kids find their gifts and limitations, and then ask them how they could use that to support their community? There's an individual and community aspect to finding success."

The group continued to discuss ways in which advisers could go beyond just helping students get through college, but help them find their talents and passions that could impact the greater

community. They talked about building community on campus and beyond involved in this process. Henderson left the group off by saying, “together we travel alone.”

As a community, though we are all headed in different directions, we can help one another realize our talents and ability to impact the world. Some of these techniques are modeled in Career Services as professionals connect with students to discover their passions and interests, provide an opportunity for internships and help them create a roadmap to achieving those goals.