

2007

Peer guide website for new CSUMB students

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Peer Guide Website for New CSUMB Students



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Journalism and Media Studies/ Single Subject Waiver in English

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Spring 2007

Division of Humanities and Communication

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Introduction

Many researchers have studied college students and the process of adapting to college life. Most researchers have found that students both new and transfer need help to do so. Issues such as new environment, harder class

schedule, living away from parents/family and meeting new people all take their toll and the physical and mental well being of a student. Most schools recognize that this can potentially become a serious problem and have programs to help acclimate students to their new environment.

Though such programs are in place students attending CSU Monterey Bay have a more difficult times adapting to their new life because of the unique technology, curriculum and dynamics of the CSUMB campus. Students are required to use many new forms of technology on a daily bases and rarely find the support they need provided by the school. Students both new and transfer are forced to find peers willing to help them navigate the new systems while still being expected to keep up with class work. Because of CSUMB's distinctive mission statement the classes here are much more interactive and engaging than some students may be comfortable with. Grasping the concept of group work and service learning while also figuring out the unique language that surrounds the classes can prove as stumbling blocks to a student already trying to adapt to a new environment. The school has programs in place to help freshmen get acquainted with the campus and those living in their surroundings. Transfer students who need the same support do not have any such program to attend. Many students are not aware of the programs either because the advertisement of functions is poorly developed.

As students who experienced this problem as both a transfer student and as a new student we realized that we had a lot of information that could be useful to students in the future. Our knowledge combined with that of other students who encountered the same obstacles may provide an augmentation to information already provided to students at CSUMB. If this information is not provided

students will never fully acclimate to life at CSUMB, which will impact both their academic and social college experience greatly.

Literature Review

Most colleges have websites and pamphlets with information that pertains to new students. This information is used to guide them through their transition into their new academic community. The goal of our research is to find what is lacking from the current literature at CSUMB for support of the new students and to use this information to develop a fresh perspective, more relevant information and a more efficient way to communicate this information to the incoming students.

Previous studies and literature in this area is very broad, scientific and impersonal. We plan to use our research and our experience as students to make our information more personal and therefore more accessible to students as they are adjusting to a new social, academic, and economic environment.

ADAPTATION:

There are many different levels to which a new student needs to adapt. A new social environment, new surroundings, a higher level of academic stimulation, and a new found independence. CSUMB, being a very diverse campus, has to cater to students from all different backgrounds, cultures, and ways of life. These students in turn all have very different ways of coping with new student life. Women, men and even different ethnicities have different experiences and ways of dealing with the stresses that their new life presents. Without a successful adjustment and transition to college, students many drop out. Nearly 30-40% of college students drop out without obtaining a college

degree, and many of these students never return to college to complete degrees (Consolvo, 2002). Individuals who are able to succeed at handling their independence and newfound freedoms are able to make new relationships while maintaining old relationships (Holmbeck & Leake, 1999).

Social Adaptation:

Academics are not the only important factor in a student's adaptation. "Personal adjustment and integration into the social fabric of campus life play a role at least as important as academic factors in student retention" (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994, 286). Interviews conducted with CSUMB students showed that they feel more comfortable at the school and have an easier time living in a new community if they participated in some sort of extracurricular activity (Interview #1, 2007). The transition to college is difficult for many students and students need support and encouragement to join various organizations and participate in activities to feel like they are a part of the university community (Consolvo, 2002). Through this research we found that the involvement in extracurricular activities is important for the growth of a student on the campus. Using this information we plan to incorporate this into our guidebook by letting the students know what type of activities are available to them on the CSUMB campus and the importance of finding something outside of academics that they are comfortable with.

Academic Adaptation:

Through interviews with CSUMB students and from our own experience we have found that the academic situation at CSUMB is different than most colleges. Because of the unique structure of the school and the original language that is present on the campus it can be difficult for a student to become comfortable in their academic situation. Being secure in your academic tract and having accurate advising and planning for semester schedules are factors that

increase a student's ability to adapt to their new academic setting. A study of students at Michigan State University in 2001 showed that forming a relationship with an advisor and having some sort of prior contact with the university helped to ease the transition (Flaga, 2006). In relevance to our research this will help students with the jargon associated with CSUMB and the way they name their classes and majors. We will point out in our handbook to new students that the CSUMB jargon can be confusing and it helps to meet with an advisor so that they can be clear on what the acronyms and slang words unique to our campus mean and their parallels with other universities.

TRANSFER STUDENTS:

Transfer students, though also new to universities are often overlooked in the activities and programs made to help adjust students to the new campus life. In her article "Lost, Alone and Not a Freshman" Laura Pappano discusses the adversity that transfers students face when they enter a new school just as lost as the freshman but expected to know their way around college. She states that a "Ball State University survey...found that while they [transfers] are more academically confident than first-year students, they struggle more socially" (2). CSUMB has a high rate of classes that require some sort of online interaction in the form of discussion boards or Blackboard, which basically outlines many courses all via internet technology. Freshmen at CSUMB are required to take a course that introduces them to this technology and information and transfer students are not. Interview and personal experience show that the lack of instruction in these areas affects grades and ability to feel integrated into academics. They also stated that the bulk of their knowledge in these areas came from other students and peers who knew the technology. We want to let transfer students know that there is a deficit in the support that they get when they transfer here. We also will try and give an overview of these issues and

that the best way for them to get information is to make a connection with an existing student.

Another issue that is very prevalent at many colleges, but CSUMB in particular is the transferring of credits to the new school. Because CSUMB has a unique way of naming their classes it may be very difficult to figure out on your own where you credits apply. Again making connections with advisors and students in your major is highly recommended by students interviewed at CSUMB. Laura Pappano in her article "The Transfer Student Nightmare: Getting Credit Where Credit is Due" says to "bring course syllabuses and important tests, papers or projects to help explain the depth and breadth of previous course work" (2). We want to let students know that they should meet with advisors to be clear on what major they should pick and make sure enough of their credits transfer to make it worth it to attend CSUMB.

RESIDENTIAL LIFE:

CSUMB is a highly residential campus and living on campus is large part of many students experience at CSUMB. In our handbook we want to give an overview of the campus life of CSUMB including the dining halls, recreational facilities, health services and dorm life. "Residence hall climates have been likened to families, in terms of rules, boundaries and an atmosphere of care and concern for other members. The sense of community that a hall has is similar to a family unit, with students developing care and concern for other students. Resident assistants have often acted as older sibling and have assisted in creating a positive and warm environment in the halls (Barthelemy & Fine, 1995). The social climate has also been deemed important in assisting students' with adjustment to college. In their study of 121 undergraduate students living in residence halls, Barthelemy and Fine, (1995) found that personal support was significantly related to adjustment to college life. Students who felt that they had

a high level of support from members of the campus community had significantly higher levels of adjustment than students who felt that they did not have the support of others” (Enochs & Roland, 2006).

Methodology

For our capstone we started our research with peer insight to understand the issues students have. Most of the research and information that we will be using for our paper and for the final project is not in the form of literature but in interviews conducted with students attending CSUMB and from personal experience with acclimating to CSU Monterey Bay. We used this information then to find solutions to amend the problems the students pointed out. This is a limitation in the validity of our findings but it serves our purpose of making a *peer* guide to CSUMB.

For the research paper we also used a basis of educational research papers to understand why students need support when starting college. These documents were found using article database websites found on the CSUMB library website. We mainly used Ebsco Academic Search and Expanded Academic ASAP. Though the literature that we have found does not directly correlate to our research because our topic is specific to CSUMB, it has reinforced the concepts that we have found to be true in our experience. It will also help us to understand how to transmit our information to our audience more efficiently and to strengthen our understanding of student acclimation as a more universal dilemma. Also information we are linking to our website will be coming from the CSU Monterey website and CSUMB documents.

Findings

In our final year of school at CSUMB we have reflected on the ups and downs of our academic and social careers at the school. One thing that we both agreed upon coming from the position of a transfer student and a “native” or 4 year student was that there was a lack of support to aid us in our assimilation to life at CSUMB. Though we both have different experience to draw from we both suffered from a deficit of information from the school as an institute in multiple areas key to existence at a college campus. The goal of our research is to find what is lacking from the current literature at CSUMB for support of the new students and to use this information to develop a fresh perspective, more relevant information and a more efficient way to communicate this information to the incoming students.

For the broad scope of our research we examined the adaptation of students to college in general. There are many different levels to which a new student needs to adapt. A new social environment, new surroundings, a higher level of academic stimulation, and a new found independence. Without a successful adjustment and transition to college, students drop out. Nearly 30-40% of college students drop out without obtaining a college degree, and many of these students never return to college to complete degrees (Consolvo, 2002). Individuals who are able to succeed at handling their independence and newfound freedoms are able to make new relationships while maintaining old relationships (Holmbeck & Leake, 1999).

Academics are not the only important factor in a student’s adaptation. “Personal adjustment and integration into the social fabric of campus life play a role at least as important as academic factors in student retention” (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994, 286). Social life and activity in a new environment is a

building block for a healthy and well-rounded experience. The transition to college is difficult for many students and students need support and encouragement to join various organizations and participate in activities to feel like they are a part of the university community (Consolvo, 2002). Through this research we found that the involvement in extracurricular activities is important for the growth of a student on the campus.

We began our campus specific research by looking at the current website for CSUMB and concentrating especially on the “becoming a student” link. We also conducted interviews and mediated focus groups to find out how students were responding to the current information. The response that we received was that the information on the Prospective Student link and the CSUMB website in not adequate in aiding students. One reason there is such a lack of reception to the current site is because of the way the information is presented. According to Kristi Lopez, a Senior TAT major, “the CSUMB website is very confusing and you have to click on a lot of links to find what you need. I can almost never find anything to help me on my major’s website.” Prospective students need clear information in a relatively concise area for them to assimilate the knowledge and use it properly. This BLANK ambiguousness causes students to shy away from the website completely and rely on other sources for information and help. Some students don’t even use the school’s website to apply to the campus. “I went to CSUMentor.com and I filled out an application and sent it in. It was very easy, fill in the blanks” (Erin Lee, Junior Transfer).

As a solution to these problems that present themselves even before students attend the school we asked two questions. The first being what is missing from the current website? One of the first issues that we believed important to address was the fact that CSUMB has a unique culture that separates it from other college campuses. This is one of the appeals of coming to

the school, but it can also hinder the already difficult process of assimilating to college life. Some of the things that provide obstacles for the new students are: the technology used on campus, the amount of students living on campus and the fact that the campus is not dry (alcohol permitted on campus).

CSUMB being a newer school had the privilege to start out fresh in the age of technology. Almost every classroom is equipped with a computer and there are many computer labs on campus. The accessibility of this technology also means that students are required to know how to use it. Most courses have part or all of the material and course information online on the campus website or in Blackboard which is an interactive site teachers use to post the syllabus, post grades and have online meetings with students. Another component that is unique to the campus is the Firstclass email system. This email is for students, staff and faculty of CSUMB only and it navigates slightly different than other email sites. All of these things are “lifelines” (Chelsea Lanning, Junior) at CSUMB and “if you don’t know how to use them you fall behind.”

To help aid with this assimilation to technology every student is required to take a computer class to graduate. Students are told this when making their academic plans and registering for classes. What they are not told is how important this class is to their assimilation into the academics of the school. “I didn’t take my CST [Computer Science Technology] class until my second semester at school and I was completely lost until then” (Kellie Koorndyk, Sophomore). Ideally these computer courses should be required your first semester at the school, but that may not be possible. What we have done is stressed the importance of taking the class and learning everything possible about the computer and web-based part of the CSUMB.

Living on campus is an option that 68 percent of the student population has chosen. The atmosphere that is created by a large population of potential

classmates has been equated to a family unit. "Residence hall climates have been likened to families, in terms of rules, boundaries and an atmosphere of care and concern for other members. The sense of community that a hall has is similar to a family unit, with students developing care and concern for other students. Resident assistants have often acted as older siblings and have assisted in creating a positive and warm environment in the halls (Barthelemy & Fine, 1995). This atmosphere may be something that a new student desires, but also if they want to be away from this environment they should be informed that there is limited help from the school in finding off campus housing.

Another major issue that separates CSUMB from many campuses is the policies concerning alcohol on campus. CSUMB has two on campus dining facilities that serve alcohol. This factor may influence a student in many ways. It may deter them from coming to the school at all if they are not willing to be in that environment. It can affect their choice of living situations as the school does offer substance free halls and dorms. Or it simply may change where you eat on a regular basis. Students should be aware of this issue and the policies surrounding it when considering this campus.

CSUMB takes pride in its diversity but some of its diverse areas cause confusion for potential and current students. The multitude of acronyms and unique names for the classes and majors make it difficult for students to figure out where to place themselves academically. "Learning what all the acronyms stand for is like learning another language. It is a different struggle on top of already trying to deal with the new school and everything" (Laura Minnis, ESSP Junior). The acronyms explained on the current website are hard to find and incomplete. To make the assimilation to CSUMB's jargon the acronyms should be readily available and easily accessible. Also to make sure they are in the correct classes and major students should take the time to review the current

website, talk to advisors and even look at course syllabuses to find the academic path that is right for them.

Another way the language of CSUMB is a deterrent for students is the effect the unique language has on others perceptions of their education. Says one student when asked about others reactions to her explanation of her major, "People look at them and say 'what is that?' It is difficult to see what falls under what category." Again learning the details of a major in comparison to other schools is a big help here and students must be self motivated to do the homework on their major.

One group that goes overlooked a majority of the time when providing assistance to the assimilation to college life is transfer students. A fact that is often disregarded is that though transfer students are not new to the pressures of college life and its academics they are still new to the campus and they are still trying to find their way around a new social environment. A "Ball State University survey...found that while they [transfers] are more academically confident than first-year students, they struggle more socially." (2)

Transfers students also have to deal with transferring credits to the new college and getting credit for classes they have already taken. This can be even more difficult at CSUMB because of the language used in naming majors and classes. Because CSUMB is so unique in its class structure and the classes that are offered may not transfer with many of the classes taken at a different college. This information is not made readily accessible to students trying to transfer into the school and it usually comes as a shock when students are forced to take over the same or similar classes taken elsewhere. Laura Pappano in her article "The Transfer Student Nightmare: Getting Credit Where Credit is Due" says to "bring course syllabuses and important tests, papers or projects to help explain the depth and breadth of previous course work" (2).

Making students aware of the difficulties they may encounter when transferring into the school is a big part of our project. If students know what their major will be meeting with an advisor in that area will help them figure out what courses can be used in that area. If they come to the school undecided or as a lower division student meeting with the general education advisors will keep them on track with the lower division classes. Because there can be so much discrepancy in what courses will be accepted being preemptive in sending transcripts to the school will help you decide if it is logical to attend CSUMB.

The second question we asked was what is the most effective way to distribute the information to students. Our first answer was to put it into a different form. The website is not well received by the students that we interviewed and getting them the information in a different media could help them to retain the knowledge. Based on our personal experience and the response of students interviewed a guidebook or pamphlet was a highly suggested media for our peer information. This booklet would also increase the amount of potential students the information would reach, as it would target those who do not have Internet access. It could be placed in recruiting packets and distributed to high schools to deliver the information in a concise, accessible, tangible piece of literature.

Another way we would like to distribute our information is through a website. We would ideally like to have it attached to the CSUMB site and have it become a supplement to the information already provided for students. The site would be simple and easy to use with clear and easy to find information. Any information that may already be provided would become more accessible and succinct, which would in turn help ease a student's transition into CSUMB life.

Getting the word out to students from a new perspective will make a great difference in the careers of many future students. Peer insight has been one

of the most valuable tools that students can use to help them navigate through CSUMB. Students who have dealt with the same issues are able to help with the seemingly small details that make a lot of difference in the transition period of a new student. "Ask a lot of questions and talk to as many people as possible" (Chelsea Lanning, Junior). Making sure students know that our information is coming from their peers rather than an unconnected source will encourage them and in turn get them one step closer to a successful career at CSUMB.

Conclusion

Students at CSUMB need more assistance than what is provided to help them fully acclimate to life at this school. If students do not find the help elsewhere, they suffer the consequences of not adapting to the process or transfer to a school that they are more compatible with. This can be detrimental because then they have to go through the acclimating process again. There will always be new students, so this problem will not solve itself over night. By showing the need for new information the school can improve its current methods of helping new students. The school can only provide so much as they are separated from the experience of students. This mandates that student insight will change based on personal experience and the development of an integration program. Like most aspects of CSUMB this element will continually evolve along with the student experiences and the continual need for support.

Annotated Bibliography

Consolvo, C. (2002). Building student success through enhanced coordinated student services. *Journal of College Student Development*, 284-287.

Expanded Academic ASAP. California State University of Monterey Bay, Seaside. 28 Sept. 2006. Keyword: adaptation*, college.

We will use this piece to compare other school student services to that of CSUMB's. This piece tells how support in that area is crucial for students and that helps to solidify our conclusion that the student support at CSUMB is inadequate to help new students assimilate fully to academic life at CSUMB.

Enochs, Wendy K., and Catherine B. Roland. "Social adjustment of college freshmen: the importance of gender and living environment." *College Student Journal* 40.1 (March 2006): 63(11). Expanded Academic ASAP. California State University of Monterey Bay, Seaside. 28 Sept. 2006. Keyword: Adaptation*, college.

This piece talks about the importance of a constructive living environment when at college. This is important to our paper because of the high percentage of students living on campus at CSUMB and the amount of time they spend with their "adopted dorm family".

Figueroa, Gary. Personal interview. 7 Jan. 2007.

This interview will be helpful because it is the opinion of a coach on campus. He gave us information on what question students have coming in and how is able or unable to answer them based on what he can find on the website or what is provided to him as a coach.

Flaga, Catherine T. "The Process of Transition for Community College Transfer Students." Community College Journal of Research and Practice 30 (2006): 373-19. 17 Jan. 2007. Expanded Academic ASAP. California State University of Monterey Bay, Seaside. 28 Sept. 2006. Keyword: adaptation*, college.

This gives us information on what transfer students have to go through when the change schools. Many transfer students live on campus and have to go through the same assimilation to campus life as the freshmen do. This article is specific to community college students which make up a good portion of the students at CSUMB.

Holmbeck, G. N., & Leake, C. (1999). Separation-individuation and psychological adjustment in late adolescence. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 28, 563-581. Expanded Academic ASAP. California State University of Monterey Bay, Seaside. 28 Sept. 2006. Keyword: adaptation*, college.

This piece has information about the psychological reactions that students go through when presented with a new environment. It focuses on being away from home and being away from the family.

Pappano, Laura. "Lost, Alone and Not a Freshman." The New York Times 23 Apr. 2006. 17 Jan. 2007. Expanded Academic ASAP. California State University of Monterey Bay, Seaside. 28 Sept. 2006. Keyword: adaptation*, college.

This piece focuses on transfer students and the lack of support that they receive when they attend a new university. We can use this because we have many transfer students on campus. This will help to validate the feeling that most transfer students have that they should know what is going on but don't and have no one to help them.

Pappano, Laura. "The Transfer Student Nightmare: Getting Credit Where Credit is Due." The New York Times 23 Apr. 2006. 17 Jan. 2007. Expanded Academic ASAP. California State University of Monterey Bay, Seaside. 28 Sept. 2006. Keyword: transfer student, college.

This article concentrates specifically on the problems that transfer students have transferring credits when they transfer to a new school. It gives tips on how to avoid problems and steps to take in order to make sure your credits will transfer. Since CSUMB has such a unique curriculum this will be helpful to the incoming transfer students.

Student Athlete Focus Group. Personal interview. 9 Jan. 2007.

This interview will provide the perspective of student athletes on campus at CSUMB. They gave information on what drew them to the college, mostly athletics, and what it was like learning about the academics after they agreed to come here.

Student Focus Group 1. Personal interview. 5 Jan. 2007.

This interview with students on campus gave us many different problems that students have while attending the school or when applying. This added to the conclusions that we found based on our experiences. It also gave us lots of information about what students wanted out of a website when looking into this or any college.

Student Focus Group 2. Personal interview. 16 Jan. 2007.

This interview with students on campus also gave us many different problems that students have while attending the school or when applying. This added to the conclusions that we found based on our experiences. It also gave us lots of information about what students wanted out of a website when looking into this or any college.

Vignau, Sherrie. Personal interview. 7 Jan. 2007.

This interview with an assistant coach gave us insight again as to what the coaches know about life on campus. It gave us insight about what athletes are looking for in a campus and what aspects are deterring students from CSUMB and which one's are drawing them in. It also showed us what aspects of the website and campus some coaches are unaware of.

Appendix A: Link to Peer Guide Website

This is the link to our website [CSUMB Peer Information Guide](http://www.csumbpeerguide.info):

www.csumbpeerguide.info

Appendix B: Interdisciplinary Reflection Essay

ALEX'S INSIGHT

As a Single Subject in English Waiver student and a transfer student all of my classes at CSUMB were upper division and geared towards teaching. Most of my classes had portions of the curriculum devoted to making the students comfortable in a classroom setting teaching English curriculum. I even took classes where I had to prepare a mock lesson plan to teach to the class or to deliver to a real class of young students.

One class that really solidified my thoughts of becoming a teacher was the Service Learning course that I took in my second year. It was Creative Writing for Teachers and we not only had to explore our skills as a creative writer but also our skills in evoking creative writing in youth. This class allowed me to explore my creative writing talents, which I did not know I had, and interact with children and share my teaching skills and writing with them. When I first started at CSUMB I was not aware of the service learning requirements and what they involved. As I become integrated into the curriculum I did not look forward to the day when I would have to take my service-learning course. Now in retrospect I am glad that it was required because now I have knowledge of the career that I have chosen and confidence in my abilities.

Another ability that I acquired through many of my classes was that of analyzing situations successfully from many points of view. One class that stands out with this feature was Multicultural Adolescent Literature. Because I had read many of the books required for the class before, reading them again let me view them from the perspective of a teacher. The curriculum also allowed me to explore what it is like to introduce multicultural and sometimes controversial literature into a classroom. We discussed what the controversy could be from the

point of view of a teacher, student, parent and administrator and what types of arguments have been made in the past concerning some of the books we read. Because the high school I attended was fairly liberal in the curriculum of our English classes the concept of “banned” books was new to me and it helped me prepare for something that I am sure to encounter during my career as a teacher.

MAURA’S INSIGHT

Through my courses in the Human Communications major I have developed skills and qualities that have enabled the creation of this capstone project. By instilling social responsibility and equipping me with the tools to create a website with dialogue to my peers, I am able to share what I have learned. Different classes gave me different opportunities and allowed me to expand my education to a higher level.

Looking through my course history several classes in particular seem to have enabled me to become the person I am today with the mentality and skills I have demonstrated in this capstone. From my very beginnings here at CSUMB I have taken classes like HCOM 211: Reading, Writing, Critical Thinking and HCOM 212: Reasoning and Communication. With these courses I was able to develop not only writing skills, but skills of thinking critically and being able to reason. I found these particularly helpful because they fed into each other both classes built on the other’s class content. From my research to our website I have used the tools I learned in these classes to discern invaluable content and produce a cohesive understanding of my findings.

From my upper division classes in the Journalism and Media Studies concentration I was able to use HCOM 388: Investigative Reporting in gathering evidence and information for this capstone project. As part of our

methodology we used group and individual interviews to decipher the real needs of students on campus as it related to all aspects of campus life and academia. Also HCOM 330: Intro to Creative Writing helped me in the actual production of our research paper and website. This class helped me develop the writing style that had served me well in the past, but I also learned quickly and my new creative flair was able to improve. Being able to think creatively made my essay style more interesting and this is reflected in the research paper, but more importantly our website because this is what we want the students, our peers, to be engaged with.

Above all I think that HCOM has changed me as a person. I think about classes like HCOM 307S: Social Impact of Mass Media, HCOM 316: Media Ethics and HCOM 310: Free Speech and Responsibility that have shown me the responsibility that comes with being a journalist, producing any type of media, and being an accountable citizen and person. Those classes enable me to see outside my own direct experience and particularly in my service learning how the community around me is affected by all types of media. With this profound understanding I was given the abilities to be productive and work within this mindset from classes like HCOM 312: Cooperative Argumentation and HCOM 306: Gender and Communication. I realize upon reflection of my career as an HCOM student that I have indeed been extremely impacted by these courses and my life experiences have and will be affected constructively because of this.

WORKING TOGETHER

As we began to perform the actions to make our capstone complete we encountered many obstacles. The first was to find a reasonably priced company to take our pamphlet to. We researched many of the stores in the area that could do the work like Kinko's and other similar establishments. The one that was

most reasonably priced was a local print shop in Marina called Integrity Printing Service. The next step we took towards completing our project was applying for a grant to help fund the publishing of the paper form of our booklet. The grant that we applied for was the Steve Arvizu Capstone Grant, which is sponsored by Associated Students. In our application we included why we wanted to make our guidebook into paper form and how we thought this would benefit the university. Unfortunately we did not receive the grant and we had to abandon the idea of making a tangible guidebook available to students who don't have reliable access to the Internet.

We then switched our focus completely to the construction of the website form of the guidebook. We had some trouble with the website creation because neither of us has a lot of experience with website creation. We used Dreamweaver to create our website and we worked through our challenge of not knowing about website design. We were forced to learn in a crash course of web design and we were able to create a website that we both are proud of and hopefully will be an effective resource for peers.

Another challenge of our capstone was choosing what topics that are most applicable to new students. We really want to help new students and we don't want to eliminate important information. We focused on working with our peers in our focus groups and what they brought to our attention along with anything we personally had trouble with at the start of our educational career at CSUMB.

The last challenge we had was getting our web-based version of the guidebook linked to CSUMB's website. We wanted to get linked to either the "student" or "becoming a student" link on CSUMB's website because the information we supplied in our guidebook is for the students and they need to access it to make it effective. Because of miscommunication and our lack of

technical abilities we were unable to achieve this goal, but the next step was to try linking our guidebook to the HCOM (Human Communications) website. When it didn't work out that we could attach it to the HCOM website we almost gave up. Finally after pooling together and researching some options we decided to buy a domain and put our work on the web that way. We used godaddy.com to do this.

Through all our many years of work at CSUMB we have come upon challenges and excellent learning opportunities. The teachers and the class structure will allow us to apply our work in the classroom to a real field. Because of our service learning experiences and the diverse nature of our curriculum we gained a sense of social responsibility that has led us to create our capstone. This understanding of our social responsibility as educated adults will carry on with us as we leave this campus and help direct our future and careers.