

PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

POLICY PROPOSAL



“Initiative for the Creation of the Schreyer Wellness Ambassadors”

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We recommend the creation of a new division of students under the Schreyer Honors College called "Schreyer Wellness Ambassadors" (SWA). These students, who will be hand-selected by a team of Schreyer Administration and Staff, will promote health and wellbeing in the Penn State community. These Ambassadors will be trained in conflict mediation, professional communication skills, mandated reporting and will be educated on the health and wellness resources Penn State has to offer. Additionally, we hope to provide an incentive for students to participate in SWA such as a stipend or HWS credits.

Some of the programs that our initiative group has brainstormed (to be elaborated upon later) include Chef Notes, Community Building Activities, Dialogues about mental health, Student lead physical fitness activities, and Information Sessions about Physical and Mental Health Resources on campus. We intend that these programs will help students to think critically about their nutrition, stress levels, physical fitness, mental health, and the overall health of the community in the Schreyer Honors College.

We believe that if the SWA is a student-led organization, the general Schreyer student population will be more receptive to a body of peers, compared to staff or faculty. We hope that a peer network such as the SWA will cultivate trust and start dialogues about personal wellbeing in the Schreyer community. As a result, we predict that the students in Schreyer will take strides to not only improve their overall quality of life but the welfare of their peers as well.

I. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The purpose of the initiative is to propose the creation of a new division of students under the Schreyer Honors College (SHC) called "Schreyer Wellness Ambassadors" (SWA). These students, who will be hand-selected by a team of Scheyer Administration and Staff, will promote health and wellbeing in the Penn State community. These SWA will be trained in conflict mediation, professional communication skills, mandated reporting and will be educated on the health and wellness resources Penn State has to offer.

Our group came up with certain initiatives that will come under this proposal. Each initiative has its purpose and set of responsibilities which will be carried out by the Ambassadors. The initiatives include Community Fitness Activities, Community Building Activities, Information Sessions, and Chef Notes. We intend that these programs will help students to think critically about their nutrition, stress levels, physical fitness, mental health, and the overall health of the community in the Schreyer Honors College. As a result, we predict that the students in Schreyer will take strides to not only improve their overall quality of life but the welfare of their peers as well.

The motivation behind creating this proposal was to help students get connected with the tremendous amount of health resources already available to them. Penn State has an array of health and wellness resources which are constantly being underused. This is understandable because at such a large university it becomes extremely difficult to convey information to the student body. It is not easy to make sure that all the students are aware of what is being offered to them. We created SWA so that this program can target a small population of the student body (The Schreyer College) and educate them in Penn State's health resources. We hope that the SWA becomes a contact point for students for anything health related. The Ambassadors can help to ease the process of using the health services for students and at the same time inspire the students to build and sustain long term healthy healthy behavior habits. Ultimately, we can't force a person to go to the gym or start eating healthy but we can certainly try and make the process easier for them.

II. BACKGROUND DATA

Through the research we did on the Schreyer population data pool we collected the following statistics:

Category	Count	Percentage
Total active enrolled	1856	100.00%
Female	1023	55.12%
Male	833	44.88%
Asian	193	10.40%
Black	45	2.42%
Hawaiian	1	0.05%
Hispanic	96	5.17%
Native American	1	0.05%
International	122	6.57%
Multiple	95	5.12%
White	1233	66.43%

Undeclared	70	3.77%
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	Atherton	Simmons
First Year	131	136
Sophomore	91	109
Junior	25	64
Senior	17	27
Total	264	336

We have a total of 600 Schreyer students living on campus; 44 % living in Atherton and 56% living in Simmons. With that data pool in mind, a total number of 9 Ambassadors (ideally 3 sophomores, 3 juniors, and 3 seniors) who live on campus will each be able to thoroughly represent and assist about 67 Schreyer students living on campus. We have a total number of 1856 Schreyer students and only about 33 % live on campus. Thus, to ensure that the off-campus students can benefit from the initiative, we recommend that the SWA possess a designated office in Atherton Hall that is easily accessible to off-campus students. To ensure diversity in the group it is our goal also, to recruit students of various ethnic backgrounds so that all Schreyer students are represented and included in the SWA initiative.

III. THE AMBASSADORS

A. Roles

The most important aspect of this program is that it is a primarily student-led organization. We believe that if SWA is a student-led organization the general Schreyer student population will be more receptive to a body of peers, compared to staff or faculty. We hope that a peer network such as SWA will cultivate trust and start dialogues about personal well-being in the Schreyer community.

Moreover, it is our philosophy that the students involved with the SWA will be experts in their own right on the subtle social intricacies that take place in the SHC. Therefore, they should also have autonomy as an organization to observe and act upon the difficulties that they see in their communities. This whole organization is built on the principle that the students will have a greater sense of trust with members of their peers than those of administration. This will create a culture of trust and transparency which will then, in turn, allow for honest conversations about the Penn State College Experience. It is the job of the Schreyer Wellness Ambassadors to cultivate this environment of trust.

Lastly, it is also important to mention the role of overseeing administrators at this point, too. Since this program also cultivates leadership and initiative, the administrating staff must encourage students that show drive and enthusiasm to certain social issues. The staff should play a supporting role that also pushes students to challenge some of the problems in this university that persistently damage the mental and physical health of students on and off-campus.

B. Recruitment

In total, we suggest that a total of nine (9) students be recruited for the SWA. This will consist of *three students from the current Sophomore, Junior, and Senior classes, respectively*. The prospective students will apply during their Spring Freshman year so they can start their journey with SWA in the first semester of their Sophomore. This is crucial as students will be trained during this semester and will attend a class during the preceding fall semester.

The prospective students will go through a rigorous application and interview process that can showcase characteristics such as leadership, humility, empathy, patience, understanding, and a high level of various communication skills. Since the SWA will be affiliated with and represent the Schreyer Honors College, these students must be chosen with integrity in mind. Among the SHC dean, another high-level administrative staff will help to make observations to which students will make the best candidates.

C. Incentives

There are multiple Incentives for the Ambassadors. These are as follows:

1. 10 dollars an hour stipend (approximately 6 hours per week)
2. Great Resume builder
3. Personal interaction with administration of South dining and Schreyer College
4. Ambassadors along with students also get to task new dishes free of cost (This is not that frequent so maybe we can hold it off for the advertisement)
5. A platform to extent the care and passion of wellness through the schreyer college
6. An official certificate that proves that they have been formally trained to be promoters of health and wellness in their respective communities.

D. Training

Each Schreyer Wellness Ambassador will be required to take “BBH 325: Health Promotion Services Training” - Dr. LaSalle provided us the syllabus - upon entry to the program. This class will train students to talk about a variety of health issues including nutrition, physical activity, sexual health, sleep, and stress. This course also includes components that explore the professionalism and ethics that are involved with delivering sensitive information to students.

There will also be a separate class or meeting time held by the SWA on at least a weekly basis that will be used for planning activities, sharing observations, and checking in with staff leadership. We hope that skills such as communication, conflict mediation, leadership, and organization will be refined from these classes.

The Health and Wellness incentives for the program include pre-professional development; the establishment of a “pipeline” that will facilitate the continuation of the SWA program for years to come; and finally, the potential to gradually knock down barriers vis-à-vis Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), and at the very least train students for peer mental health and stress management services.

The Ambassadors will receive a paid stipend of \$10 per hour per week. We recommend that this be transferred either monthly or every two weeks (bimonthly) via the direct deposit system already in place for the Penn State work-study program.

E. Responsibilities

❖ Overview

The students who are part of Schreyer Wellness Ambassadors must try to act as role models for healthy behaviors. This goes beyond apparent physical health and ability in that these Ambassadors should promote self-improvement at any level or capacity. This may include anything from a healthy level of physical activity to overcoming adversities of mental health. It is important to create a culture that celebrates well-being, inclusively, and diversely. Being healthy looks different for everyone and there is no one type of lifestyle that will improve each individual’s quality of life. It is the job of the SWA to encourage students to find what helps to improve their well-being in various aspects of life.

The students of SWA will also distribute information about some of the health services on campus. This will be done through the distribution of materials that promote student health, casual and candid informational sessions about student health, and participate in Healthy Penn State outreach events. This could range to discussing mental health, sexual health, building healthy domestic and social relationships, nutrition, spiritual health, physical activity, along with other needs that the SWA sees.

❖ Community Engagement Activity Examples

This section will just consist of a few ideas for community engagement events that the Schreyer Wellness Ambassadors may hold:

- Student-led physical fitness classes
- Coffee and Study Habits Seminar
- Self Image and Self Esteem Workshop with Therapy Dogs
- Mental Health Awareness Painting Night
- Skits on Building Healthy Relationships
- Distributing information on Sexual Health and Health Resources
- Learning to Cook and Eat Healthy in a Dorm
- Pizza with a Low Pressure Facilitated Dialogue about Drug and Alcohol Awareness
- An Open Discussion About Learning How to Talk About Mental Health
- A Support Group for Students with Burnout and Stress

❖ **Chef Notes**

Another opportunity that these Ambassadors will pioneer is a sub-initiative that we have christened “Chef Notes.” Staff members in the South Halls Food District have expressed keen interest in working with the Schreyer Wellness Ambassadors. The primary staff liaisons with the Ambassadors are:

- Jim Meinecke, Associate Director of Residential Dining at Penn State
- Stephane Gawlowicz (affectionately known as “Chef Stephane” among his peers), Managing Chef in Redifer Commons; and
- Katy Petrosky, Corporate Registered Dietician within Housing and Food Services.

Having brainstormed ideas with Meinecke, “Chef Stephane,” and Petrosky, our final “Chef Notes” itinerary is fairly straightforward. Indeed, we recommend that the Ambassadors meet with the three dining leaders bimonthly (twice per month) - this may be amended to a weekly basis at the SWA’s discretion - in order to debrief them on student feedback related to recent and future menu choices.

Meanwhile, on non-meeting or “off” weeks - i.e., still every other week - Chef Stephane has agreed to teach a fully-funded cooking course in the same time slot as the “Chef Notes” meetings. Chef Stephane has indicated he plans to introduce a variety of international food options come next fall, in addition to new healthy eating choices that he will address firsthand with the SWA. Further, we strongly recommend Meinecke, Chef Stephane, and Petrosky as ongoing liaisons between the SWA and dining hall administration. We believe this “trifecta” of honest and transparent campus dining leaders is among the SWA’s most valuable assets for the near future.

Most crucially, these staff members would like the Ambassadors to collect live, “real-time” feedback - this according to our meeting with the aforementioned three leaders - on the menu options and food availability in the Commons. This would provide students the ability to have more autonomy and choice on the food that is offered to them while living on campus. Additionally, the chefs would be able to make a menu that caters to the needs of the students on campus.

This would be a weekly or bi-weekly retrieval of information that could either be delivered to South Commons in an organized report or raw feedback. We see this as a great opportunity since South Commons is the dining commons assigned to the Schreyer Honors College. In establishing this symbiotic relationship, members of the South Dining Commons have also offered spaces and resources to hold cooking workshops and nutrition education. SWA would provide a perfect opportunity to be an advisory board for healthy eating to students in their periphery.

Finally, insofar as first-year Scholar scholars are concerned, we believe they are the ideal demographic from which to be gauging dining hall feedback. Moreover, they are obligated to live on-campus and possess a meal plan; thus, we recommend the distribution and mandatory completion of SWA-sponsored dining hall feedback forms at Schreyer Honors College semester meetings. Since these meetings - which are designed to keep scholars abreast of credit requirements and upcoming opportunities - are mandatory for first-year scholars, we see them as the perfect occasion during which to promote and implement Chef Notes! In turn, the SWA will

submit and review the aforementioned feedback forms every two weeks with Meinecke, Chef Stephane, and Petrosky at their scheduled meetings.

IV. BUDGETARY INFORMATION

Major expenses of the Schreyer Wellness Ambassadors includes the student stipend and the cost for the events hosted by SWA.

Each ambassador would be paid 10 dollars per hour. This compensation is for the time commitment for holding the sessions, hosting events and attending mandatory meetings for the program. The Ambassadors themselves would need to take the class, BBH 325: Health Promotion Services Training, for training. At its fullest, there are 9 ambassadors with each of them working for about 6 hours a week. An event lasts for about 2.5 hour and a session about the same. There is also a mandatory meeting of one hour per week. This meeting time would be used to give important updates and plan the rest of the week. The frequency and the duration of the meeting can be changed according to the Ambassadors' needs. This makes the total cost to be 8,100 dollars (9 Ambassadors x \$10/hour x 6 Hours/Week x 15 weeks per semester).

The events hosted by ambassadors range from student activities to professional lead seminars helpful for the mission of the organization. The budget allocation would be done by the financial head of SWA , a full time employee of the university. Each Ambassador would have allocated money which they can't exceed throughout the semester. The money allocated to each Ambassador depends on the decisions of the financial head of SWA. Ambassadors would be told their budget at the start of the semester. Ambassadors would have to file a request, including the time, date and cost estimate, for the events that cost money. Whenever the money is used for the event, a mandatory sign-in sheet needs to be provided for the attendees. This sheet would be required to be submitted to the financial head of SWA. The costing for the events is variable. Each Ambassador would on average spend 100 dollars each semester. This makes the total cost of events to be 900 dollars each semester.

This budget doesn't include any costs involved with increased salaries of any full-time employees because of additional responsibilities of SWA.

V. STUDENT INTEREST

An informal survey was conducted by the members of this initiative group in hopes that it may provide information about some of the needs in the Schreyer Community as well as student interest in SWA. While only 53% of the participants indicated that they would be interested or very interested in joining an organization like SWA over 80% of the participants would participate in prospective events hosted by Schreyer Wellness Ambassadors.

Further open-ended responses desperate the evident need for a program like this in the Schreyer Honors College. Only 6% of participants were aware of any physical or mental health resources offered in the Schreyer Honors College. Additionally, in the survey, we asked the question “What are some frequent health problems that you face as an SHC student?”. Some of the responses included “Depression, anxiety, panic attacks”, “anxiety about thesis, lack of self-worth from high pressure”, “Mental health is the largest, otherwise access to cheap and reliable food” and “Incidental related to burnout and fatigue”.

The most prominent request for these students was timely and equitable access to mental health resources. The second most frequent request was physical fitness class and activities specifically made for Schreyer students. From this data, it is very evident that the students in the Schreyer Honors College need a stronger framework and support network for dealing with their well-being, especially with their mental health. This is a need we hope the Schreyer Ambassadors will be able to help fulfill.

VI. COMPARISON WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Penn State is a university that is highly ranked and highly known among other schools in various fields. In order to get an idea where Penn State stands in providing health & wellness services, we looked at some other schools' programs. While most schools we looked at share a very similar health and wellness services system, there are some unique differences. The following list highlights those differences:

- Michigan State University: It offers almost all the services that Penn State offers such as nutrition, fitness programs, sexual wellness programs, etc. Based on our research, we couldn't find any peer-led health programs. On the other hand, Penn State offers a few peer-led health initiatives where students are trained for a semester and then work to publicize our health resources and educate other students on various topics. All this happens under the Health & Wellness Promotion office. One unique feature of MSU was their State of Spartan Health Assessment. It is a survey designed to gauge the health status and health behavior of students and how it impacts their academic performance. We are not sure if Penn State has this kind of survey, but it would be helpful to get this data in order to assess our current level and decide our future goals and policies (Michigan State University).
- Ohio State University (OSU): One special service OSU offers is the Buckeye Peer Access Line (PAL). It is a non-emergency talk line operated by students. Students can call this from Monday to Friday 8pm-midnight to simply talk and get support especially about college related issues and also learn about campus resources. This is a convenient, casual, and anonymous platform to connect, talk and learn about resources from the students themselves (The Ohio State University, Office of Student Life).

- Princeton University: Princeton offers a peer led program called Peer Health Advisors (PHA). The students are educated in mental health issues, nutrition, physical fitness, sleep, stress, etc. They serve as the contact for students seeking support , help them navigate University Health Services, stimulate awareness and decrease stigma through promotional programs. There is one PHA present in each residential college. Since Penn State is such a large university, having more peer educators can be of great value (Princeton University, University Health Services).
- Columbia University: Columbia focuses mainly on providing information about various health topics online (Columbia University Irving Medical Center).
- University of Pennsylvania: This school has a similar program to OSU called Reach-A-Peer-Helpline. It consists of call line and texting services which are available every night from 9 pm to 1 am. This is an anonymous platform where students can talk about anything and are also directed to the campus resources available according to the students' needs. The listeners are students also and they complete a full semester of training, approximately 40 hours (University of Pennsylvania).

In conclusion, Penn State offers a great variety of programs shared by the other universities we researched. While some schools also have peer-based health programs like Penn State, they are structured in different ways. A couple of useful things to notice were that many schools had such programs in a calling/texting service. Also, one of the schools, Princeton University, had health peers for every residential college. Having more students working to create awareness about the resources is definitely something Penn State can improve upon. Finally, one main point to notice is that every one of these schools have a university-wide health program, and it usually becomes difficult to reach every student in big schools. The SWA

Initiative would focus only on one college, that is the Schreyer's Honors College, and this would make sure that more students are reached and helped. A college specific peer led program in health and services hasn't been implemented in any of the B1G 10 schools, so this initiative would show that Penn State truly cares about the health and wellness of its students.

VII. FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Program Leaders

1. As per Dean Johnson's suggestion, we recommend Donna Meyer - Director of Student Programs within the Schreyer Honors College - as one of the two staff (i.e., Penn State-employed) leaders for the Ambassadors program. **Dean Johnson has specified that Meyer is not considered a full-time faculty member.*
2. Additionally, we recommend Erin Raupers - Assistant Director of Penn State Health Promotion and Wellness, as well as the current BBH 325 instructor - as the second program head. **Note: Raupers is an ACSM Certified Personal Trainer.*

Room Assignment

3. We recommend Atherton C9 room as the Ambassadors' headquarters and central meeting place. Since C9 is reserved through Schreyer anytime after 5 pm or on weekends, we believe it is the ideal location - as opposed to, for example, the Grandfather Clock Lounge, which is reserved through Residence Life. In a worst-case, last-resort scenario, we recommend locations within Simmons Hall as the alternatives to C9.

VIII. FUTURE OF WELLNESS AMBASSADORS

In this section, we will roughly discuss the 2020-2024 plan for our program. This includes methods of measuring the success of the program, and any quantitative or qualitative metrics therein. We hope to gather feedback in a timely and productive manner.

- If all goes well, after a couple of years we can try to establish this for each residence hall, so we increase the number of Ambassadors reaching to each student and lower the student-to-Ambassador ratio, thereby improving representation. This change would help the students in streamlining the process to use health resources on campus.
- 2021-2022: Assess the SWA program, collect regular feedback from the Ambassadors to see how productive it is, what kind of challenges they are facing and then make adjustments for the program accordingly. During this time, we will also take a survey from the students in the Honors College to check in what ways is this program helping them in their health habits. What things/changes would the students want to see? We can also try to get some data from the health resources like fitness classes, yoga sessions, etc. to see if their use has increased.
- 2023: Based on the aforementioned feedback, we would like to propose a similar program to train more students so they can be placed in each residential halls. Through this we would like to reach more students by placing more Ambassadors who can then reach small parts of the student population. By doing this, we hope to cover the entire student population. Ambassadors will ease the process for them to use the current health resources. Students will become more aware of these free resources and hopefully they will be utilized to a greater extent.
- 2024: we recommend that the SWA carry out the implementation of its proposed expansion if the residence halls approve, in accordance with the above plan for 2023.

IX. CONCLUSION

Ultimately, we see the formation of the Schreyer Wellness Ambassadors not only as a necessary institution to add to the Schreyer Honors College but also as an opportunity to provide leadership opportunities for students in the college. This program can improve the lives of students at Penn State. The institutional trust that students in the SWA will cultivate will subsequently heighten trust and confidence in the various SHC institutions. As a result, students will start to have more meaningful conversations and interactions pertaining to their health and well-being in college. This mutually-beneficial relationship between the institution and its constituents will lead to a more meaningful, reciprocal, and generally impactful change in the way students live their lives at Penn State - and hopefully, beyond. These “Scholars With Aptitude” will help rein in a new period of sustainable leadership and learning within the Schreyer Honors College that will encourage cross-major interaction. Thus, regardless of each Schreyer scholar’s individual skills and expertise, the Ambassadors will ensure that all students adopt prolonged health and wellness as a new, timeless *aptitude* for both the present and near future. Such a change, we hope, will lend further “honor” to the Schreyer Honors College in pointing scholars toward an even more prosperous horizon - without sacrificing the incremental steps needed to arrive at that destination.

TEAM MEMBERS & MAJORS

1. Sebastien Kraft: *Broadcast Journalism, College of Communications*
2. Angelina Santamaria: *Earth Sciences & Policy / Geography, College of Earth & Mineral Sciences*
3. Belinda Mativenga: *Chemical Engineering, College of Engineering*
4. Dhir Agrawal: *Industrial Engineering, College of Engineering*
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6. Flavia Kung'u: *Electrical Engineering, College of Engineering*

CITATIONS

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