*STEPS TO LEAPS UPDATES*

*FALL 2021*

*SUMMARY*

In Fall 2019 Purdue kicked off the Steps to Leaps initiative with a flourish. The Steps to Leaps Summit in the North Ballroom of Purdue Memorial Union hosted nearly 200 people and included presentations, a faculty research panel, a student panel and time for table discussion among the participants. A separate student kickoff was held later in the semester for those interested in the program. Several initiatives were launched and programs were reformatted under the Steps to Leaps umbrella.

When COVID-19 struck in Spring 2020, Steps to Leaps pivoted to an online approach to sustain engagement with students, staff and faculty across the pillars. Last year the initiative continued to evolve, with collaborators finding ways to connect with students, staff and faculty during a year that was fraught with challenges. This report reflects these efforts and shares relevant themes as we move Steps to Leaps into the future.

*HISTORY*

Initially dubbed The Resiliency Project, Steps to Leaps grew from a desire to support student growth of resiliency and grit. At the time, Purdue experienced significant upticks in demand for counseling services, Student of Concern reports and issues rising to the Behavioral Intervention Team. Students reported knowing that services were available but did not always know where or how to access the resources. Five pillars were developed to frame the Steps to Leaps initiative and a growth mindset was added to encourage continuous growth of students.

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*GOALS AND OUTCOMES*

The following three goals were initially created and progress made toward each achievement is outlined below.

*GOAL 1 – CONTENT CREATION/LAUNCH*

Videos

Five videos were deployed at the outset of the Fall 2019 semester highlighting the experiences of five current or former Purdue students aligning with the Steps to Leaps pillars. This has now increased to nine videos, which are available on the Steps to Leaps website: <https://www.purdue.edu/stepstoleaps/learning-modules/videos/index.php>

Steps to Leaps Lunch and Learns

Steps to Leaps Lunch and Learns were initially held in person and averaged approximately 30 participants. In the Spring 2020, the presentations transitioned to an online format and have averaged 44 participants. Steps to Leaps has provided 44 virtual presentations for 816 faculty, staff and students with information on programs, departments and topics that support the five pillars. Videos of these online virtual trainings are housed on Purdue’s MediaSpace: <https://mediaspace.itap.purdue.edu/category/Organizations+%26+Units%3ESteps+to+Leaps/166701881>.

Virtual Presentation Attendance

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Type** | **Number** | **Percent** |
| Faculty | 65 | 8% |
| Staff | 538 | 66% |
| Academic Advisor | 138 | 17% |
| Student | 75 | 1% |
| Total Individual Attendance | 816 |  |
| Total Attendance | 1,960 |  |

Training Modules

Students and staff have created 30 Steps to Leaps Brightspace modules to engage students with materials that will help them grow within the five pillar areas. All modules are now available on the Training at Purdue and Steps to Leaps websites: <https://www.eventreg.purdue.edu/training/Heading.aspx?heading_id=903> and <https://www.purdue.edu/stepstoleaps/learning-modules/index.php>.

Growth Mindset

Growth mindset, a concept coined by Dr. Carol Dweck, is an approach to learning wherein intelligence is viewed as malleable, dynamic and amenable to development. Dweck juxtaposed this growth mindset to what she defined as a fixed mindset in which people believe that intelligence is rigid, static and resistant to change.

The Project for Educational Research That Scales (PERTS), was conducted during the 2019, 2020 and 2021 fall semesters to gauge the impact of Boiler Gold Rush on the development of a growth mindset in students. In 2019, prior to participating in the PERTS Growth Mindset pre-arrival homework, 53% of students were identified as having a growth mindset. After completing the educational modules, 65% of students were reported as having a growth mindset. Similarly, 2020 showed growth from 56% of students showing a growth mindset prior to arrival to 69% after completion of the education modules. Data for the most recent Fall 2021 cohort will be delivered by PERTS in October 2021.

Percentage of Students with a Growth Mindset pre/post PERTS

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Purdue Federal Financial Literacy

Boiler Financial Track was started in 2019 as a collaboration between Purdue Student Life, Recreation & Wellness and Purdue Federal Credit Union. The program helps Purdue students learn to manage money effectively and provides the education and guidance needed to empower students to make informed financial decisions during college and throughout life.

Junia McDole, assistant director of Boiler Financial Track, has been hired to provide training and one-on-one financial coaching for students. Having previous experience in providing education and guidance to students and families regarding financial aid, financial wellness and the scholarship process made for a smooth transition to direct Purdue’s official financial wellness program. McDole earned a Master of Business Administration from Purdue University Global and has maintained membership with the Association for Financial Counseling & Planning Education and the National Financial Educators Council. Being passionate about providing students with the financial education they need to ensure a strong financial foundation that will last throughout their lives is a driving force for the assistant director.

Financial Literacy Education



Center for Career Opportunities

The Center for Career Opportunities has collaborated with the Leadership & Professional Development Initiative within the Student Life area to develop and promote a student competency-based model supporting student development and success.

Academic Success Center

The Academic Success Center has integrated the Steps to Leaps pillars into all aspects of their work with staff and students. Professional and graduate staff training has been re-framed to integrate Steps to Leaps language throughout. In addition, Steps to Leaps language is incorporated into student messages (including the probation campaign), workshops and the BGR academic success session.

*GOAL 2 – RESOURCE COMMUNICATION*

Resource List

An initial list of 1,830 services for supporting students, this resource now resides online at: <https://www.purdue.edu/odos/resources/index.html>. More than 5,000 students and staff have accessed these resources. The drop in views in 2020-21 was likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the number of students choosing the online option.

Views and Users of the Resource List

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*EXTENSIVE SERVICE ENHANCEMENT*

ODOS Support

The Office of the Dean of Students took a significant step to support the Steps to Leaps initiative and the needs of our students through the creation of Student Support Services. Since Fall 2019, 28,174 students have accessed these services, with more 95% simply dropping in without an appointment.

Student Visits to the Office of the Dean of Student

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Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) and Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR)

The Office of the Dean of Students manages two trainings for the Purdue community – MHFA and QPR – that assist individuals in having conversations that will lead to action and support.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is an 8-hour course that shares tools to help to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The training delivers the skills needed to reach out and provide initial help and support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem or experiencing a crisis. From the outset of the 2019-2020 academic year until the transition to online course delivery, 16 trained faculty and staff interacted with 248 participants. The training program was paused during the 2020-21 academic year. In-person sessions have now resumed.

The Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) sessions moved from in-person to virtual once Purdue pivoted to an online format and continued to train members in the Purdue community. QPR seeks to increase awareness, dispel myths and teach the three skills that can save a life – Question, Persuade and Refer.

Purdue QPR Suicide Prevention Training Totals



Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

Counseling and Psychological Services were identified early on as a reason for the Steps to Leaps initiative. Purdue followed the national trend of increased need for counseling and mental health resources on college campuses. Resources were provided for increasing the number of counselors over the past two years to continue to support our students. Serving thousands of students and gaining hundreds of new clients each month, CAPS is a significant way Purdue supports students in Well-Being and Grit.

Counseling and Psychological Services Appointments

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Counseling and Psychological Services New Clients

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*GOAL 3 - TECHNOLOGY*

WellTrack

WellTrack, launched in Fall 2018, provides students with access to self-help mental health resources for a variety of concerns including stress, depression, and self-care. Utilization for the 2020-21 academic year increased compared to prior years and will continue to serve as an important access point for students. Since its inception, WellTrack has extended access to mental health resources through the use of self-help technology, providing 55,147 logins and a total of 6,979 signups.

Portfolium

Portfolium, a tool for students to reflect upon their learning and demonstrate understanding of content, will be decommissioned in the upcoming year in favor of more substantial software.

BoilerConnect

The successful launch and adoption of BoilerConnect has allowed faculty and staff to support students in a more seamless manner. Appointments understandably were down due to fewer drop-in appointments during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, messages sent nearly tripled from year one to year two.

Use of BoilerConnect



Chatbot Adoption

While chatbot technology continues to be explored, the COVID-19 pandemic did require the formation of the COVID-19 Call Center. Technology was leveraged to provide Purdue students with a resource for information and support. More than 160,000 calls were received during the 2020-21 academic year.

The Transformative Education 2.0 team has also explored new technological options for supporting communication with students. A chatbot option and streamlined communication for applications already in use at Purdue are being examined.

*STEPS TO LEAPS IN THE CLASSROOM*

Summer Start and Early Start

Through course content and assignments, GS12000 and GS12001 educates students about the Steps to Leaps pillars. In GS 12001, students are required to link student development theory to a Steps to Leaps pillar as a final group project.

The Data Mine

In The Data Mine Learning Community, all students take a common course. They are also required to attend and write written reflections upon presentations from corporate partners, The Data Mine staff and other speakers. Steps to Leaps has been incorporated into many facets of these student interactions. The Data Mine has produced a year-end review of student reflections that align with each Steps to Leaps pillar.

Teaching Assistant (TA) Training

Steps to Leaps has been incorporated into TA training. Franziska Lang incorporated the pillar language of Steps to Leaps into TA training for Chemistry 294 and 599. This course was designed using a combination of research on evidence-based practices, feedback from student and TA evaluations, and comments from TA focus groups. The course was realigned with the Steps to Leaps pillars to guarantee a holistic TA training experience.

Exploratory Studies

Steps to Leaps has been incorporated into the EDPS 105 course to increase Exploratory Study students’ awareness of resources across campus.

Purdue Promise

Purdue Promise has incorporated the Steps to Leaps pillars into the first-year student course, GS 197. Steps to Leaps spotlights are also included in weekly announcements to students.

*RESEARCH*

Research plays a critical role in understanding how growth within the pillar areas truly helps students grow and thrive. Leading this area is Dr. Louis Tay, associate professor in Industrial-Organizational Psychology at Purdue University. He serves as the Research Fellow for the Steps to Leaps initiative and leads a research collaborative of faculty members from across disciplines. Their goal is to find ways to identify student growth within the pillar areas and assess how it is making a difference at Purdue.

These past two years, Tay has been working on a standardized Steps to Leaps assessment to measure pillar growth. The research collaborative has also been produced prolific output in both research and publications. A total of 61 publications were produced by faculty members, including content connected to all pillars: Well-Being (45), Leadership and Professional Development (10), Impact (6), Networks (10), and Grit (11). To communicate research findings broadly, Tay facilitates the Tip of the Week with the research collaborative on well-being and more, shared each week to the broader Purdue community from the Research Collaborative: <https://www.purdue.edu/stepstoleaps/explore/well-being-tips/index.php>. Tay has also developed and taught the class PSY123: "Beyond Mental Health: Science of Well-Being" offered in both Fall 2020 and Fall 2021 to focus on understanding the science and practice of well-being for Purdue students.

Tay has used the Steps to Leaps assessment to examine Purdue Engineering students as well as the students participating in the Engineering Projects In Community Service (EPICS) program. The assessment was sensitive to the impact of COVID-19 and increased social isolation due to online learning, and students showed lower levels of well-being. Key takeaways include:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Variables** | **2021 Status** | **Implications** |
| Well-Being and Resilience | ~15% decline from the past year | Declines in student wellness metrics were expected. Changes will be carefully monitored in the coming year. |
| Meaning and Purpose | ~8% decline from the past year |
| Social Isolation | ~15% increase from the past year |
| Leadership self-efficacy | ~15% decline from the past year |
| Sleep and Diet | 65% of students report poor levels of sleep and diet | Focus on programming to help students improve on their sleep and food choices |
| Top 5 negative influences on academics | (a) mental health issues (61%); (b) sleep (61%); (c) not eating well (41%); (d) difficulties with professors (31%); (e) difficulties with friends (26%) | Provision of services to enhance well-being can enhance academic achievement. |

The results in the table are being used by both programs to frame future changes. Specifically, the College of Engineering was able to examine the impact of COVID-19 on specific subgroups and determine appropriate programming to improve well-being and student growth. Tay will now expand the assessments to include additional academic colleges at Purdue with an eye toward making Purdue an assessment leader in the student growth and well-being space in higher education.

In addition, Tay edited a special issue on "Building Community Well-Being in Higher Education," which includes nine articles with authors from various universities including Duke University, University of California Irvine, and the University of Virginia. One article is on the "Steps to Leaps Initiative" led by Dr. Beth McCuskey. This special issue will appear in the International Journal of Community Well-Being this year and will be a model for other universities seeking to implement similar initiatives to promote student growth.

*NEXT “STEPS”*

The Steps to Leaps Steering Committee met in July to review progress to date and to discuss the next steps to move the project forward. Members reviewed the efforts taken in the first year of Steps to Leaps to help faculty, staff and students acknowledge the initiative. Year two focused on supporting faculty, staff and students in understanding the Steps to Leaps initiative even as the world navigated a global pandemic. During year three, efforts will be made to help faculty and staff integrate Steps to Leaps into existing programming and courses.

The focal areas for 2021-22 are:

1. Continued focus on assessment - Dr. Louis Tay will be sharing Purdue Engineering’s findings with all of Purdue’s colleges with the goal to launch the assessment model more broadly across campus. This will enable a deeper understanding by colleges, allowing for more targeted programming.
2. Revamped communication plan - Finalization of the Steps to Leaps Communication Plan incorporating goals established for year three, with implementation to begin immediately.
   1. Language review/construct – Because communication is such an integral model of the Steps to Leaps initiative and communication preferences of college-age students change over time, Steps to Leaps language will be reviewed to ensure continued resonance. Additionally, given Purdue’s focus on equity and inclusion, the current modules and communications materials will also be viewed with the lens of assuring their perceived relevance with underrepresented students.
   2. Website and social channels — These areas will continue to be monitored and managed using metrics.
   3. Adopting the Steps to Leaps language and logo — A continued emphasis will be placed on the benefits of linking programs and initiatives to the Steps to Leaps framework to amplify the message.
3. Continued programmatic initiatives – Steps to Leaps will continue to adapt to campus needs and partner with individuals who have launched programs that align with Steps to Leaps. Tools will be created to support the continued integration of Steps to Leaps inside and outside the classroom.
   1. Steps to Leaps integration tools – Faculty-focused Steps to Leaps resources will be created that can be easily integrated into the classroom or student interactions.
   2. Leveraging early adopters – Continued efforts will be made to “snowball” Steps to Leaps to leverage early adopters’ stories and strategies to engage others.
4. Broaden student support— From a new CAPS director to supporting new beginners to “find their home” on campus, Steps to Leaps will focus on support structures as Purdue navigates through/beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. Alignment with Transformative Education 2.0 — There is considerable overlap between the delivery model of Steps to Leaps and the transformative education opportunities being developed by the Office of the Provost. This includes communication efforts, Experiential Education, and the Innovation College as a whole.
6. Engage a new generation of students — Student interns were instrumental in launching and building many of the components in the first year of Steps to Leaps. This year, students are actively building a student organization to further advance Steps to Leaps efforts.