

**“USING THE ELLISON MODEL  
TO ACHIEVE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY BUILDING AT  
NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY”**

**Group Project:**

Department of Conflict Analysis and Resolution  
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Dr. Michele Rice

Sam Appiah-Marfo  
Linda D.W. Mitchell  
Melissa Wyant

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## **Introduction**

Many university administrations have tended to live as islands - separate from the rest of their surrounding community. This group feels that Nova Southeastern University (NSU) is not an exception. To bridge the gap between the University administration and its own community, the university needs to implement an inclusive community-building model. To strengthen the intra-institutional collaboration, the administration, faculty, departments, and students must be united. This task is often an uphill battle for many universities. In short, a “*communiversity*” concept has not been achieved within, and therefore, by implication, is also absent from the surrounding community.

Throughout the duration of the group discussions, the members agreed that among their fellow students, there is a “disconnect” between the University and themselves. There appears to be a tacit conflict between the student body and the Office of the President and the Administration at Nova Southeastern University. The students perceive themselves as being merely the source of the MONEY for the campus - it is our non-scientific observation that the entire NSU community is beginning to feel the effects of this negative feedback.

Furthermore, the group concluded that a mentoring project could utilize coalitions of clubs and organizations on the Davie campus, as well as groups from the university administration to spearhead dialogue. This communication could be the first step in minimizing conflict. As an additional benefit, these coalitions could lead students to explore and discover the diversity on-campus and also in the surrounding community.

As we began to develop this project, we also discovered that, in general, the administration, faculty, and student body are not aware of the existence of university clubs and organizations on the Davie Campus. The NSU website, which has recently received a “face-lift,” does not mention any extracurricular activities on its homepage. Only through careful navigation does one locate a listing of clubs and organizations. Therefore, it appeared that a project to promote an awareness of the thirty-one clubs and organizations for undergraduate and graduate students (there are also eight clubs and organizations for graduate students) would greatly benefit the university community. If it were a joint project infused with a loving, caring, sharing spirit, which encouraged the participation of the entire university, the end product has the potential to result in “*communiversity*.”

With regard to the students, the project will give special attention to holistic development from the administration. Therefore, there will be greater intra-student development; awareness of diversity on campus; and the growth of a vibrant/dynamic loving, caring, sharing student body. Relative to the administration, this more diverse, vibrant/dynamic student body, will improve NSU’S reputation, will generate greater interest from prospective students, thus increasing student admission. Each benefit will be an excellent resource for the other party - students gaining from the holistic overview are better-developed persons, and the Administration stands to learn from the student body. For example, the President on a proposed trip to Africa would be aware of and

contact the Pan-African Student Club for information. Importantly, there will develop a community that has learned to love, care, and share while establishing and continuing implementation of the project.

This project therefore seeks to evaluate the extent to which the Ellison Model may be utilized to achieve these ends. This model operates as a system using basic principles of moving from diversity, to unity, to community. It has the potential to be adapted to implement a project aimed at promoting awareness of clubs and organizations on the NSU Davie Campus. The Ellison model and this project initiative aim at nurturing inclusive relationships within the University and the surrounding communities. It is a holistic, economic, and efficient method of delivering services.

The Ellison Model is holistic due to the involvement of a community of people acting in concert to perform organizational tasks in a caring, sharing, and loving, spirited manner. Furthermore, the project upholds the Nova Southeastern University (NSU) mission of providing high-quality educational programs of distinction from pre-school through the professional and doctoral levels, as well as service to the community; thus fostering inquiry, research, and creative professional activity, by uniting faculty and students in acquiring and applying knowledge in clinical, community and professional settings.

The project may reveal areas of excellence and weakness that have existed at the NSU since its origin. Additionally, it has the potential to reveal how the Inclusive Community Building model could be used to achieve a desired objective of character formation, identity and focus. It should be stressed that to benefit from this project, it should be studied and applied, so as to make the NSU community more reliable and truly committed to its philosophies and mission.

### **Statement of the Problem**

NSU has over 73,000 alumni and an annual enrollment of more than 19,000 students. The goal of the university community is to develop an informed, sensitive, and supportive audience or populace. One of the best ways to achieve this objective is through quality programs that are well produced and well promoted. Quality programs on a college campus are characterized by substance, intelligence, creativity, relevance, and taste. Good production demands paying extra attention to all the details, both technical and human, in the presentation of the program. Effective promotion includes developing channels of communication with an audience and using these channels properly.

If the University is to be successful in building an audience of students, then the elements of credibility and consistency are crucial. A student should never be misled, neglected or insulted. In addition, a student should never be ignored or overlooked. Furthermore, promoting a program is important so that the larger student audience is targeted. This is one of the fundamental obstacles at NSU. The larger student community does not have readily available information about the extra-curricular communities on campus. For instance, there are thirty-one clubs and organizations on NSU campus (refer to Appendix

1) targeting undergraduate and graduate students. In addition, eight clubs are available for the perusal of graduate students only.

In relation to the university administration, the Division of Student Affairs alone consists of:

1. The Office of the Dean of Student Affairs
2. The Offices of Student Activities and Leadership Development
3. Recreation and Wellness
4. Residential life and Housing
5. Career Services
6. The Student Union

It is interesting to note that these Offices have been established to enhance the academic development of students with active participation in a variety of extra-curricular opportunities. However, it is officially recognized that Student Affairs offers many leadership opportunities that are not widely known in the larger University environment. Moreover, NSU admits students of diverse culture, race, and ethnic backgrounds. Extra-curricular activities on-campus should reflect this diversity.

### **Research Questions**

The group considered the following questions:

- How many students are aware that there are thirty-one clubs and organizations on campus?
- How many students have access to these clubs/organizations?
- What are the attitudes of students towards extra-curricular activities at NSU?
- Are there any collaborative efforts between the various schools and institutions at NSU to address the issue of lack of information?
- Are NSU students taking full advantage of programs offered in the International Student Affairs Office?

### **Purpose and Objective of the Project**

Much of the existing literature on student affairs and leadership development has concentrated on the expansion of its scope, but has not sought to investigate and assess whether its programs are reaching the target audience. It was abundantly clear that the 'Inclusive Community Building' model - which employs the technique of caring, sharing and loving to move communities from diversity, to unity and to community - is the best instrument to utilize in order to create a sense of ownership among the major players of the Office of Student Services on the NSU campus and the student body.

Also, the project was devised to develop a frame-work for identification and analysis of the problem of information flow and to recommend remedial measures to the appropriate institutions on NSU campus based on the use of Ellison model community building tools.

## **Significance of the Project**

This project will help NSU significantly in the following ways:

1. The result will serve as an indicator to measure the performance of policy and programs implementation on NSU campus.
2. It will help the various agencies on campus to devise strategies and review issues of cross- cultural importance as well as institutionalize cost effectiveness.
3. Integrate the Ellison model into the NSU mainstream development agenda.
4. Mentoring to Build an Inclusive Community at NSU

## **The Target Population**

In its pilot program, the project will target the undergraduate population. NSU offers undergraduate programs in the Farquhar College of Arts and Science, the Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Education, and the Bachelor of Science in Nursing by way of DHPD.

## **The Mentoring Relationship Among Groups**

The Office of the President of Nova Southeastern University will be the **Executive Mentor** of the Program. More specifically, the Financial Operations Department will be responsible for budget decision-making and budget allocation. Financial Operations will also be responsible for mentoring six representatives from the Student Affairs Division, as will be described in more detail later. The contact will be in both directions between the Office of the President of NSU, and the Dean of the Students.

At the next level will be lateral collaboration among:

- **Student Affairs Division (STAD,)** which is administered by
- The **Office of the Dean of Students (DOS,)** which consists of:
  1. Student Activities and Leadership Development
  2. Recreation and Wellness
  3. Residential Life and Housing
  4. Student Development and Special Events
  5. Career Services
  6. Student Union
- The **Dean of the Farquhar College of Arts and Science (DFCAS),** which is composed of the following academic programs:
  1. Behavioral Sciences
  2. Business and Administration Studies
  3. Business and Professional Management
  4. Education
  5. Liberal Arts
  6. Math, Science & Technology

- The **Dean of the Health Divisions Department (DHPD)** for the Nursing Program, and for the three entry-level courses in the College of Allied Health:
  1. Physician's Assistant
  2. Physical or Occupational Therapist
  3. Audiologist

One of the premises of the project is that undergraduate students will participate in the project for two consecutive terms. In return for their participation, each student has potential to earn a maximum of thirty-three (33) percent towards their grade in a specifically designated course. The offices of the DOS, DFCAS, DHPD will collaborate on these measures. In addition, these offices will be responsible for deciding which of the courses in each of its departments will be best suited to foster the mentorship project and the student's leadership potential.

Moreover, Deans and Directors will be asked to assign **mentors** from within departments who will be responsible for assisting students who are affiliated with the project. A student's specific training, skills, and abilities toward obtaining the project's goals will be the key factor that determines his/her level and type of participation in the project. For instance, for the development of relevant software programs and websites, there might be a Graduate Assistant within a specific department who will be assigned to mentor individual members from that group of volunteers. The Dean of Students may also consult other Schools and Departments at NSU, for example the Department of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, for input.

Communication from the Dean and Directors will go up to the Office of the President of NSU, to Finance Operations. As will be described below Finance Operations will mentor six "coordinators" from STAD.

All of the Departments of Students Affairs will have a lateral relationship. Each Department will nominate a representative to "mentor" one of the Sub-committees of the University students who undertake to participate in this the project. These nominations will be critical, as each nominee will provide vital expertise in terms of organization, familiarity with the operations of NSU, and budget management. However, the Office of Student Activities and Leadership will bear particular responsibility because it houses the clubs and organizations of the university. In this role, the Office "provides clinics for leadership training for the University Community as well as student-driven events..."

A representative from each of the clubs and organizations on the campus will serve as a mentee (as time evolves, this representative will become a mentor). After acceptance of the project and the allocation of funds by Finance Operations, the DOS will arrange to have a fact sheet sent to each of the clubs. It will outline the aims of the mentorship project and will seek volunteers, who will commit to become a part of a group that will love, care for and share with the wider University. There will also be an opportunity to develop leadership skills and become a part of a new diverse group at NSU. Additionally and finally, each student will gain the reward of a percentage of their grade for two courses during each of two consecutive terms.

The Mission Statement of NSU states “Nova Southeastern University is a dynamic, not-for-profit independent institution dedicated to providing high quality educational programs of distinction from pre-school through the professional and doctoral levels as well as service to the community. Nova Southeastern University prepares students for lifelong learning and leadership roles in business and the professions. It offers academic resources on campus and at distant sites. The University fosters inquiry, research and creative professional activity, by uniting faculty and student in acquiring and applying knowledge in clinical, community and professional settings.” Regrettably there is no mention of the holistic development of the student, and of any social interactive extra-curricular programs that might help with this aspect.

Therefore the set of initial mentees joining the committee will have an opportunity to be among the trailblazers for this aspect of student-development. They will have completed at least one term at NSU, and they will have experienced the positive effect of exposure to a club or organization. During this period of enrollment at NSU, each mentee will have the opportunity to develop not merely academically, but as well as to hone their social interaction skills, and meet others who are committed to the mentoring project based on the idea of living and developing a wider caring, sharing and loving “*communiversity*.”

This new group, a homogeneous combination of diverse groups within the NSU campus will now undertake the task of combining forces to increase membership numbers in all the clubs on campus. The committee members will temporarily set aside an individual interest in their own club. They will now be a part of a new united group aware that promotion of all clubs and organizations will have long-term benefit for both on the organization and individual level. Furthermore, clubs and organizations will be encouraged to invite all members of the NSU society to join. For example, the Caribbean Students Association will actively encourage any interested persons to join, not just those of Caribbean descent, so that all may share a Caribbean “experience.” The committee will work diligently to actively encourage clubs and organizations to curtail the rituals of hazing, initiation and the “rites of passage” into clubs. This would serve to widen the scope of membership status and increase diversity.

The sizeable group will meet and will be given an overview of the project and a brief description of each sub-committee. Each sub-committee will have, at least, one of the representatives from the Student Affairs’ Departments, to mentor the volunteers. These representatives of the STAD will have the benefit of familiarity with the processes within NSU, and will have had the previous experience of being a mentee of the Financial Operations. These mentors will assist in the understanding of the checks and balances utilized in the Office of Financial Operations.

The six representatives formed from the Office of Student Affairs will advise this group. Five sub-committees will be formed and will be apprised of the aims of each Sub-committee in order to give them a running start, so that the project may be implemented efficiently and effectively. The sub-committees will be comprised of:

1. Coordinating, Budget & Oversight
2. Speakers Bureau

3. Planning & Research
4. Entertainment
5. Information & Technology Support.

The Coordinating, Budget and Oversight Sub-committee has the significant responsibility of communicating upward to the DOS. This will counter the five sub-committees from jockeying for the attention of that office and will also present a smaller yet united front for discussion with the DOS. This committee will be composed of the representatives from STAD mentors and one member of each of the other four committees. Other committees seeking guidance from the DOS will receive it indirectly via the Coordinating, Budget and Oversight Sub-committee.

STAD mentors may benefit from sessions administered by the Department of Conflict Analysis and Resolution prior to this period of the project. Through a process of collaborative effort and consensus building, the members will examine their goals and their targeted numbers. They will be facilitated through brainstorming activities with the purpose of establishing the committees of student membership based on class registration, avowed goals, and interests and strengths. Ideally, the students will convince these members as to which committee they think would best be served by them, and from which they might be best placed to maximize their learning experience. For example, students interested in information and technology may choose to join the Information & Technology Support Sub-Committee.

The five sub-committees will work laterally with each other, and each mentee, during the course of his/her first term, will actively seek a replacement, aware that their own mentee will have to be in place by the beginning of Term II. Each committee will have had its responsibilities outlined previously, and will have been advised of its budget. As already indicated, these committees will work laterally with each other, and information will flow up and down between these teams and the DOS.

### **Description of Each of the Sub-committee**

#### *The Coordinating, Budget and Oversight Committee:*

This sub-committee will have ultimate control of the budget. The STAD representatives through earlier mentoring will be familiar with Financial Operations procedures. New mentees will have less responsibility for expenditure but will be exposed to budgeting procedures. Members of this committee will work collaboratively with a partner, and this two-person team will be responsible for reporting on current activities occurring in their sub-committee. In addition, they coordinate the activities schedule to ensure that there is no great overlap in the activities/events of the individual sub-committees. They will also hold the responsibility of liaising with the DOS and disseminating information between the DOS and the various sub-committees.

#### *Planning & Research:*

The Planning & Research Sub-committee will create a calendar of events for NSU. STAD will make recommendations on which dates the Entertainment Sub-committee

may plan its own departmental functions. The sub-committee will also conduct research to establish other events with which the Entertainment Sub-committee may usefully establish linkages that will benefit each sub-committee. For instance, Departmental orientation social functions that will allow the project representative to speak, and Open Houses, which will welcome the opportunity to give additional reasons why a student should consider NSU. (As Graduate programs will not be a part of the pilot program, here will be an ideal site for the promulgation of information!)

Additionally, it will research how “icebreaker” parties are coordinated, what activities/events are successful and which events need to be restructured, the functions other institutions implement/offer, and conduct a needs assessment in order to create events customized for the NSU administrative, faculty, and student populations. The Entertainment Sub-committee will be proactive, seeking cutting-edge ideas for promoting its “product” to current and potential students.

*The Speakers Bureau:*

This group is responsible for promoting the clubs and organizations offered on the NSU campuses. The Speakers Bureau will have knowledge of all the activities offered by the various clubs and organizations. In addition, STAD will utilize their resources to find persons with strong public speaking and public relations skills who will be able to serve effectively as mentors. They will assist students on this bureau with developing and presenting an effective package that will be well received by the target group of incoming undergraduate students. (Students from allied undergraduate programs within NSU will be ideal candidates to serve as mentees on this sub-committee.)

*The Entertainment Sub-Committee:*

The Entertainment Sub-committee will organize one social mixer/function each term with the objective of promoting the thirty-one clubs and organizations on the NSU campus. A format will be devised that will allow presentation in the form of a question and answer session, visuals (such as posters/props), and a post-mixer social function following the presentation.

There will be various functions (mixers) planned by each entertainment committee, at least one per term, which will be aimed at promoting awareness of all the clubs and organizations to new undergraduates at NSU. Expertise and guidance will be provided by the coordinator/mentor, who is a representative of the Student Affairs group. The mentees will seek innovation during the organization of the mixer.

A viable committee will also look for other opportunities in which efforts can be link with other social functions to promote awareness. These functions will utilize allocated funding, to organize a bigger, better event by the joint collaboration of two groups/sub-committees.

*Information & Technology Support:*

The Information & Technology Sub-Committee will seek innovative ways to publish information via software programs utilized by NSU, such as the NSU website. For example, information can be presented to new students by sending invitations to join a club/organization by postal and electronic mail. It will be vitally important that new, incoming students be advised of the calendar of events for all clubs and organizations. In addition, members of this sub-committee will work with Finance Operations Department to devise ways to detect “red flags” in the programs so that the objective of increasing community building is achieved.

Furthermore, the NSU website will be a useful tool for generating information. The Sub-Committee will work to ensure that it may be easily accessed, informative, and entertaining. Interactivity will be monitored to ensure that this process is being used to its utmost effectiveness.

### **The Result**

The Office of the President, and the Dean’s Offices will have greater dialogue with each other and with the student body. They will offer valuable insight into their leadership style and the operation of this “business.” In addition, the students will also provide their own valuable influence. Through the role of mentor, each student has the opportunity to contribute to inclusive community building through the generation of positive ideas about diversity training, social activities, promotional campaigns, etc. This collaborative effort will create a ripple effect that will create long-term benefits to the university population and surrounding community.

### **Conclusion**

This group is concerned that the majority of students at Nova Southeastern University may be unaware of the wealth of human resources that exists on Main Campus, in terms of the diversity of its international student body. Introducing and implementing this mentoring model will facilitate communication regarding extra-curricular activities on the NSU campus. With this heightened awareness of extra-curricular offerings, greater exploration of campus activities and cross-cultural integration will occur.

With the implementation of this project, conflict between the student body and the University administration will be minimized or resolved. This would become a win/win for students and administration – representatives from the student body can build meaningful relationships with each other, and the administration will possess the skills necessary to develop an all inclusive mentoring project that targets the crucial human elements of caring, sharing, and loving thus fostering an inclusive community.

**Appendix 1**

Alpha Phi Omega Sigma Alpha Mu  
Astronomy Club Sports Management Club.  
Best Buddies  
Beta Beta Beta Biological Honor Society  
Beta Theta Pi  
Ba’Hai Unit Club  
Caribbean Students Association  
Delta Phi Epsilon  
Hillel  
Indian Students Association  
International Muslim Association at Nova  
Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship  
Kappa Delta Pi  
Lambda Theta Alpha  
Lambda Theta Pi  
NATURE  
NISA  
Nova University Theater Society  
NSU Accounting Club  
NSU Finance Club  
NSU Music Appreciation Club  
NSU Vegetarian Society  
Pan-African Student Association  
Phi Alpha Delta  
Phi Sigma Sigma  
Pre-Med Society  
Pre-Pharmacy  
Psychology Club  
SALSA  
Sigma Alpha Mu  
Sports Management Club

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