



BENNION CENTER

THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

2023-2024 Annual Report

Lowell Bennion Center for Community Engagement

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Section 1: Executive Summary

2,749

TOTAL STUDENTS ENGAGED

The Bennion Center provided students with a variety of opportunities to participate in community engagement activities. Through their engagement, students made meaningful impacts in their community, enhanced their own civic competencies, and built invaluable relationships with mentors, community partners, and other students.

\$59,400

TOTAL SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

Thanks to the longstanding support of key donors and campus partners, the Bennion Center awarded 8 different scholarships to 48 students during 2023-2024. These scholarships helped students offset costs related to tuition and housing as well as allowing accessibility for volunteer engagement instead of paid employment.

150

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Building ongoing, reciprocal relationships is vital to the Bennion Center's work. During 2023-2024 we engaged with 150 partners locally and throughout the western United States to provide transformative community engagement experiences for students.



LOWELL BENNION COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CENTER

The mission of the Bennion Center is to support student well-being and success by inspiring and mobilizing people to strengthen communities through learning, scholarship, and advocacy.

The Bennion Center provides transformative community engagement experiences that make positive impacts on student development and community needs.

Our vision is for students to discover their **people, passion, and purpose.**

VALUES

Belonging

Care

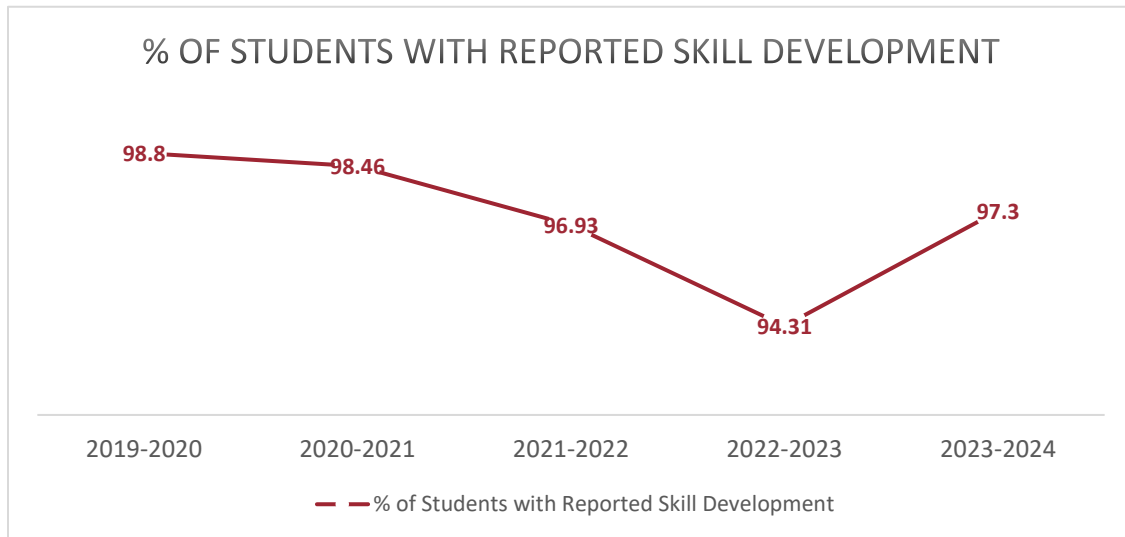
Integrity

Lifelong Learning

Self-Discovery

97.3% STUDENT REPORTED SKILL DEVELOPMENT

The Bennion Center utilizes self-assessment to assess student leaders' development of Civic Awareness, Civic Skills, and Civic Habits. These skills include critical thinking, communication, leadership, accountability, dedication and more – year after year, we are thrilled that so many student leaders advance these invaluable skills!



85% STUDENT BELONGING

For the first time, students reported about their feelings of belonging while engaging at the Bennion Center. We are pleased to report that a significant percentage of students feel a sense of belonging, values alignment, and trust with their peers and staff here at the Center.



Section 2: Major Accomplishments

Perspective: Students

- I. Increased Student Awareness and Access – while the Bennion Center demonstrated an overall decrease in unique participants (-2%), hours of engagement rose (8%) during the 2023-2024 academic year. Of note, the Service Corner/Service Corner Hours and Utah Reads programs contributed significantly to this growth.

By offering near weekly Service Corner Hours with a variety of partners and projects, students had more opportunities for engagement. This resulted in 958 students engaging in 1,109 experiences demonstrating a 76% increase in the number of participants and a 258% increase in the number of hours served.

Utah Reads employed 83 students at 6 partner locations during fiscal year (FY) '24. This is an increase of 22% in the number of tutors/site coordinators and these students contributed to a 69% growth in the number of hours spent tutoring Title I elementary students. This is particularly valuable as we were able to support more University of Utah students in utilizing their Federal Work Study (FWS) awards – and using a higher percentage of their available award - while making valuable impacts in the community.

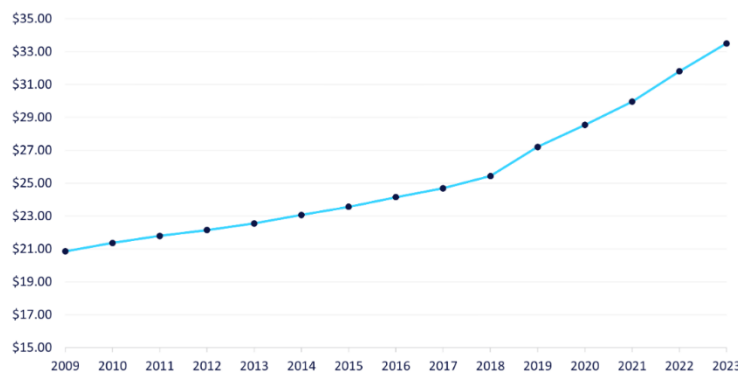


I have loved being a part of the Bennion Center because it has opened my eyes to all the different things I can do to make a positive impact in the community I love. It has introduced me to new communities around Salt Lake and has made me realize that I have the ability to contribute to them. The Glendale-Mountain View Community Learning Center is a really special place and I am so grateful that I was introduced to it through the Bennion Center. I have made so many connections and have found a home where I feel like I have the ability to make a positive impact. By giving me an opportunity to learn alongside others at the Bennion Center and at the sites I've worked and volunteered at, the Bennion Center has helped me feel like I can make a difference in these Salt Lake communities and beyond.

Program	2023-2024 Participants	2023-2024 Hours	% Change Participants from 2022-2023	% Change Hours from 2022-2023
Alternative Breaks	141 ¹	10,591	-23%	2%
Community Partner Programs	737	8,602	15%	10%
First Year Experience/HIVE	31	378	-18%	0%
Issue Education, Dialogues, & Conferences	40	115	-94% ²	-99%
Program Coordinators	9	2,886		
Residential Engagement – Gail Miller Tower Residents	294 ³			
Residential Engagement – Gail Miller Tower RAs	8	110	60%	-6%
Saturday Service Projects	725	2,758	-6%	-31%
Service Corner	958	3,979	76%	258%
Service House	10	317	-9%	88%
Student Board	7	166	0%	0%
Utah Reads	83	12,573	22%	69%
Total⁴	2,749	42,475	-2%	8%

[Independentsector.org](https://independentsector.org) rates the value of a volunteer hour at \$33.49 which means that Bennion Center students contributed the equivalent of \$1,418,904.32 to our community partners.

Historic Dollar Value of a Volunteer Hour: 2009-2023



¹ Decrease explained by using unique count vs. total participants per season

² Previous year data contact information for programs that are no longer part of the Bennion Center (curricular)

³ Data for informational purposes, not counted as part of total - engagement reflected in program areas

⁴ Overall data totals may appear to have significantly decreased from data historically presented by the Bennion Center. However, 2023/2024 was the first year that curricular data was not included in our overall numbers (Bennion Scholars, Community Engaged Learning courses, Community Engaged Learning Certificate) and the data has been adjusted to present co-curricular data only.

Perspective: Internal Processes

- I. Collaboration and partnerships are essential to the success of the Bennion Center. During 2023-2024, our team improved collaboration and key partnerships by:
 - Added 9 new off-campus and 3 new on-campus partners for Saturday Service and Service Corner projects
 - Added 5 new partners for Community Partner Programs, bringing the total to 46
 - Expanded program partnerships with 4 organizations, increasing the impact of Bennion Center students with these partners
 - Alternative Breaks retained partnerships with 32% of organizations from 2022-2023, supporting programmatic goals to create long-term, reciprocal partnerships in this program area

By expanding and strengthening partnerships and collaborative efforts, the Bennion Center can engage more students, make a greater impact on community needs, and serve as a valuable resource to the University of Utah at large. 100% of the partners who responded to our annual assessment survey agreed that partnering with the Bennion Center positively impacted their organization's mission and purpose!

- II. Improve Management and Practices - during FY2024 the Bennion Center participated in audit with the University of Utah's Internal Audit Department. According to the records of both Internal Audit and the Bennion Center, this was the first time this has been conducted in the Bennion Center's history. The audit granted an opportunity to assess fiscal health and management oversight, and to evaluate controls for revenues, operating expenditures, and capital expenditures.

The overall assessment resulted in 4 recommendations for improvement (1 High Priority, 3 Medium Priority). These recommendations will help ensure that the Bennion Center is moving forward on responsible and ethical business practices. The recommendations include the following:

- Restricted funds should only be used for donor approved purchases
- Restricted funds documentation should be maintained
- Participant agreements about be personally signed and held within the department
- Internal controls over purchasing cards should be improved

Significant progress toward meeting these recommendations has already been made with the intention that all will be resolved by the close of FY2025.

Perspective: Organizational Capacity

- I. One of the Bennion Center’s strategic goals for 2023-2024 was to support Student Affairs objectives and initiatives around staffing levels, compensation rates, and training. Key accomplishments include:
 - Restructured the Bennion Center’s professional staff team to more fully meet the needs of our students and programming. The most significant outcome of this restructure was the addition of a new Associate Director role to expand the support for Program Managers.
 - Salary adjustments for all Program Managers and our Administrative Manager ranging from 2.5% to 12% to ensure Bennion Center staff members are compensated fairly and in line with comparable University of Utah positions.
 - All new staff members attended Student Affairs orientation and all staff members participated in the Student Affairs Retreat held in March. This engagement reflected efforts to engage staff members in Student Affairs-wide professional development opportunities.

Perspective: Finance

- I. The Bennion Center’s FY2024 goal concerning engaging alumni and expanding fundraising efforts were successful (see notes in Section 4). Overall, our fundraising details are as follows:

Designation	2022-2023	2023-2024
Foundations	\$103,000	\$105,000
Individual Donors over \$5,000	\$110,000 ⁵	\$80,000
Annual Giving	\$45,807	\$49,418
Giving Day	\$4,065	\$6,432
Totals	\$262,872	\$240,850

Although the overall total decreased, the Equity in Access Endowment that was transferred last year, was included in the total for FY23 but was not actually available for immediate programmatic use. Dollars raised for general support actually increased by \$27,978 in FY24.

⁵ 22/23 individual donors includes a \$50,000 endowment

Section 3: Major Challenges

I. Student Retention

While the Bennion Center recruits and trains over 100 student leaders annually, retention of these students is posing a challenge, especially during and between the Fall/Spring semesters. During FY24, more than 30% of programs in our Community Partner Program area alone experienced student disengagement, turnover and/or exits that directly impacted our ability to adequately meet the needs of our partners, recruit new students, and report consistent, quality data on program utilization. While there is no explicitly collected information about why students are choosing to disengage or step away from these volunteer roles, it is clear that it is problematic for the Bennion Center and our partners. Staff retention and strong student mentorship will also be instrumental to our efforts to mitigate student drop off.

II. Data Management

The Bennion Center utilizes a variety of methods to collect and report annual data and student outcomes. These systems vary in their ease of use as well as in the compliance of student leaders to report the required data. Using Community Partner Programs as an example - in 2022-2023, this area has a 48% compliance rate for hours reporting, in 2023-2024 this decreased to 38%. It is vital that the Bennion Center work to streamline processes around data collection, reinforce expectations, and conduct regular assessment of data submission to ensure accurate utilization data is reported.

Our goals for FY24 included reaching 85% compliance in reporting utilization across all program areas – we did successfully reach that number in 11 program areas (92%), but the significant lack of utilization data in our largest program area is problematic. In addition to the utilization data, there is also a substantial lack of data reported by student leaders across all program areas in the annual Student Learning Objectives and Assessment survey. The lack of information poses challenges in reporting accurate utilization data and providing a comprehensive examination of the outcomes for students engaged with the Bennion Center.

Section 4: Status of Strategic Projects

Perspective: Organizational Capacity

Improve Culture: By creating an environment that recognizes the value of and understands our dynamic and diverse student body and staff, we will improve the culture within Student Affairs. We will focus on establishing trust through transparency and empower our teams to increase collaboration through shared governance models. Additionally, we will work to recruit a Student Affairs staff that is reflective of our campus diversity and will also commit to the retention of our team. Student Affairs will achieve this by creating working environments that are appropriately resourced, staffed at a level that is consistent with our benchmark institutions, compensated above the national average, and trained and positioned for success within the University.

Initiative 1: Support Student Affairs objectives and initiatives around staffing levels, compensation rates, and training.

Purpose: To ensure the Bennion Center is well positioned to hire, train, and retain exceptional staff members.

Timeline: FY 2023-24

Metrics:

- Evaluate staff salaries and seek alignment with comparable University of Utah positions as well as in line with other benchmark institutions
- Create and implement a Bennion Center-specific staff onboarding training that includes an updated staff handbook
- Educate about and encourage staff members to participate in Student Affairs-wide training opportunities

Status: Completed

Key accomplishments include:

- Restructured the Bennion Center's professional staff team to adjust to the needs of our students and programming. The most significant outcome of this restructure was the addition of a new Associate Director role to expand the support for Program Managers.
- Salary adjustments for all Program Managers and our Administrative Manager ranging from 2.5% to 12% to ensure Bennion Center staff members are compensated fairly and in line with comparable University of Utah positions.
- All new staff members attended Student Affairs orientation and all staff members participated in the Student Affairs Retreat held in March. This

engagement reflected efforts to engage staff members in Student Affairs-wide professional development opportunities.

Initiative 2: The Bennion Center will fairly compensate all student leaders for their work to manage, coordinate, and administer community engagement programming.

Purpose: To provide equity to an inequitable process thereby strengthening long-term capacity for the Bennion Center and the University.

Timeline: FY 2024-25

Metrics:

- Compensate student leaders, prioritize those who contribute at least 10/hours per week to Bennion Center programming and operations (unless students opt out for personal/financial aid reasons).
 - Model should emphasize hourly-rate work pending budget approval.
- Collect benchmarking data against other SA division student leader positions

Status: In Progress

The Bennion Center did propose a funding request related to student leader compensation, it was not approved for 2024-2025. However, we were able to make some key structural changes to help move toward this goal.

- Created student employment options (vs. volunteer leadership positions) to support programs including Saturday Service Projects, Service Corner, and Residential Engagement. In addition, because 2 of these project areas support engagement for the community-at-large, the salary expense is fully covered by Financial Aid and no longer requires a cost share from the Bennion Center, saving valuable financial resources.
- The Bennion Center awarded \$59,400 in scholarships to students during the 2023-2024 academic year, \$14,850 of these funds were to directly support student leadership experiences (25%)

Improve Staff Experience: Staff experience and excellence are heavily influenced by opportunities for growth and development. Improve the staff experience by creating or promoting programs that further professional training that contributes to employee development. Consider and implement possible solutions to staffing concerns, not limited to hiring, retention and succession planning.

Initiative 3: Support efforts related to training staff members.

Purpose: To improve the staff experience by supporting involvement in professional development and training.

Timeline: FY 2023-24

Metrics:

- BC Team members will be expected to find and register to participate and/or present at professional conferences, trainings, workshops, and educational opportunities
- Each Bennion Center team member will create (or update) a position handbook for their position to support knowledge sharing and succession planning

Status: In Progress, Not Completed

The Bennion Center's goals around staff professional development were not met during 2023-2024, however, this remains a priority and will continue to be emphasized with staff members and Bennion Center leadership for FY2025.

Each Program Manager position (Alternative Breaks, Community Events, Community Partner Programs, Utah Reads) has a completed and up-to-date position handbook. This effort will be expanded to reach the Administrative Manager, Associate Directors, and Director in the future.

Perspective: Internal Processes

Improve Collaboration and Strategic Partnerships: Establish a regular and systematic review of internal (department/division) and external (campus/community) collaborations and strategic partnerships based on annual goals, strategic plans, and improving the student experience. Focus on effective referrals to services and programs; duplication of services; sharing data and information; and streamlining processes for students and employees

Initiative 4: Conduct evaluations regarding partnerships and collaborations of on- and off- campus organizations connected to our programming to ensure a quality student experience

Purpose: The Bennion Center's programmatic offerings will be enriched by thoughtful, reciprocal, and effective collaborations

Timeline: FY 2023-24

Metrics:

- Creation and implementation of an annual evaluation tool utilized to assess current partnerships (by program area)

- Creation and implementation tool for acceptance of new partners (as applicable by program area)
- Increase response rate in annual evaluation data for community partners

Status: Not Completed, Under Review

While this is a best practice, staff retention and capacity did not allow for progress on this goal. It will be re-evaluated for 2024-2025

Perspective: Finance

Increase Funding: For those areas that can create revenue streams, they will increase funding in order to maintain their operation, add to the student experience or fund Student Affairs or University initiatives. This includes auxiliary organizations, development processes, and designated funds. For state appropriated activities request state funds from Central Administration after evaluating the current financial situation of Student Affairs.

Initiative 5: Develop more opportunities to reconnect with BC alumni and bring them back into the family through service and/or philanthropy

Purpose: This would serve two purposes: to increase donations from BC alumni, thus allowing increased funding for excellent student programs of Bennion Center, and to maintain more sustained relationships in the community that could manifest deeper, broader and more long-term societal impacts

Timeline: FY 2022/23 develop specific strategies for increased BC alumni connections; FY 2023/24 implementation of strategies

Metrics

- Increased number of BC alumni in donor list;
- Increased participation by BC alumni in community engagement opportunities
- Updated records in University databases

Status: Complete, Ongoing

During FY24, the Bennion Center made significant efforts to connect/reconnect with alumni. These efforts included:

- Direct alumni and supporter outreach as part of the Bennion Center’s year-end appeal (November, 2023) resulting in \$49,418 raised from alums and BC supporters
- Conducted an on-site meeting with the BC founders and local alumni in California (March 2024)

- Prioritized alumni outreach and engagement for U Giving Day resulting in \$6,432 raised, a 58.2% increase in donations
- Utilizing a U of U Advancement intern to review physical records and update the UNITE database. All physical files have been compiled in a spreadsheet and will be sent to UNITE Data Integrity Team to update database.
- Secured a \$10,000 alumni gift specifically intended for alumni engagement and infrastructure support of this process
- Creating programming opportunities that will extend into FY25 including the Bennion Birthday Bash on Saturday (July 2024) and Alumni Social the evening prior to our Legacy of Lowell Saturday Service Project (September 2024)).
- Established the Bennion Center Alumni Newsletter that will be sent out quarterly.
 - Issues for March 2024 and June 2024 were distributed and we will continue to prioritize this medium to highlight alumni and share information on happenings at the Bennion Center.

Perspective: Students

Increase Student Awareness and Access: Refine and enhance communication to students using a variety of methods to inform and engage ALL students in learning about opportunities, utilizing services, and taking responsibility for their learning and well-being based on their unique identities, needs and interests. This includes improving outreach related to programs, services, facilities use to support a path to graduation.

Initiative 6: Develop and implement targeted communication strategies to promote awareness of and participation in deeply engaged community learning experiences at the Bennion Center.

Purpose: The Bennion Center provides students a sense of belonging, community, and purpose, which deepens their connection to the U and improves their overall college experience.

Timeline: FY 2023-24

Metrics:

- Progress will be assessed through information from student applications (total number, student year, academic area) and
- Program participation growth

Status: Not Completed, Under Review

Due to staff turnover and a departmental restructure, this was not a priority for FY24. This goal will be reevaluated and likely restructured for FY25.

Improve Student Outcomes: Improve student satisfaction, engagement, well-being, success and ability to thrive at the University of Utah through Student Affairs programs and services. Increase confidence and trust in Student Affairs for all students by effectively utilizing student input and demonstrating that historically underserved students are utilizing and meeting the same outcomes with our programs and services.

Initiative 7: Develop, implement, and utilize systems for stakeholder evaluation of satisfaction.

Purpose: To evaluate and improve student satisfaction.

Timeline: FY 2023-24

Metrics:

- In partnership with Assessment and Analytics, create a system for collecting feedback on students' satisfaction with BC programming, the suite of CP partnerships offered, and BC priorities.
- Collect feedback and satisfaction data regarding current BC programming (involved students & community partners).
- Develop and implement a process for responding to, and/or utilizing feedback from all stakeholder groups.

Status: Not Completed, Under Review

While this is a best practice, staff retention and capacity did not allow for progress on this goal. It will be re-evaluated for 2024-2025

Section 5: New/Continuing Strategic Initiatives

Strategic Initiative – Create Proactive and Personalized Pathways

Build a coordinated system for tracking student and staff journeys and utilization in order to be more proactive with decision-making and more informed about the user experience. We aim to utilize resources, tools, and services to more efficiently and effectively meet student and staff needs.

I. Project: Bennion Center Data Management

Description: Leverage technology and software already adopted and accessible on campus to better track participation, satisfaction, and streamline student volunteer experiences. With streamlined data collection, we will be able to better tell the story of the Bennion Center as well as contribute to student’s co-curricular transcripts and their engagement. This will help to influence Bennion Center operations and enable staff to have real time access to engagement data to better inform programming decisions, and promotion of opportunities.

Scope: Leverage current software and systems in place to collect student engagement data and improve the user experience for Bennion Center volunteers, student leaders, staff, and community partners.

Objective(s): Improve Infrastructure (Organizational Capacity), Improve Outcomes (Students), Increase Student Satisfaction (Students)

Metrics:

- Pilot utilization of UCard Readers/Campus Connect for better data collection FY24
 - Identify 10 partners or programs to participate in the initial pilot of the program
 - Train and support 20 community partners and student leaders on the platform
 - Implement technology at 10 community partner programs or Saturday Service Projects
 - Develop and implement a system for evaluation on CampusConnect expansion with community partners, students, volunteers and Bennion Center staff
- Develop, implement, and utilize systems for stakeholder evaluation of satisfaction
 - FY24 – Develop and implement satisfaction survey

- FY25 – Continue using satisfaction survey, utilize data to make programming decisions
 - Develop and implement a process for responding to, and/or utilizing feedback from all stakeholder groups
- Increase response rate in annual evaluation data for community partners

Strategic Initiative – Revitalize Engagement & Belonging

Improve and re-envision resources, events, programs, traditions, and services (and the promotion of these) that enhance engagement, connection, and belonging for staff and students.

I. Project: Establish a Pillar Event Celebration

Description: The Bennion Center will establish a pillar event (Legacy of Lowell) in order to:

- Connect with our campus community through community engagement projects and needs
- Celebrate the students, community partners, staff, and alumni who are making advancements in community engagement work
- Identify opportunities for resources and engagements in our community both on and off campus
- Create a place for students to start their engagement at the Bennion Center in hopes of extending that start into other areas of the center and feeling belonging to the Bennion Center community

Scope: Plan, deliver, and evaluate Legacy of Lowell 2025 as a University of Utah pillar event. This will include:

- Traditional Legacy of Lowell community engagement projects
- An opportunity for folks to gather, connect, and celebrate (kickoff)
- An opportunity for campus and community partners to table and show what resources and opportunities are available through their offices and organizations
- A recognition ceremony to highlight and honor the work in the community

Strategic Objective(s): Increase Awareness & Access (Students), Improve Collaboration & Strategic Partnerships (Internal Processes), Increase Student Satisfaction (Students)

Metrics:

- Plan and implement a social event to engage students, alumni, and community members at Legacy of Lowell 2025
- Offer and fill a minimum of 500 volunteer opportunities for engagement at Legacy of Lowell 2024
- Offer and fill a minimum of 600 volunteer opportunities for engagement at Legacy of Lowell 2025
- Reintroduce Bennion Center recognition awards
- Develop and implement a system for evaluation of participant satisfaction for Legacy of Lowell 2024
 - Utilize 2024 data as a baseline for growth in satisfaction for 2025

II. Project: Bennion Center Staff Development

Description: Improve the staff experience by supporting involvement in orientation, training, and ongoing professional development

Scope: Bennion Center professional staff development

Strategic Objective(s): Improve Infrastructure (Organizational Capacity), Improve Staff Experience (Organizational Capacity), Improve Culture (Organizational Capacity)

Metrics:

- Development of position handbooks for remaining Bennion Center professional positions (Director, Associate Directors, Administrative Manager, Campus Dialogue Program Manager)
- Implement a regular and ongoing expectation of program handbook annual updates
- Develop and implement a Bennion Center staff orientation
- Encourage, mentor, and support at least 1 professional development opportunity for each staff member annually

III. Project: Bennion Center Constituent Engagement

Description: Expand and enhance engagement in key groups including the Advisory Board and Bennion Center Alumni

Scope: The Bennion Center team seeks to engage key non-student constituents to support development and organizational capacity efforts.

Strategic Objective(s): Improve Infrastructure (Organizational Capacity), Improve Strategic Communication (Internal Processes)

Metrics:

- Completed data migration from physical files to UNITE
- Plan and deliver 3 alumni-focused engagement opportunities in FY24
- Increased fundraising support from BC Alumni
- Strengthen and support the Bennion Center's Advisory Board
 - 10 engaged members for FY24
 - 15 engaged members for FY25
- Create and implement an annual evaluation tool to assess current partnerships (by program area)
- Create and implement a tool to evaluate new partnership requests (as applicable by program area)