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Capstone Project Idea

Title: Graduate Admissions and the Service Perspective

Problem and need: This project has both a problem and a need component. The problem with the graduate admissions process at SJSU is that it is almost entirely transactional. Prospective students do not typically have the opportunity to build relationships or gain confidence in the process. They are hesitant to use resources as they tend to receive a static response from advisors if they receive a response at all. The problem can be stated as, admission practices at SJSU are guided by transactional activities, not transformational experiences. I view this problem as impactful to all prospective students as their first impression of SJSU may sway their desire to attend the institution, resulting in lower applications and enrollment.

The need for this project comes from a personal and professional desire to support my colleagues at SJSU to develop the knowledge and skills necessary for supporting a student-centered service environment. Specifically, the graduate admissions team at SJSU is in need of training that includes best practices for student affairs and builds on this basic knowledge by offering a training series directed at topics such as having difficult conversations, empathy and encouragement, supporting diversity, confidence building, and customer service 101.

Target audience: As outlined above, the target group is all members of graduate admissions and recruitment at SJSU. This includes the College of Graduate Studies, GAPE, and all colleges at the institution that offer an advanced degree.

Solution: The solution to this problem/need is to create a training series aimed at developing the service skills of the target audience. My professional background is in the service industry. I have worked with Disney, Hilton, APAC, and other companies that make service the number one goal of their business. I have never viewed higher education as a business but we have to put "butts in seats" to keep the doors open, so it is a business. There are many employees in the CSU system that have become stagnant and lost their passion, but they still work in student-facing roles. I have been at SJSU for over two years, in that time I have increased applications and enrollment yields by 70% in my department. I want to share the tricks and tips I have learned over my eighteen years in higher education with professionals who seek to advance their skills and provide an exceptional experience for students.

The training outlined above may include media, game-based tutorials, in-person training, problem-based learning scenarios, and supplemental documents. The training will be designed from a constructivist perspective and may incorporate a variety of learning theorists such as Biesta (2015), Knowles (1975, 1984), and Mezirow (1997).