

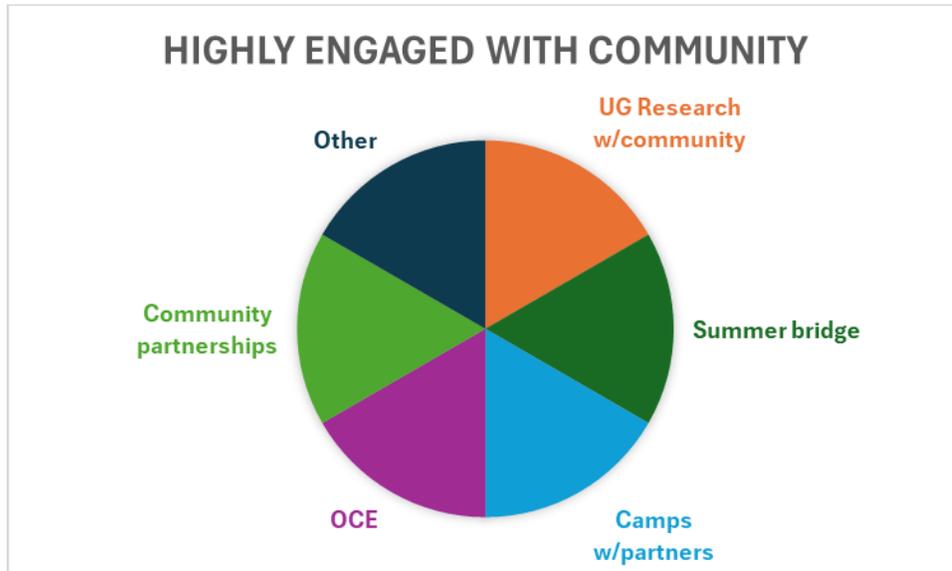
To be completed by the tri-chairs using content from the three Subcommittee Write-Ups. Please only include content that can be posted online, saving other items in the Supplementary Materials folder. The Subcommittee Write-Ups will be archived in a separate folder for documentation of the approaches used for information gathering.

Penn State Berks

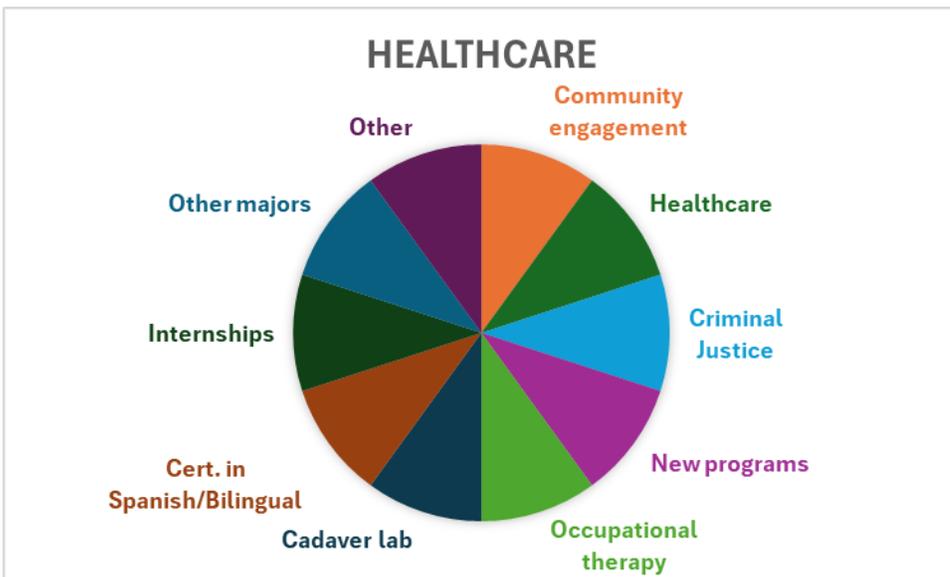
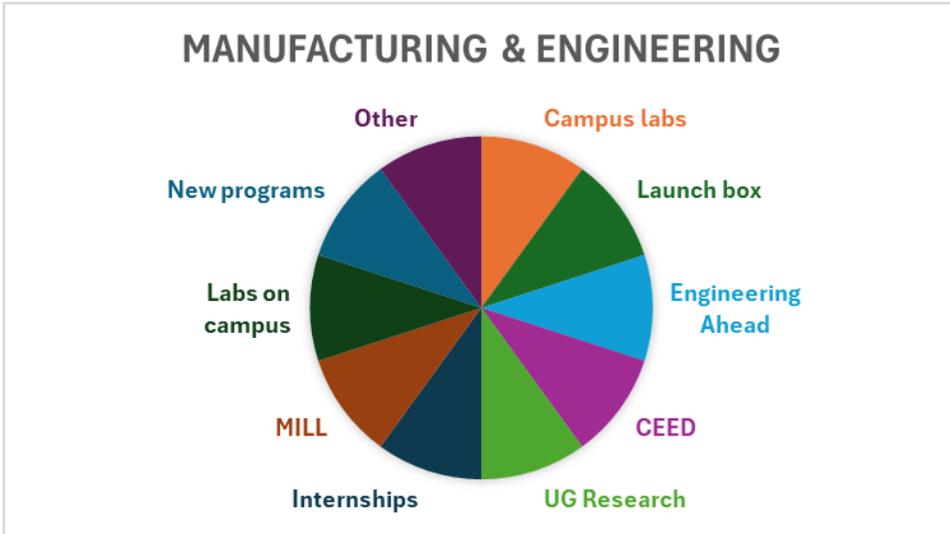
Information Gathering Phase I Report

Summary

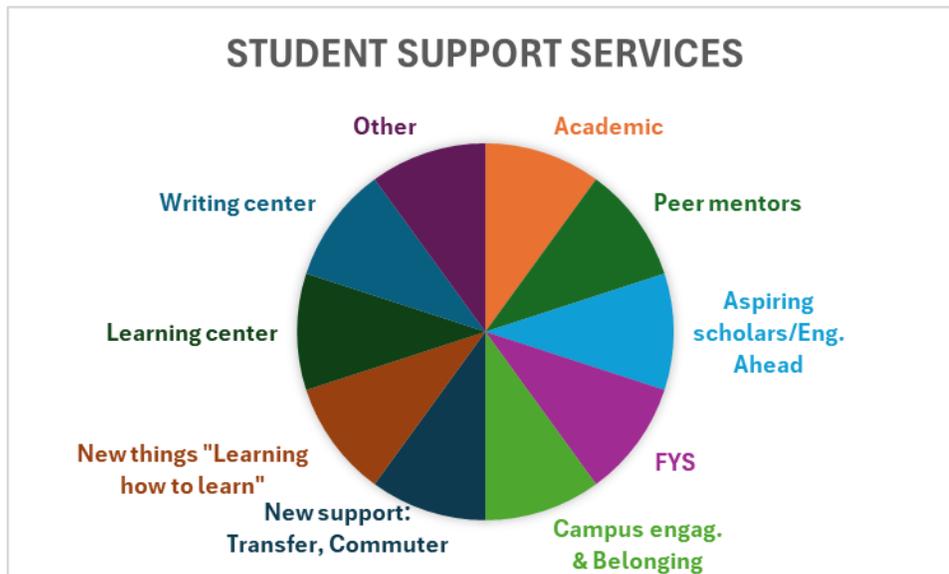
1. Penn State Berks aims to be a highly engaged partner with the local community. The campus is already doing a lot of great work with external partners, but how do we leverage this and strategically organize our efforts with external partners. There isn't staffing in place to help foster this relationship. How do we continue to expand our visibility in the community and get community members to attend events on campus.



2. There is a need in the local community for degrees and programs related to the manufacturing and healthcare industries. Penn State Berks has some programs available but how do we expand our offerings, maybe specifically how we can also support the Hispanic & Latino community with these offerings.



- There is a need for a cohesive student support service. How do we make student support services readily available to our students. How do we continue to expand on our High Impact Learning practices. What populations of students are under supported (transfer, commuter, first gen. just as examples)



Methods and Key Findings by Subcommittee

Identity Subcommittee

Methods

- The Identity subcommittee met three times: first to brainstorm areas of strength, second to identify data sources and contact people, and third to determine three key findings.
- For each area of focus, we reached out to PSU Berks' campus contacts to request data, e.g., the Office of Community Engagement, Career Services, Undergraduate Research Fellows, and specific faculty, staff, and administrators with expertise in the areas of interest.
- Where possible, we used a combination of LionPath and iTwo data to determine student and faculty counts. Unless otherwise stated, data were unduplicated to show the number of individual students, not each students' level of participation in a particular HIP. For example, one student can have multiple internships, and participate

in multiple semesters of undergraduate research. However, in our data table (shown in the Identity table in supplemental materials), that student would be counted once for internship and once for undergraduate research.

- Due to the short turn-around time, we did not survey all faculty, staff, and administrators. Therefore, counts likely underrepresent the number of students impacted and the number of faculty, staff, and community participants. In some cases, we are confident the data are fully accurate counts, such as those for First Year Seminar, Writing Across the Curriculum, undergraduate research, and internships. In rare cases, data may be overrepresented. For example, the Cohen Hammel Fellows program has been predominantly an undergraduate research program in its first few years of inception because of the impact of COVID.

Key Findings

- The identity subcommittee was charged with identifying strengths of PSU Berks' campus with respect to academics, research, and campus assets.
- With respect to academics: High impact learning practices (HIP) are a major strength at PSU Berks. According to the American Association of Colleges and Universities, students engaged in HIPs are more successful learners. At PSU Berks, our students participate in multiple HIPs that allow them to work more closely with faculty than is common at a larger institution or campus. Our faculty are accessible to our students with a student faculty ratio of 15:1. During 2023-2024, our First Year Seminar is the HIP with the largest student participation at Berks, with 67% of our student body (n=1315) participating. Berks has other First Year Experience HIPs, including Engineering Ahead and Aspiring Scholars. Engineering Ahead, which is in its 9th year, has annual cohorts of 20 students from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Participants have significantly higher: grades in their first college math course, first year GPA, and university retention. Aspiring Scholars is a 1-week program that seeks to smooth the transition to college for marginalized populations, such as first-generation students, graduates from under-resourced schools, as well as students from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The second largest HIP at Berks is Writing Across the Curriculum, which is a requirement for all students. In 2023-2024, 46% of Berks students (n=911) took a W course. The third largest HIP at Berks is service learning / community-based learning, with approximately 16% of Berks students (n=322) participating in 2023-2024.

- Looking at student participation over a broader period, Diversity / Global learning is a HIP with a large student involvement at Berks, with approximately 31% of Berks students (n=600) participating in one or more experiences between 2021-2024. PSU Berks is a diverse campus with 3.5% international students from 27 countries. Although Berks is a majority white institution (56%), Students of Color are increasingly represented in Berks enrollment, including approximately 8% Asian students, 8% Black or African American students, and 15% Hispanic / Latino students. The Diversity / Global learning HIP supports Berks efforts to become an emerging Hispanic Serving Institution, with Spanish courses for bilingual students, a Spanish for Healthcare certificate, and Hispanic Heritage Month activities. Berks campus is located in Reading, PA where 60% of the population is of Latin American heritage. Following Diversity / Global learning, internships are the next largest HIP at Berks, with 17% of students (n=339) interning between 2021-2024 with 275 community partners. Additional HIPs are shown in the Identity table in supplemental materials.
- With respect to research, a major strength at PSU Berks is undergraduate research, which is also a HIP. Faculty involve students in their research and work more closely with them than is typical at the undergraduate level. Students can get involved with research their first semester in disciplines including STEM and the social sciences. In 2023-2024, more than 7% of students (n=146) were engaged in undergraduate research, which is supported at Berks partly through endowments, such as Cohen Hammel Fellows program and Franco Undergraduate research endowment. These and other endowments contributed \$44,000 in 2022-2023, and \$57,000 in 2023-2024 to support undergraduate research.
- With respect to campus assets: Physical assets are a strength of PSU Berks. Berks has a beautiful campus close to Reading's urban center that houses Berks' Launch Box: a maker space and co-working space in downtown Reading. Our campus physical assets include facility upgrades to the dining hall (Tully's), and a new athletic center. Berks has athletics fields to support sports such as softball, baseball, and soccer, and trails to support cross country. Additionally, the campus is located next door to the Union Canal Trail in Gring's Mill Recreation Area. The campus offers free parking and newly installed, soon to be operational, electric car chargers. We have a theatre, public library, and the Freyberger art gallery. Berks has multiple research spaces: including labs for biology, BMB, chemistry, and physics, a cadaver lab, biomechanics lab, electrical and mechanical engineering labs, and a digital design computer lab. We use the campus as a living laboratory to support courses. We have a campus garden, green infrastructure, greenhouse, farm, and PSU Berks is part of the Commonwealth Arboreta Network.

Peer Models Subcommittee

Methods

- Identified peer institutions using the following criteria: institutions within Berks County, institutions identified as enrollment competitors, institutions that are currently Hispanic Serving Institutions or emerging HSIs, institutions with similar demographics, and institutions in similar communities (e.g., the Lehigh Valley).
- Identified key types of programs that would strengthen our campus: programming to support Latinx students and other DEI initiatives; services and programs for transfer and commuter students; services to enhance the student relationship to the wider community; programs and services that connect colleges to their local communities; summer bridge programs and programs aimed at academically underprepared students; extracurricular activities, such as Esports; programs aimed at adult students
- Used web-based resources (e.g., institution websites) to find information and data about services and programs at identified peer institutions.

Findings

- Peer institutions offer a variety of initiatives that focus on diversity, inclusion, equity, and belonging. Some universities provide specific programs for underrepresented students and have offices for DEIB.
- Peer institutions that are or are emerging Hispanic Serving Institutions put into place programs and initiatives aimed at Latinx students and families. This includes ESL programs, webpages translated to Spanish, academic programs in Latin American Studies, and cultural programs related to Hispanic/Latinx heritage.
- Local community engagement at peer institutions includes increased presence in local communities (e.g., John R. Post Center), programs for community development, collaborations between university and local community, and transportation for students and staff to local community from campus.
- Peer institutions provide support services for students in the form of summer bridge programs, specific programs for academically underprepared students, peer mentor programs, and specific offerings for commuter students, transfer students, and adult learners.

External Partnerships Subcommittee

Methods

- Lighcast In-Demand Skills data shows us that nursing is the number one posted skill followed by merchandising and project management. By leveraging this data, we can focus new offerings on in-demand skills with local employers giving us the best chance to support local industry and offer programming people are willing to pay for. By digging deeper into these reports, we can view job posting data for positions in specific degree areas. Continuing Ed also provided additional workforce information.
- Career Services at the Berks campus collects all internship paperwork, for all majors that have internship requirements, which gives us access to a vast amount of internship data in one location. It is a model that is unique to our campus and has been highly successful. We also survey program chairs to find out any internship opportunities they know of that their students are seeking.
- We looked at the news for local economic development opportunities including the Broadcasting Road Housing Development, and Governor Shapiro's initiative to expand passenger rail development into Berks County.
- We collected data for the Office of Community Engagement and compiled a list of nonprofit organizations in the local community.
- We talked to Strat Comm about the work the campus has done with the Hispanic and Latino communities and compiled a list of events the campus has sponsored.
- We looked at programs coordinated with local school districts and talked with Athletics about their goals as a department. We talked with Alumni Relations about their partnership with the local alumni chapter.
- We looked at data driven reports including Census information, Philadelphia Federal Reserve, PA Workforce, and BLS.gov.

Findings

- Berks County has two Priority A Industries, Manufacturing and Healthcare.
 - Manufacturing is a driver industry with the largest sector both by annual economic output (23.3% of Berks GDP) and employment (17.4% of local employment). Manufacturing remains an important piece of Berks County, and we know that in order to maintain capacity manufacturers will need to leverage technology and



continue to upskill their current workforce. We need to expand our programming to better support the future workforce.

- Our second Priority A Industry is Healthcare as an expanding industry and having the 2nd largest sector of employment (13.8%) and also the 2nd and 12th largest employers. There is an alarming replacement need for both of these industries due to looming retirements. Our biggest non-credit programs are within these industries and there is opportunity to expand upon our current offerings to help meet these demands. Specifically, expanding capacity in the practical nursing program and considering a pathway for LPN to RN could be beneficial.
- As a campus we are always looking for the best ways to collaborate and expand our relationships with community partners. There are many more untapped opportunities to partner with local businesses and create opportunities for internships and jobs for our students. The loss of the Job Development and Internship Coordinator position has created a gap in our ability to proactively pursue new industry partnerships.
- There is need for higher education in the county as only 11.7% of residents (25 or older) of Reading and 26.8% of Berks County hold a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 33.8% for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It's also a young population, as the median age in Reading is 32, compared with 41 for Pennsylvania
- According to the 2020 census, the Hispanic and Latino population of the City of Reading is nearly 69%, up from 58% in 2010. To meet the needs of this growing population, Penn State Berks is expanding its efforts to engage with and support the local Hispanic and Latino communities with several new initiatives.
- We engage with local school districts on a micro level through individual programs – PEPP, FIERCE, Careers in Math workshop, National Biomechanics Day, Engineers Week, Flemming CEED Center activities, etc. Additionally, we have multiple superintendents and the head of the BCIU on our Advisory Board. There has not been a high-level, holistic approach to connect K-12 students to Berks, but individuals working through and leveraging their existing connections. OCE has helped to support the logistics of the events, and they are less labor-intensive. Many opportunities are available to expand these relationships – but we must understand the needs of the districts and what they are willing to support. Stronger direct relationships with those who can help to coordinate, and communicate/market would be helpful.
- To improve communication and streamline involvement, it is essential to address current staffing challenges within the Office of Community Engagement (OCE) and Corporate Engagement Team (CET). Establishing a dedicated office or group focused

on community integration and leadership development is recommended. This could involve hiring staff to organize efforts and engage students with the local community.

- Currently, there are 13,275 Penn State Alumni who reside in Berks County; 6,230 are considered Penn State Berks Alumni. We have 16,325 Berks alumni across the commonwealth and more than 22,000 total Berks alums, worldwide. Leveraging the local Penn State and primarily the Penn State Berks alumni network by providing more opportunities to bring alumni volunteers to the campus, coordinating and marketing the impact of our alumni on our students and in the community, are ways to leverage this incredible asset. Most people have fond feelings of their experience at the campus and want to give back with time and talent.
- We have a unique opportunity to transform Penn State Berks from a hidden gem into a well-known institution and cornerstone of the local community. By actively promoting our arts and athletic events, we can invite the community to engage with our campus. Our beautiful campus features multiple statues and walking paths that connect to the Gring's Mill Recreation Area, offering a scenic space for exploration. Additionally, our library is open to the public, providing valuable resources for everyone. Throughout the year, we host a variety of events that are accessible to the community, including Fall Fest, the Arts & Lecture Series, sporting events, and exhibitions at the Freyberger Art Gallery. We need to look at continuing to expand on these opportunities to engage with the local community on our campus.