New Student Services Center Opens to Better Serve Students

Key University offices serving Stanford students collaborated to bring about the new Student Services Center. The Center will provide students with a single point of contact for assistance relating to their University bill, financial aid, enrollment, transcript, and the student ID card. The Center opened on September 15, 2008, in time to greet the incoming students, and will be followed by a grand opening on September 22, 2008.

Provost John Etchemendy said "The new student services center reflects Stanford's commitment to reducing the time and effort students invest navigating the university. I applaud the offices that have worked hard to create this new center for our students and to re-imagine their jobs with our students in mind."

Located on the 2nd Floor of Tresidder Memorial Union, the Student Services Center invites students to "come with questions, leave with answers," according to the Center's charter developed jointly by Student Financial Services, the Registrar's Office, Financial Aid, IT Services, and the Vice Provosts for Student Affairs, Undergraduate Education, and Graduate Education.

Students can expect one-on-one assistance from cross-trained Student Service staff when visiting the Center. They may also choose to work with a staff member by telephone. Beginning October 1, 2008, students will be able to access answers through the Center's self-service on-line knowledge base (Stanford Answers). Interactive web support (web-chat) capability will be added at a later date. All of these support options are aimed at the goal of first contact resolution of student issues. Polina Segalova and George Bloom, co-chairs of the Graduate Students Council, said "Navigating the cobweb of University offices is sometimes frustrating and often an impersonal
experience. We're extremely excited that the Student Services Center's friendly staff will provide a central point of information for a variety of graduate student issues."

The concept of a centralized, comprehensive, student-focused resource originated from a Student Services Working Group formed by the Provost and Chief Financial Officer, Randy Livingston, to address concerns regarding the coordination of student services.

The group highlighted student dissatisfaction with having to "navigate through multiple offices and departments to solve basic problems." The decentralized organization of administrative offices presented a challenge in implementing a single Student Services Center. This challenge was addressed through the energy brought by the leadership in all the represented offices and was led by Allison Baird-James and Teresa Janeway of Student Financial Services, which had already implemented a new service model to better serve students. “There has been an enthusiastic collaboration and commitment of all key offices," says Greg Boardman, Vice Provost of Student Affairs, "culminating in the opening of the Student Services Center."

Moving forward, the Center is committed to meeting student needs through helpful, friendly, effective service and has established staff performance and service level metrics to evaluate success.