



The David and Leighan Rinker

**CENTER for
INTERNATIONAL
LEARNING**
STETSON UNIVERSITY

PEACE CORPS PREP AT STETSON UNIVERSITY

Fifth Year Report
2016-2021

SUBMITTED ON:
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BACKGROUND

In December 2016, Stetson University entered a five-year agreement with the [Peace Corps](#) (PC) for the establishment of a [Peace Corps Prep Program](#). The program is designed to advance the goals of the Peace Corps and Stetson University by combining academic course work with practical field experience and enhancing ongoing international initiatives. Peace Corps Prep advances Stetson University's mission, goals and strategic values by providing professional development, leadership experience and training, intercultural competence, and academic growth.

One of the main benefits of the program is how closely the

requirements align with the curriculum students are already working towards degree completion. Students participating in the Prep Program select a PC work sector (below) that aligns with academic and personal interests. Students must complete at least three (3) pre-approved courses and 50 hours of volunteer or work experience in their sector. The agriculture sector is not offered at Stetson. To enhance intercultural competence, students are required to complete three (3) courses focused on diversity and inclusion or the study of marginalized groups.



Study abroad can count as experience towards the intercultural competence requirement. In addition, students must complete a mock interview, resume review, leadership training, and hold one leadership position. Upon successful completion of program requirements, students receive an endorsed [Exit Checklist](#) that can be used as part of the application to the PC, graduation cord, and certificate of program completion signed by the PC.

ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION

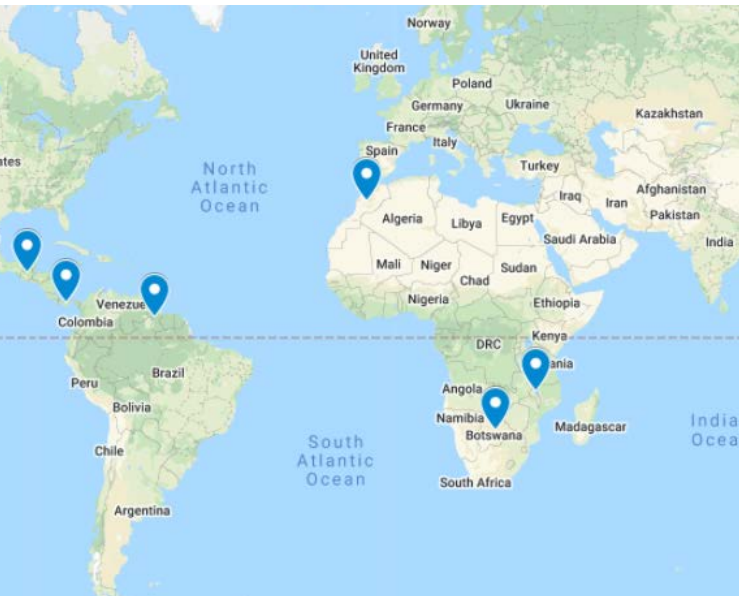
Program recruitment occurs in fall semesters with enrollment in spring. To that end, annual enrollment has remained fairly consistent with fall trending to lower numbers due to seniors graduating and a fall recruitment cycle. Although the program experienced a nice boost for the spring 2020, the global pandemic greatly impacted the ability to recruit new students. Student interest in adding new initiatives and programs appeared to wane with remote engagement. The program also experienced lower foot traffic at virtual Student Involvement Fairs versus in-person events. In addition, the Peace Corps recalled volunteers from abroad programs and shut down international operations. Together, these factors likely attributed to decreased interest by prospective students.

Students can enroll in the Peace Corps Prep program at any time during their Stetson academic career. Therefore, the timeline to complete the program varies for each individual. Typically, most students enter during their first or second year and complete all program requirements at the end of their senior year. Stetson's first program graduates completed requirements in May 2018. In spring 2021, a junior completed all program requirements prior to graduating. Although our completion and retention rates have remained strong over the years, a small number of students withdraw from the program. Of that group, most withdraw from the university. Since the program's inception, only 2 students have withdrawn due to scheduling conflicts/demands. Of the 44 students enrolled since 2017, a total of 16 students have completed the program with an anticipated 18 in the pipeline to completion. If they persist, the program success rate will sit at 77% (3 in 4)

| Term | New Enrollments | Continuing Students | Total Enrolled | Withdrawals Mid-semester | Completion |
|--------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------------|--------------------------|------------|
| Fall 2017 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 0 | N/A |
| Spring 2018 | 10 | 6 | 16 | 2 | 2 |
| Fall 2018 | 0 | 14 | 14 | 4 | 0 |
| Spring 2019 | 8 | 11 | 19 | 2 | 3 |
| Fall 2019 | 0 | 14 | 14 | 1 | 0 |
| Spring 2020 | 15 | 15 | 30 | 3 | 3 |
| Fall 2020 | 0 | 22 | 22 | 2 | 1 |
| Spring 2021 | 5 | 18 | 23 | 0 | 7 |
| Total | 44 | | | 14 | 16 |

Program Highlights

Over the past five years, the program focused on expanding students' global perspective and providing professional development and leadership opportunities. The first three years were dedicated to building an active cohort and assisting students with completing program requirements. In March 2020, activities transitioned online due to the pandemic and remained primarily virtual to date.



- A menu of 82 [approved courses](#) were available for students to complete their sector academic requirements. In addition, there were 18 courses offered for the intercultural competence requirement not including the option to study abroad. Courses range from MGMT 305: *Human Relations, Leadership, and Teamwork* to EDUC 370V: *Celebrating Diversity: Examining Populations on the Fringe of Society* and BSAN 351: *Technology Globalization and Social Justice*.
- A [Student Guide](#) was created to aid students with the completion of program requirements.
- A total of 16 students successfully completed the Peace Corps Prep Program as of May 2021.
- A total of six (6) students were accepted to the Peace Corps for service. Students served in Morocco, Botswana, Guyana (Clare Sullivan, '18 teaching local students, *left*). A map, (*top left*) of their service sites illustrates the diversity of regions served. Several interested students were unable to apply given the closure of PC locations due to the global pandemic
- Participants engaged in one (1) community service project at the Spring Hill Community Gardens (*bottom left*). Additional service projects were canceled as a result of the pandemic.

Program Highlights Continued...

- The program collaborated with [Global Brigades](#) to engage students in service activities abroad which count towards sector service requirements. Participants presented on experiences during a cohort meeting.
- During cohort meetings, PCP students present on current trends, topics, and projects related to their sector that the PC volunteers are tackling abroad.
- Stetson's trivia contest during Peace Corps Week was so well received by the local PC representative that it is now offered as an event at other schools throughout the state.
- A total of six (6) Stetson/PCP Alumni Sessions were offered online (below). PCP alumni shared personal experiences in applying, training, and serving in the PC. Four (4) students were serving abroad at the time of these presentations.
- Student leaders participated in LEAD Training every summer to improve their leadership skills and understand university policies for student organizations.
- Peace Corps Prep Certificates were presented annually during the last four Top Hatter Award ceremonies.
- The program maintains a robust social media presence as well as a university [website](#) to ensure dissemination of information and highlight student engagement in programming: [Facebook Instagram](#).

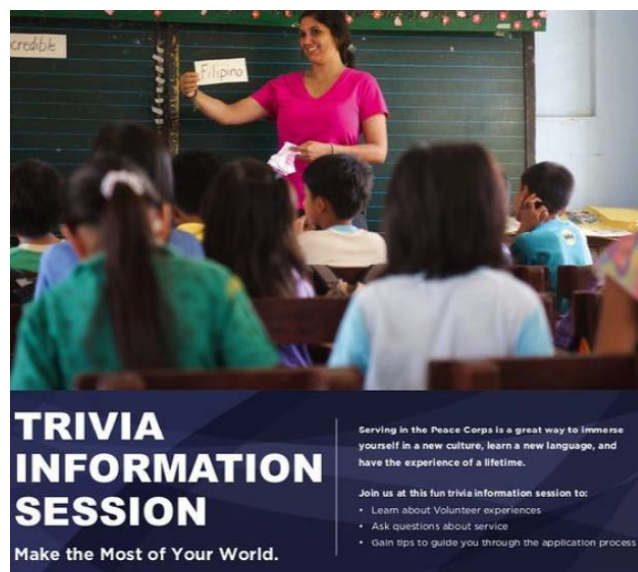


STETSON UNIVERSITY PEACE CORPS PREP PRESENTS

**ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT
COURTNEY CONVERSE**

Tuesday, February 26 | 12:00 p.m.
DuPont-Ball Library 25 L
Cultural Credit Approved

Courtney Converse is a Stetson Alumni who is currently serving in the Peace Corps in Panama as an Agricultural Extension Agent. Join the Peace Corps Prep Student Leaders Program in a Q&A with Courtney Converse over Skype to learn about her experience serving in the Peace Corps.



**TRIVIA
INFORMATION
SESSION**

Make the Most of Your World.

Serving in the Peace Corps is a great way to immerse yourself in a new culture, learn a new language, and have the experience of a lifetime.

Join us at this fun trivia information session to:

- Learn about Volunteer experiences
- Ask questions about service
- Gain tips to guide you through the application process

Wednesday, March 3, 2021
4:00 – 5:00 p.m.

This is a Virtual Event
Register here:
[https://www.peacecorps.gov/
events/21_vrs_infoession_pctrivia_20210303/](https://www.peacecorps.gov/events/21_vrs_infoession_pctrivia_20210303/)

For more information, contact Laura Loveland at loveland@peacecorps.gov.

If you require reasonable accommodations when attending a Peace Corps event, please email Laura Loveland at loveland@peacecorps.gov and provide details of the reasonable accommodation(s) you are requesting.



Student Profiles

The following [student profiles](#) represent members of recent cohorts.

Tahiyya Khan

Graduating in May 2022


I joined Peace Corps in Spring 2019

Major: Public Health
Minors: Management and psychology

Sector: Health

My favorite part about PCP is that it enables me to have skills designed to help later in my life and allows me to travel to different places and help those who are in need

CO EXEC CHAIR



 **Peace Corps Prep**

Ocean Crawley-Sweeney

Graduating in 2022

I joined Peace Corps prep because... I have always wanted to serve in the peace corps and learn more about what volunteers do in the field

Molecular Biology and Public Health

Health Sector

My favorite part about PCP is video calling with past alumni who are volunteering overseas!

CO-EXEC CHAIR



 **Peace Corps Prep**

Tahira Perry


Graduating in 2021

I joined Peace Corps prep in 2018

Majors & Minors: Biology, Public health and spanish

Sector: Health

The Peace Corp Prep program has exposed to so many international opportunities to explore my passion for preventative initiatives in marginalized communities and allowed me to meet so many like minded individuals that want to make a difference in this world!



 **Peace Corps Prep**

William Burke
(I GO BY BILLY THOUGH)

Graduating in: May 2022


I joined Peace Corps prep in Spring 2018

Majors & Minors: English and minor in Business Law

Sector: Community Economic Development

My favorite part about PCP is that it grants me the opportunity to give back to the community, provides leadership opportunities, and prepares me for future roles in my life.

Recruitment Exec Chair



 **Peace Corps Prep**

Sydney Betancourt


Graduating in May 2021

I joined Peace Corps in... Spring 2018

Majors & Minors: International Studies, Minors: Music, French

Sector: Community Economic Development

My favorite part about PCP... Its a program that fosters international cultural awareness while providing opportunities for volunteering. Plus, its a great way to prepare for actual service with the Peace Corps!



 **Peace Corps Prep**

Cassandra Concilio


Graduating in December 2020

I joined Peace Corps prep in Fall 2019

Major in Political Science with a minor in American Studies

Sector: Youth and Development

My favorite part about PCP ... Being able to dive in and learn about multiple cultures that are different than mine! Additionally, being a part of an organization that encourages you to always have an open mind and helping others is the main reason why I wanted to join this program.



 **Peace Corps Prep**

Chris Walker

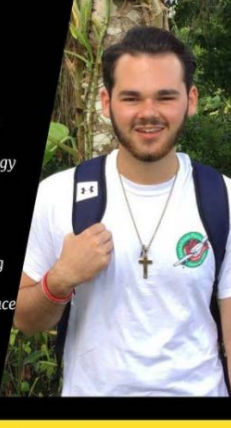
Graduating in 2023

I joined Peace Corps prep in fall 2019

Majors Health Sciences and Psychology Major

Sector: Health

My favorite part about PCP is hearing about the experiences of others and learning about what being in the Peace Corps is actually like.



 **Peace Corps Prep**

Sidney Saxen


Graduating in 2022

I joined Peace Corps in Fall 2019

Majors: Political Science Major, Sociology & Education Minor

Sector: Education

My favorite part about PCP... is hearing from different experiences of Peace Corps Volunteers and connecting with like-minded individuals who are passionate about learning about different cultures and making an impact in the world.



 **Peace Corps Prep**

Alexa Koch

Graduating in 2022. (Deceased)

I joined Peace Corps prep in 2019

Majors & Minors: International Business

Sector: Community Economic Development

My favorite part about PCP is ... is hearing all the amazing stories from past volunteers.



 **Peace Corps Prep**

Program Evolution and Leadership

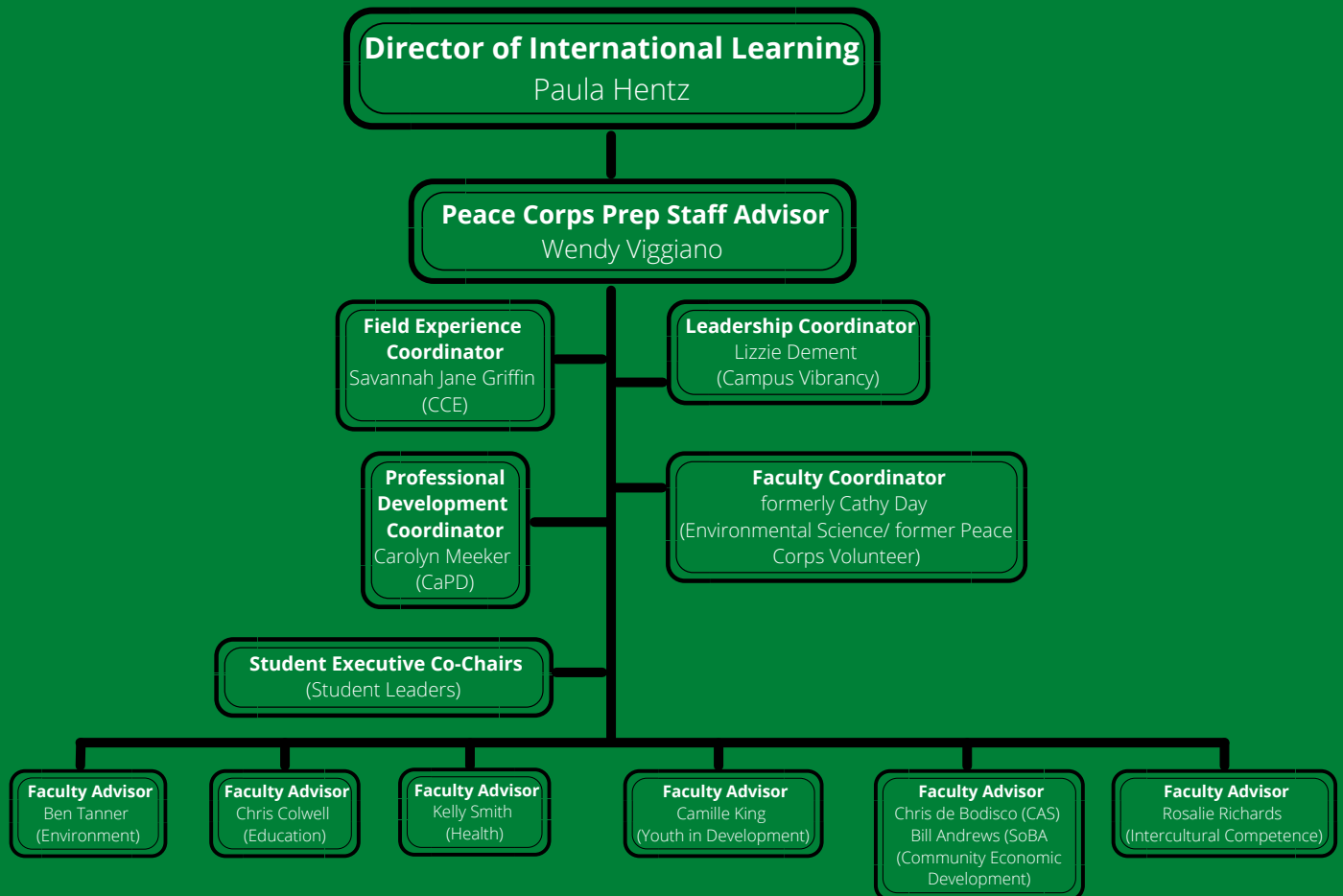
The Prep Program was initially housed in Community Engagement with leadership by Savannah-Jane Griffin. However, program oversight shifted to Brent Spencer, former international program coordinator at [WORLD: Rinker Center for International Learning](#) and former PC Volunteer. Upon Spencer's resignation in 2017, Wendy Viggiano assumed leadership of the Prep Program in January 2018 as part of her responsibilities as program coordinator for international learning. The program continues to be housed at WORLD. During the last three years, the program experienced a number of changes including:

- Implementation of a faculty coordinator (formerly Cathy Day)
- Establishment of new faculty sector course approvers
- Establishment of cohort committees
- Creation of recognition/incentive initiative for program component completion
- Implementation of an attendance policy
- Transition application to digital format
- Appointment of student executive leadership, and
- Restructure of the staff leadership team in April 2020.



THE FOLLOWING TIMELINE SHOWCASES THE EVOLUTION OF THE PREP PROGRAM

- **2015:** Stetson University Peace Corps Prep proposal materials submitted to Peace Corps Program
- **2016:** Inaugural leadership team formed
- **2017:** Peace Corps Prep Program formally launched on Values Day (September 26, 2017)
 - First cohort enrolled (September)
 - Elizabeth Boggs attends PC Coordinator Conference (September)
- **2018:** First cohort members complete program requirements (May)
- **2019:** Inaugural faculty coordinator appointed (August)
- **2019:** Viggiano attends PC Coordinator Conference (September)
- **2020:** Student Co-Executive Leadership established (February)
- **2020:** Global pandemic: program transitioned online (March)
- **2020:** Staff leadership team restructured (April)
- **2021:** Program renewal in progress (September-November)



The organizational chart above illustrates the leadership required to, at minimum, administer a program that will successfully meet the learning outcomes outlined by Peace Corps. The organizational restructuring is designed to improve program efficiency, transparency, workload, and student services. The program is supported by the following staff, faculty, and student leaders:

- The Peace Corps Prep Staff Advisor to the PC provides oversight of Stetson’s program and reports to the PC.
 - Wendy Viggiano, program coordinator for international learning (Program Lead)
- Coordinators provide resources and programming for students to meet the program requirements in their designated areas they oversee. Each coordinator reviews submissions from participants and assesses learning outcomes to ensure the completion of requirements.
 - Lizzie Dement, associate director for student development (Leadership)
 - Savannah Jane Griffin, executive director of community engagement and inclusive excellence (Field Experience)
 - Carolyn Meeker, director of experiential and career education (Professional Development)
 - *Open Position*, formerly held by Cathy Day, visiting assistant professor of environmental science and former Peace Corps Volunteer (Faculty Coordinator). The new role will assist with curriculum mapping and approval, work with faculty sector approvers, and disseminate information on the PCP program at faculty meetings.

- Executive Co-Chairs for the Peace Corps Prep Program are cohort leaders who create programming to enrich the student experience. Co-chairs meet weekly with the Staff Advisor to co-create agendas for the bi-weekly cohort meetings, plan activities and events, assist with recruitment initiatives, offer peer leadership, track attendance, and establish bylaws, policies, and expectations for the cohort meetings and membership. Chairs are able to count this experience towards the leadership requirement within the PCP program.
 - Tahiyya Khan, '22, public health major, PCP health sector
 - Ocean Crawley Sweeney, '22, molecular biology and public health major, PCP health sector



- Faculty (sector) advisors identify courses that align with their sector and approve substitutions outside of the [approved course list](#). They communicate any changes to the sector curriculum, substitutions, and programming. Faculty sector advisors are encouraged to attend the cohort orientation and at least one meeting per year to highlight the sector.
 - Chris Colwell, associate professor and chair of education (Education)
 - Kelly Smith, assistant professor of political science (Health)
 - Ben Tanner, associate professor of environmental science and studies; department chair environmental sciences and geography (Environment)
 - Camille King, professor and chair of psychology (Youth in Development)
 - Chris de Bodisco, assistant professor of economics (CAS); Bill Andrews, associate professor of management (SoBA) (Community Economic Development)
 - Rosalie Richards, associate provost for faculty development, professor of chemistry and education (Intercultural Competence)

Challenges and Outcomes

In April 2020, all members of the staff leadership team agreed that the program needed an overhaul as a result of the challenges highlighted in the table below. Several interventions were implemented (below).

| Challenge | Intervention | Outcome |
|--|---|--|
| Leadership team unable to meet regularly as a whole due to other job-related responsibilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish monthly leadership team meetings prior to monthly cohort meetings Request for agenda items to add to the cohort meeting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved leadership staff participation Agenda items addressed as required |
| Program-related decisions often delayed or not completed while awaiting feedback from all leadership members | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish monthly meetings of the leadership team prior to the monthly cohort meeting Use Teams for meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead team restructured (see org chart) Instant messaging facilitated faster decision-making |
| Encourage students to become more engaged with the Prep Program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create three cohort committees and 2 student co-executive leaders Coordinate events/programming for cohort members related to PC Establish program bylaws Implement activities during cohort meetings to build a community Increase social media presence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students completed PCP requirements through cohort programming Leadership experience and training Programming engaged cohort members Enhanced cohort-building during meetings through presentations, breakout sessions, games, and activities Meeting attendance increased Student spotlights showcased on social media |
| Students unsure of leadership structure and where to get answers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restructure leadership team Discuss areas of lead team responsibility during cohort meetings Encourage 1-on-1 meeting between students and coordinators to discuss program progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead team restructured (see org chart) Improved communication and clarity of area lead team member for program-related questions Increased 1-1 meetings once per semester to discuss program requirements towards completion |

| Challenge | Intervention | Outcome |
|---|---|--|
| Increase support for student completion of program requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish student leadership positions • Offer program activities and events • Use Engage, emails, and meetings to disseminate information to students • Incentivize program to increase completion of program requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point persons for program questions • Established programming collaborations with partners such as Career, CCE & LEAD • Created opportunities for students to share experiences with other members • Distributed PCP swag items to students after completion of specific requirements |
| Cohort meetings focus on how to complete program requirements and log them online versus focus on leadership and sector development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use program orientation to teach students to learn to log requirements • Email reminders to students • Use appointments to review student progress and program requirements • Create training video for students to view as needed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitioned meetings from transactional activity to PC-related topics and community building • Majority of cohort members met each year with PCP Staff Advisor to track program completion • Training video under development |

Although resignations of staff and faculty coordinators from Stetson continue to be a challenge for the program, students have become more actively engaged through regular meeting attendance and participation, completion of program requirements, volunteering at events, and building stronger cohort relationships. Students have also commented that the 2020-21 academic year ran the smoothest since they began participating in the program.



Sarah Fernandez - Malawi

Outlook

The action plan below outlines possibilities for the Prep program. The primary activity is renewal of Stetson University's Peace Corp Prep Program as the current MOU expires in December 2021. Key to the next five years is a comprehensive program assessment to ensure continuous improvement, increased student enrollment, retention and completion. In addition, WORLD is interested in offering an international (or domestic) service learning program geared towards participants as an alternative pathway for satisfying program requirements.

| Goal | Strategy | Benchmarks |
|---|---|---|
| Renew Stetson University's PCP Agreement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit fifth-year comprehensive report to leadership • Co-develop PCP renewal application for submission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders feedback • Renewal submission in November 2021 |
| Conduct program assessment to evaluate program efficacy for retention, program completion, and overall satisfaction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create assessment to distribute at the end of each AY year using qualitative and quantitative measures • Analyze assessment results | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment data • Improvement Plan |
| Expand programming to increase completion of Professional Development requirement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement recommendations from assessment • Work with Career and Professional Development to create events specific for PCP students • Schedule mock interview, resume prep, and preparing a strong PC application with the local PC recruiter • Schedule presentations geared towards seniors by the local PC recruiter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment data • Calendar of events in collaboration with Career and Professional Development • One information session scheduled per semester with the PC recruiter |
| Strengthen PCP cohort community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement recommendations from assessment • Establish Mentor/ Mentee program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved retention • Increased attendance at meetings and programming |

| Goal | Strategy | Benchmarks |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Implement a comprehensive marketing plan for promoting the program as a Stetson University academic distinctive to the campus and broader community</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create strategic connections with the Stetson Promise, the School of Business Administration's Experiential Learning Requirement (ELR), and Distinguished Scholarships & Fellowships • Collaborate with University Marketing to activate key areas of the program that showcase Stetson's mission, values and strategic goals • Collaborate with departments/student orgs to increase interest in the program • Increase social media presence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCP approved as an ELR • Articles posted in Stetson Today highlighting PCP and alumni • Collaborative events scheduled with different campus groups – 2 per semester. • Appointment of PC Social Media Coordinator |
| <p>Increase program completion rates</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement recommendations from assessment • Increase faculty awareness for advising sessions (faculty coordinator) • Integrate program requirements in Degree Audit • Continue 1-on-1 meetings with cohort members • Create how to videos in Engage/Give Pulse • Enhance the tracking and completion process • Improve incentive program • Create a non-credit study abroad or domestic program to complete program requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment outcomes • Faculty resource site & awareness activities • Updated Degree Audit • Meetings with all students each AY • Video posted & accessed • Requirement approvals and tracking document updated within one week of submission • Incentives given to students • Collaborative program with the CCE and WORLD proposal |
| <p>Increase cohort membership</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement recommendations from assessment • Actively recruit during FOCUS Orientation, FSEM courses, Student Involvement Fair, Global Citizenship Fair, monthly tabling, and info sessions • Eliminate steps required to join the PCP program (interest form, info session requirement) • Increase faculty/staff awareness of Prep program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest, application and enrollment data • Marketing materials and Fact sheet created and distributed to faculty and advisors. |