Using Human Animal Interaction (HAI) to Support and Promote Student Success and Well-being

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Proposed Idea
Implement effective HAI interventions in university course settings to promote and increase student success and retention.
- Gateway “killer” courses
- Lab, discussion, and/or tutoring sessions
- Embed therapy dog teams
- College Persistence Questionnaire (CPQ) (Davidson, Beck, & Milligan, 2009)
- Attendance, grades, and GPA
- Graduation rates
- Student surveys of instruction
- Interviews and focus groups

Background
- Attrition Rates (AIR, 2010)
  - 30% for first year college students
  - 50% or higher for part time students
- Institution is responsible for creating a welcoming environment that promotes acceptance, care, and warmth (O’Keeffe, 2013)
- Academic relational engagement is an important aspect of student wellbeing and motivation (van der Meer, Scott, & Pratt, 2018)
- Interventions aimed at retention and success need to consider available resources and fit the specific context (Zepke & Leach, 2005)
- HAI is used across educational settings to facilitate student learning and well-being Brelsford, Meints, Gee, & Pfeffer, 2017)
- HAI has become increasingly popular in college settings (Reynolds & Rabschutz, 2011)

Needs & Considerations
- 8 factors that influence student retention (Campbell & Mislevy, 2013)
- Individual student differences v. learning environment (Copeland & Levesque-Bristol, 2010-2011)
- Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000)
- Psychological Model of College Student Retention (Bean & Eatton, 2001)
- Evidence-based HAI practices in education settings (Griffin & McCardle, 2017)
- Trained professionals and trained animals (Huss, 2017)
- Purpose, goals and standardized procedures to measure effectiveness (Huss, 2017)
- The role and effect of the school, class, students and educators when designing and conducting research (Brelsford, Meints, Gee & Pfeffer, 2017)

“If students truly enjoy their university experience, if they are challenged enough but not beyond their capabilities, if they feel connected with those around them… they are more likely to consider their university experience fulfilling… students who find this kind of fulfillment at a university are very likely to personally consider their complete experience a success and persist to degree completion.” (Copeland & Levesque-Bristol, 2010)

Pete’s Pet Posse (P3)
P3 is Oklahoma State University’s volunteer pet therapy program which has been part of the Stillwater campus’s wellness program since 2013 and the Tulsa campuses since 2015. P3 has leveraged the known benefits of HAI to provide a unique wellness benefit to the OSU campus family. This program was developed through a cooperative effort of the President’s Office, OSU College of Veterinary Medicine, OSU Veterinary Medical Hospital, University Counseling, Human Resources, and the Employee Assistance Program. P3 has 53 dogs and 62 handlers across 34 departments and 13 dogs and 15 handlers currently receiving training, 38 Ruff Riders, 14 advisory board members, and 23 other volunteers. Over 250,000 touches have been felt by students, faculty and staff on the Stillwater and Tulsa campuses since 2013.

The P3 research team is a small, multi-disciplinary group dedicated to advancing knowledge and providing insight into the impact of HAI on a university campus. The team invites researchers to join the mission to better understand how the P3 or any other HAI affects the OSU student experience. If you are interested in discussing a project, please contact:

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