

Haskell Indian Nations University Student Focus Group Findings

On April 22 to April 24, 2024, the Haskell Indian Nations University (HINU) President's Office and the Center for Institutional Effectiveness (CIE) hosted a series of focus group sessions with students. These sessions aimed to gather insights on students' perceptions of their university experience, revealing key challenges, strengths, areas for improvement, gaps in opportunities, needed resources, and ways to enhance campus engagement.

Organizing the findings by key themes will enable the university to create strategies to address improvements and promote growth across various areas of the university, including academics and academic support, student services and student affairs, housing and facilities, IT and technology, and athletics.

Focus Group Meeting Dates and Locations:

- April 22, 2024: Osceola-Keokuk (OK) Hall
- April 23, 2024: Winona Hall,
- April 24, 2024: Tommaney Library

Focus Group Objective and Methodology: The focus groups, facilitated by various leaders and documented by the CIE office, aimed to gather insights from participants using eight targeted questions. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of students' experiences and needs across different areas of the university.

Questions Discussed:

1. How would you describe your overall experience as a student at Haskell?
2. What are the most significant challenges you have faced as a student?
3. What has been working well in the following areas?
 - a. Academics and Academic Support
 - b. Student Services and Student Affairs
 - c. Housing and Facilities
 - d. IT and Technology
 - e. Athletics Specific -Within Athletics
4. What improvements would you like to see in the following areas?
 - a. Academics and Academic Support
 - b. Student Services and Student Affairs
 - c. Housing and Facilities
 - d. IT and Technology

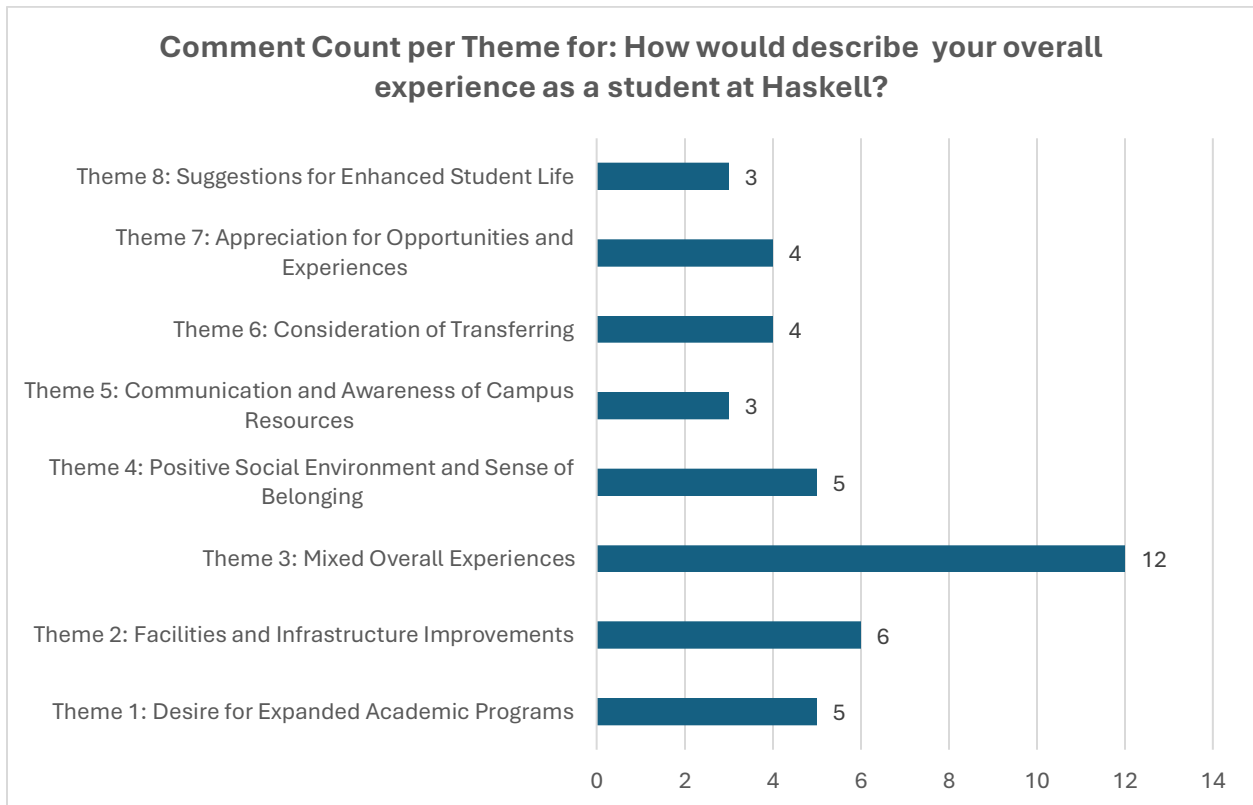
e. Athletics Specific -Within Athletics

5. What opportunities for growth and development do you feel are lacking for students?
6. What kind of resources or support do you think would be beneficial for student success and development?
7. How do you think we can enhance student engagement and involvement on campus?

Data Analysis and Next Steps: Qualitative data collected from these sessions were analyzed using Excel to identify key themes and address areas of concern. The findings will guide the development of strategies that align with strategic objectives and support ongoing improvement throughout all areas of the university.

1. How would you describe your overall experience as a student at Haskell?

The main themes that emerged from this question were: **Positive Social Environment and Sense of Belonging (29%), Facilities and Infrastructure Improvements (14%), Desire for Expanded Academic Programs (12%), and Positive Social Environment and Sense of Belonging (12%):**



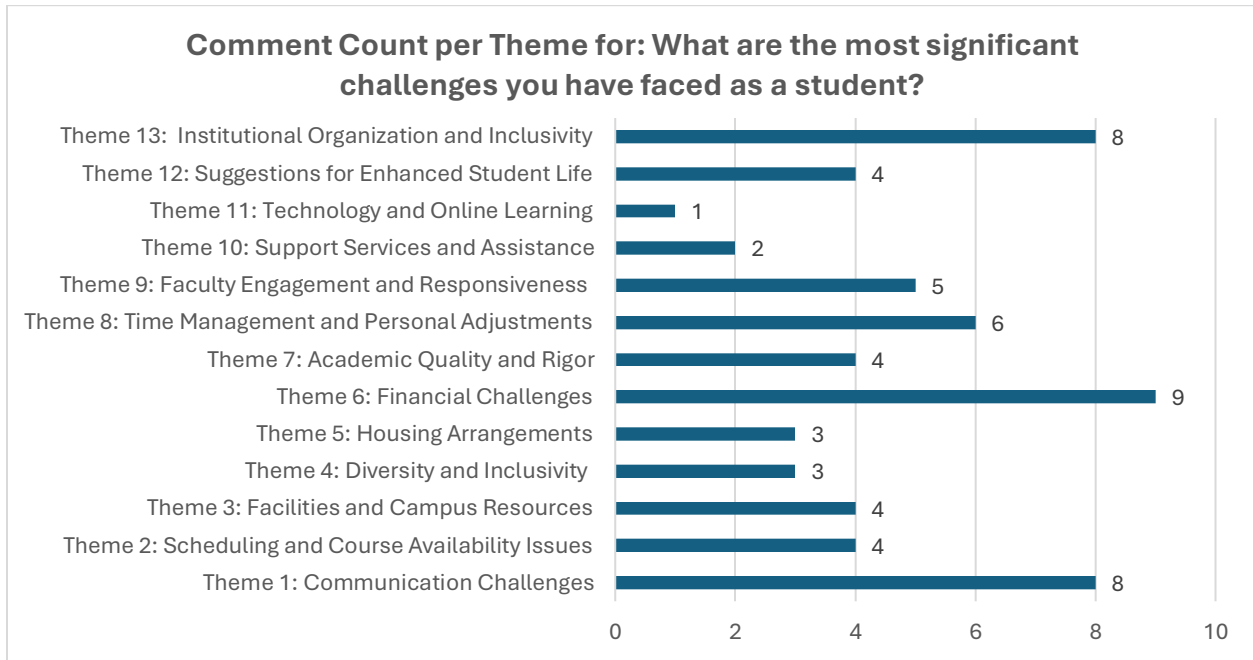
The feedback given by students about their overall experience at Haskell shows a mix of positive and valuable comments. Many students expressed satisfaction, noting that their experience has been good, with mentions of affordable education, easy access to resources, and a strong sense of community. Some students shared that they feel supported and have found friends that enhance their college life. Overall, the university environment was described as "good," "affordable," and with "no out-of-pocket costs," which indicates positive experiences. Additionally, some students stated they would stay at Haskell if additional degree programs were offered.

However, there were several areas mentioned for improvement. Students expressed a need for more degree options, better academic planning, and expressed interest in having the university offer dual degree options. Concerns were also raised about the quality of facilities, including unsanitary bathrooms in OK Hall, the need for improved workout equipment, and enhancements to the cafeteria. Wi-Fi connectivity issues were frequently mentioned, particularly by students who rely on it for gaming or completing assignments. Security improvements and better communication regarding campus events were also suggested.

Some students described their overall experience as "fine," or "not eventful," indicating a neutral perception of their overall experience at Haskell. Others acknowledged experiencing "ups and downs" but generally feel they are doing well academically and socially. While students generally have a positive outlook on their experience at Haskell, there are opportunities for improvement, particularly in academics, facilities, and campus communication.

2. What are the most significant challenges you have faced as a student?

The main themes that emerged from this question were: **Financial Challenges (15%), Facilities and Infrastructure Improvements (13%), and Institutional Organization and Inclusivity (13%):**



Students at Haskell have described several significant challenges related to financial support, campus facilities, communication, and academics. Financial difficulties were a common concern, with many students mentioning delayed financial aid, ineligibility for FAFSA and managing other expenses. Students struggle to find work-study jobs on campus or off-campus jobs that fit their schedules. Some students who do not qualify for Pell grants indicated they face additional financial struggles.

Students also faced significant challenges with campus facilities and services. Maintenance issues in dorms, unaddressed work order requests, and a lack of general student areas across campus were common complaints. Additionally, students noted that events are often scheduled at the same time, making it difficult for them to participate fully in campus activities. Other concerns included difficulties with time management, handling early morning classes, and a lack of support for non-traditional students.

Furthermore, students expressed a need for more inclusivity in campus housing, calling for dorm separation based on gender rather than sex, and suggesting more flexibility to accommodate diverse student populations.

Communication issues were also a challenge for students. They expressed frustration over the lack of a centralized “hub,” making it hard to stay informed about campus events. Poor communication with instructors and departments, including unresponsive faculty, left students feeling disconnected and unsupported.

Academically, students were dissatisfied with class schedules and course availability, noting that some classes are only offered once a semester, which hinders their progression to completion. There was also feedback regarding the lack of challenging coursework and perceived ineffectiveness of some instruction.

The feedback highlighted the need for enhanced financial support, better management of campus facilities, and improvements in the university’s organizational structure and inclusivity efforts. Addressing these concerns will be crucial in improving the overall student experience at Haskell.

3. What has been working well in the following areas?

Academics and Academic Support - Instructors are flexible, caring, and proactive, with smaller class sizes allowing more personalized attention. Academic advisors are patient and accessible, while professors are lenient if requirements are met. Extended library hours and quick responses from the Dean and President (within 24 hours) were also mentioned. Write-in activities at Ross Hall, tutoring, and research support from the library are valued resources. Programs like Student Success, TRiO, and course groups from business departments were helpful. Faculty were generally perceived as caring and willing to work with students, but there was concern about the dropping of courses like Statistics and Calculus.

Student Services and Student Affairs - Students commended the TRiO and Student Success Center for their support, and financial aid staff for being hardworking, knowledgeable, and helpful. Staff assistance within the financial aid office made on-campus job placement through student work-study “easy” for students. The bursar’s office efficiently handled ID processes, while the Registrar’s Office was noted for quick password recovery and fast responses. The IT department and Helpdesk received positive feedback, and students appreciated the extended library hours and inclusive opportunities, especially those focused on mental health and campus events.

Housing and Facilities - Students mentioned quick responses to inquiries and maintenance issues, with helpful and respectful RAs. Dorms, though small, are nice, with good showers and clean hallways. The library bathrooms were praised for cleanliness and amenities. Staff are also supportive with roommate issues. Some

feedback indicated that the restroom facilities in Roe Hall are not fully equipped, contributing to concerns about their overall quality.

IT and Technology - Students reported that IT services are responsive, with fast response times and improved performance compared to last year. The computer lab is good, though some don't use it often. Wi-Fi works but has occasional issues. IT staff are quick to help, especially during events like e-sports, and communication about tech events is clear. However, IT's inability to work on personal computers is noted as a concern. Overall, students are satisfied with IT services this semester.

Athletics Specific -Within Athletics - Students mentioned positive experiences with trainers, who are helpful and supportive. There is easy access to ice baths, and the court is well-scheduled with available times. Weight room trainers help students progress, and equipment, shoes, and socks are provided. The athletic staff is accommodating when working with class schedules. Overall, students have a great experience, though there is room for improvement in communication.

4. What improvements would you like to see in the following areas?

Academics and Academic Support - Students expressed a strong desire for a broader range of courses and degree programs. They request more classes each semester, including hands-on courses like auto shop and wood shop, additional humanities subjects like English, and the availability of degrees online. There's significant interest in new programs, particularly in STEM fields such as computer science, IT, nursing, and psychology, as well as a four-year communication degree and more teaching degrees beyond early childhood education. Concerns are raised about the limited degrees offered and the long-term value of associate degrees.

Faculty quality and accountability are major issues for students. They call for knowledgeable and engaging instructors, mentioning "simple classes", frequent cancellations, and instances of unprofessional behavior by staff. They suggested having deans observe classes and holding instructors accountable. Students also reported poor communication from faculty and staff, dissatisfaction with shortened semesters leading to rushed coursework, and a need to enhance the student portal's functionality.

There's a strong emphasis on inclusivity and mental health support. They raise concerns about bullying in sports programs like and seek administrative intervention. Introducing outdoor learning opportunities is also suggested to improve mental health and well-being. Students want learning outside of the classroom and integrating Indigenous teachings across departments.

Student Services and Student Affairs - Students raised concerns about maintenance, housing, and campus facilities. They suggest improvements to Curtis Hall services from enhancements like larger plates or trays, the posting of nutritional information to help students monitor their food intake, a broader selection of fruit, and extending operational hours.

Students emphasize the need for better campus maintenance and resources, requesting air conditioning in buildings like Coffin and Tecumseh, quicker repairs (e.g., broken basketball hoops), and more on-campus jobs. The creation of a daycare facility and a centralized location for student club meetings were suggested to improve campus amenities. Students also request workshops focused on time management, goal setting, and soft skills.

Maintenance of administrative support services needs attention. Students report recurring issues with the Bursar's office, such as missed payments and timesheet errors, and request more transparency and efficiency in financial processes. They mentioned the need for incorporating modern payment platforms like Cash App, Zelle, or Venmo for more convenient access to funds.

Concerns were raised about the disorganized Student Government Association (SGA), with calls for better communication and more consistent campus programming.

Finally, students want more flexible visitation policies in dormitories, citing strict enforcement of visitation hours between men and women by Resident Advisors.

Housing and Facilities - A major concern is the cleanliness and maintenance of common areas and bathrooms, particularly in Winona Hall, where showers and bathrooms are often dirty, and trash is not regularly collected. Complaints include broken shower knobs, infrequent cleaning, and sometimes the lack of hot water. Students also mentioned that there are only two working laundry machines in Roe, with ongoing laundry hours and availability issues.

Students requested more janitorial staff to enhance maintenance and cleanliness. They also requested better amenities such as functional microwaves and vending machines. Additionally, students are advocating for a wider range of dormitory options, including family housing and single rooms, and are calling for more inclusive housing policies. They also highlighted the need for improved parking solutions, faster Wi-Fi, and better access to recreational facilities, including the pool.

Students expressed concerns about dorm regulations and Resident Advisor (RA) behavior. They feel visitation hours should be more flexible and that curfews are overly restrictive. Some RAs are perceived as disrespectful, particularly regarding all-gender

bathrooms, which are often locked. There is also a desire for resources such as peer mediation to assist in resolving conflicts among roommates, particularly for non-traditional students who often feel restricted.

IT and Technology - Students stated issues with the reliability of Wi-Fi, which is often spotty and particularly problematic in certain areas, such as Coffin. Additionally, there are reports that Ethernet connections do not work effectively, leaving students reliant solely on Wi-Fi, which tends to go down every summer.

There are also concerns about the student portal, which has occasionally fails and lacks optimal information on courses and degree audits. Students also mentioned course offerings provide minimal descriptive information, making it difficult to make informed choices.

Further, students have requested better communication regarding the services offered by the IT department, including more frequent emails and an improved social media presence. Students also requested training opportunities to better navigate technology resources on campus.

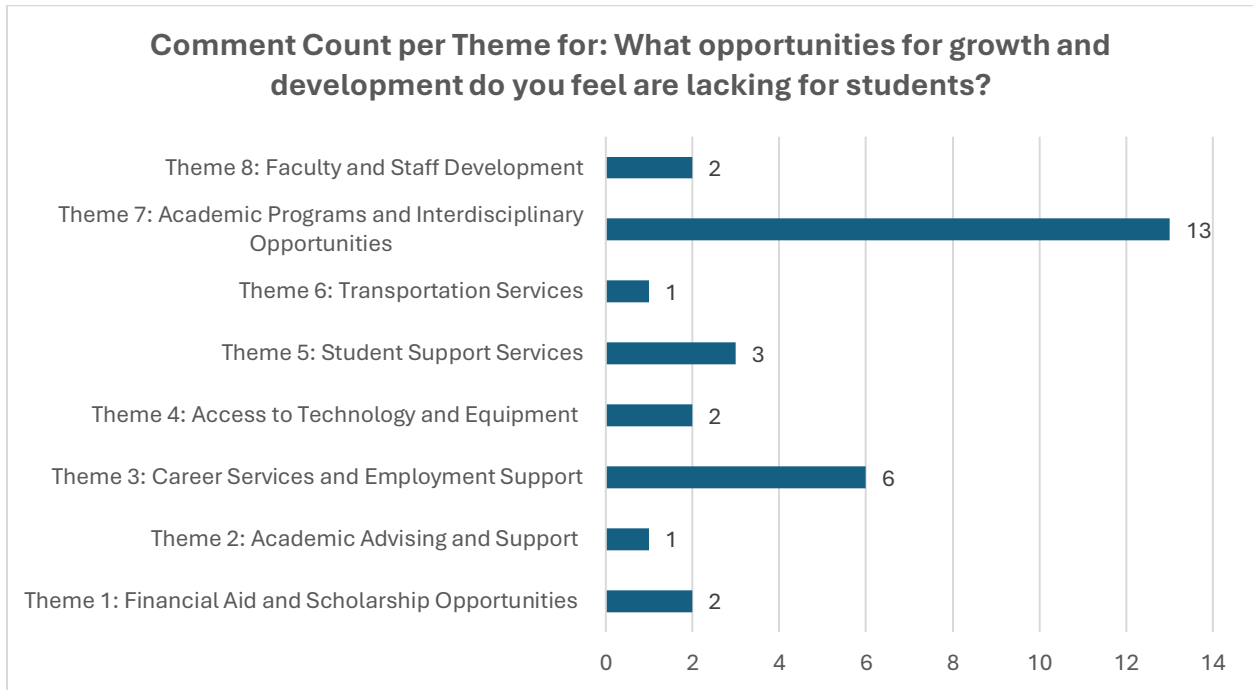
Athletics Specific -Within Athletics - Students suggest increasing interaction among students to foster support for sports teams, such as attending games and getting to know athletes personally. There is a desire for athletes to participate in more volunteer opportunities, similar to those at KU.

Concerns have been raised regarding the isolation of student athletes, who often reside in separate dorms exclusively with other athletes, as well as perceptions of favoritism within athletics. Students also mentioned that access to concession stands is limited and advocated for these facilities to be open to all clubs. Additionally, students request action against sports bullying, advocating for consequences and discussions with coaches.

Athletics facility issues include the swimming pool being too cold during winter and concerns that athletic goals are not fixed.

5. What opportunities for growth and development do you feel are lacking for students?

The main themes that emerged from this question were: **Academic Programs and Interdisciplinary Opportunities (43%), Career Services and Employment Support (20%), and Student Support Services (10%):**



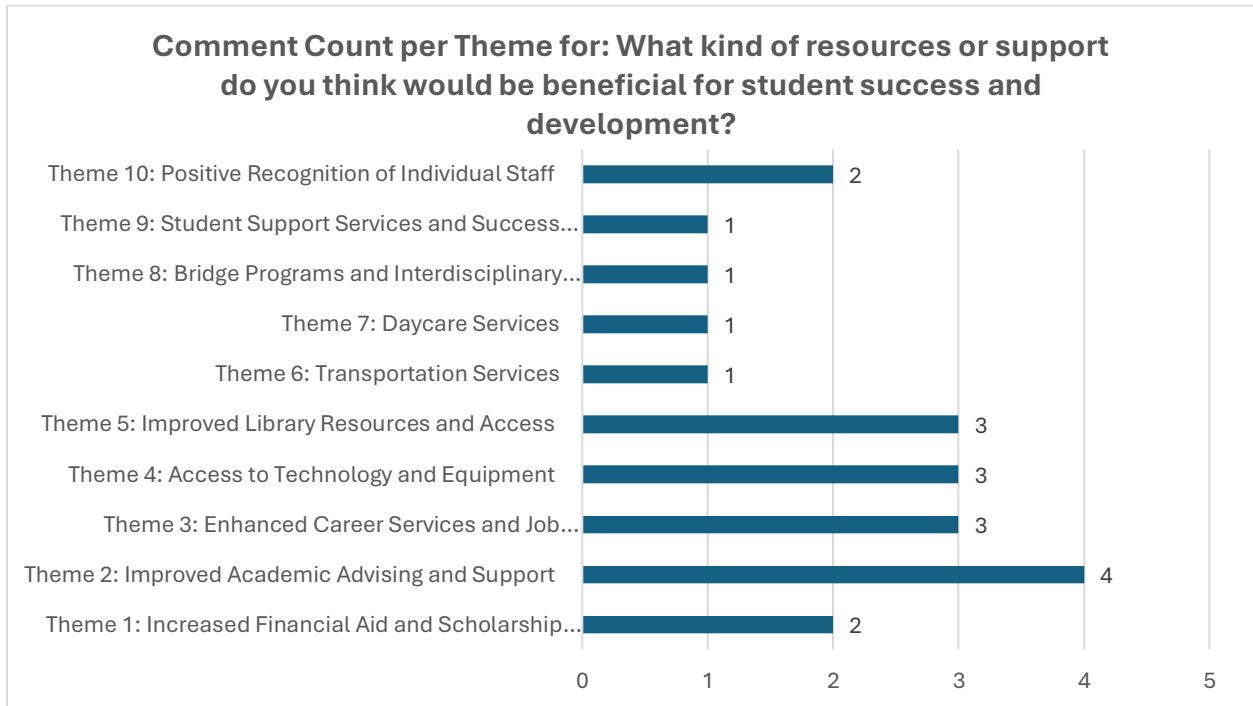
Students highlighted the need for a broader range of academic options, advocating for more degree and technical programs. They also emphasized the importance of expanding internship opportunities, particularly within the humanities department, and across all fields, not limited to Forestry. Furthermore, students want greater access to online courses and educational field trips to places like “capitol buildings,” Native American cultural centers, and museums.

Networking and career development are highlighted as areas for improvement, with a request for enhanced support in entrepreneurship and small business development within the Business Department. Students are seeking more certifications related to business and entrepreneurship, as well as resources for those pursuing creative and artistic careers.

Students mentioned the desire for more cultural activities and language classes to enrich their educational experience. Additionally, they want better support for social work students, particularly those focused on ICWA and tribal impact.

6. What kind of resources or support do you think would be beneficial for student success and development?

The main themes that emerged from this question were: **Improved Academic Advising and Support (19%)**, **Enhanced Career Services and Job Application Support (14%)**, **Access to Technology and Equipment**, and **Improved Library Resources and Access (14%)**:



Students reported feeling that academic advisors do not proactively reach out to them, leading to lack of support. They suggest that advisors should reach out, initiated check-ins, and offer to assist as needed. There were also requests for workshops to train faculty to serve as effective advisors and for more comprehensive advising practices to prevent issues that could delay graduation.

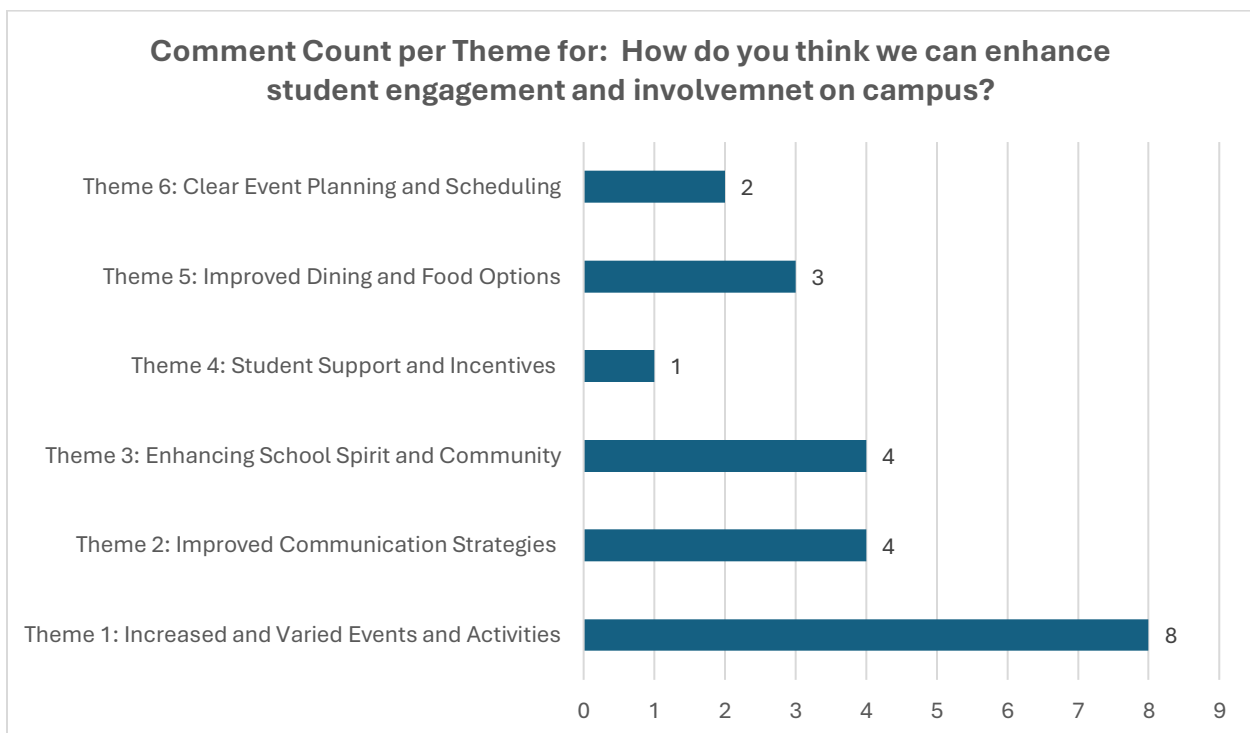
Students expressed a need for more workshops focused on job application skills and career services that provides more information about specific job opportunities. Increased recruitment efforts and personalized employment career services are also suggested to better connect students with potential employers.

Students also advocated for free laptops or computers, as well as improved personal laptop and computer support for students. Additionally, students seek better equipment to facilitate their studies.

Furthermore, students expressed the desire for better access to KU libraries and other library resources, including a greater availability of non-Native American books in the Haskell Library. They also want improved access to online library resources to support their research and academic work.

7. How do you think we can enhance student engagement and involvement on campus?

The main themes that emerged from this question were: **Increased and Varied Events and Activities (36%), Improved Communication Strategies (18%), Enhancing School Spirit and Community (18%):**



To enhance student engagement and involvement on campus, students have proposed several strategies. Students suggested organizing team-building icebreakers once in a while and hosting online engagement activities, such as e-sports tournaments, to foster interaction. Providing free merchandise, like shirts, and hosting fun, free events, including more games like Bingo and cookouts, to increase student involvement.

Students also suggest increased activities specifically for newer students, as well as opportunities for athletes to engage in volunteer hours. The Student Government Association (SGA) is encouraged to actively communicate and reach out to students. Students also suggest using effective methods such as email, text messaging, and social media platforms like Snapchat for consistent engagement.

Students reiterated the importance of establishing a centralized "communication hub," like a primary Haskell communication platform, to ensure everyone on campus is well-informed about announcements and other messages. Moreover, students expressed a desire to enhance school spirit by fostering a more enjoyable and family-like environment on campus.

8. Any last thoughts?

Students request for extended Curtis dining hours, installation of TVs for live streaming large events or displaying event information, and text message alerts for events. There were also mentions of increased communication. Concerns about insufficient parking led to suggestions for additional parking spaces, along with a request for clearly designated staff/employee parking areas. An honors-only dorm was proposed, and security received praise for being helpful and approachable. Students also advocated for enforcing speed limits more strictly, possibly through additional speed bumps, and for classrooms with lounge seating to create a more comfortable learning environment. The need for more focused group meetings was mentioned, and Haskell was praised as a great school.