



SHOWCASING COMMUNITY
STORIES THROUGH POWERFUL
PHOTOGRAPHIC NARRATIVES

FACES OF APSU: A PHOTOVOICE CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



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FACES OF APSU

Student Voice Empowerment

The initiative empowers students to define and represent themselves beyond institutional metrics and reports.

Diverse Student Experiences

Faces of APSU captures the diversity of student lived experiences during the university's centennial period.

Institutional Culture Connection

The project strengthens institutional culture by fostering engagement, inclusion, and community through storytelling.



WHY BEING SEEN MATTERS

Importance of Student Visibility

Student success is linked to feeling seen, valued, and acknowledged by faculty and staff, boosting motivation and persistence.

Impact on Engagement and Retention

Visibility affects retention and graduation by fostering positive relationships and encouraging students to seek help.

Faces of APSU Initiative

Faces of APSU empowers students to share experiences through photographs and stories, promoting belonging and community.



THE APSU CONTEXT

Diverse Student Population

APSU serves students with varied backgrounds including military-connected, first-generation, transfer, and commuter students facing unique challenges.

Challenges to Engagement

Many students balance academics with family, work, or military duties, leading to barriers in visibility and participation on campus.

Faces of APSU Initiative

This project highlights student stories and photos to reveal their multifaceted identities and foster greater campus inclusion.

WHY PHOTOVOICE?

Participatory Storytelling

Photovoice empowers participants to document and interpret their own experiences through photography and narrative.

Promoting Visibility

This method allows students to become authors of their own visibility beyond statistics and demographics.

Fostering Dialogue and Inclusion

Photovoice encourages reflection and dialogue, enhancing equity by prioritizing lived experience and personal agency.

Collaborative Narrative

The approach transforms projects into collaborative efforts where participants shape shared narratives actively.





BELONGING AND RETENTION

Faculty-Student Interaction

Meaningful contact with faculty fosters trust and encouragement, reinforcing students' sense of belonging.

Visibility of Student Voices

Student-created photographs and narratives highlight individual stories, emphasizing recognition and value.

Impact on Persistence and Retention

Belonging and recognition contribute to stronger student engagement and increased academic retention.

INTERACTIVE PAUSE · 5 MINUTES

WHO SAW YOU?

Think of one person from your own education who made you feel seen. *Not the whole degree — one moment.*

1 · THINK — 1 MIN

Picture the moment, not the résumé. What did that person actually do or say?

2 · TURN — 2 MIN

Tell the person beside you.
Where were you? What did they notice about you?

3 · WRITE — 1 MIN

Their name and that one action,
on the sticky note at your seat.

Sticky notes go up on the back wall as you leave — a small Photovoice archive of our own.

DEBRIEF · 3 MINUTES

WHAT THE NOTES ALWAYS SAY

It was small.

A name said correctly. A question after class. A two-line email that no one required.

It wasn't assigned.

No policy asked for it. That is a large part of why it registered as real.

It was specific.

They noticed something true about you — not something true about students in general.

It outlasted the course.

You can still name them. There is a good chance they have no idea.

Now multiply one of those moments by a hundred years of them. *That is what a centennial is actually made of.*



CENTENNIAL 1927–2027

Reflecting on Institutional History

The centennial offers a chance to review key milestones like buildings, leadership, and enrollment growth.

Faces of APSU Project

This initiative highlights student experiences, creating a counter-archive to traditional historical records.

Connecting Past, Present, Future

Centering student perspectives bridges the university's history with its evolving community.

GALLERY CONCEPT

Student-Created Photographs

The exhibition showcases photographs created by students that reflect their educational and personal experiences on campus.

Narrative Context

Accompanying narratives provide context and deepen viewers' understanding of the stories behind each image.

Community Engagement

The gallery invites faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members to engage in dialogue about belonging and institutional culture.

Historical and Cultural Record

The gallery serves as a historical record of contemporary student experiences and a celebration of student voice.



FACULTY TOOLKIT

Intentional Student Engagement

Faculty adopting practices like learning student names enhances visibility and fosters connection early in the semester.

Recognizing Student Challenges

Identifying absence patterns and acknowledging students' external responsibilities supports early intervention and empathy.

Inclusive Syllabus Language

Using welcoming and supportive language in syllabi encourages students to seek help and feel valued.

Small Actions with Big Impact

Consistent interpersonal practices significantly influence student belonging without large institutional changes.



RECOGNITION VS. SURVEILLANCE



Meaning of Recognition

Recognition means acknowledging students as unique individuals and fostering authentic connections through empathy and respect.

Nature of Surveillance

Surveillance focuses on monitoring and compliance without necessarily building trust or a sense of belonging among students.

Balancing Systems and Support

Effective student support combines tracking systems with genuine relationship-building to promote engagement and well-being.

Impact of Recognition

Students who feel recognized are more likely to participate, communicate, and seek help, improving educational outcomes.



TRY THIS MONDAY

Immediate Practical Actions

Simple, actionable steps like reaching out to less engaged students foster immediate connection and support.

Cultural and Personal Recognition

Learning correct name pronunciation and acknowledging students outside responsibilities shows respect and care.

Fostering Belonging Through Habits

Consistent relationship-centered habits create an environment where students feel valued and empowered.



RSG & FUTURE FUNDS IMPACT

Promoting Student Belonging

The project fosters belonging by enabling students to share their stories through photography and personal narratives.

Enhancing Community Engagement

It encourages dialogue among students, faculty, staff, alumni, and visitors to strengthen community bonds.

Preserving Institutional History

Faces of APSU creates a historical record that documents student experiences for future generations.

Supporting Educational Programs

The initiative offers public exhibitions and educational programming to foster collaborative reflection.

CLOSING: THE NEXT HUNDRED YEARS

Student Experiences as Core

Students' daily experiences form the living heart of the university's evolving history and culture.

Visibility and Belonging

Emphasizing visibility, belonging, and recognition shapes individual success and community character.

Documenting Legacy

Photography and narrative empower students to add their voices to the university's historical record.

Shaping the Future

Students' perspectives today help inform and inspire the university's evolution over the next century.





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