

The Student Support Services, Challenges and Future Trends in Student Support Services for Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract: *Student support services are an essential component of teaching and learning to enhance higher education qualitatively and quantitatively. The main aim of higher education institutions is to provide the best atmosphere for learning and wide opportunities for the students to transcend in their careers. An important factor that influences the ranking of higher education is the support services that an institution bestows to its students. In this study, it is endeavored to find the essential student support services as well as challenges and future trends to the student support services in higher education institutions [HEIs]. Assurance of proper resources/services, reforming and restructuring the support service system, and acquiring the latest technologies are the most important means to address the challenges and future trends in student support services.*

Keywords: student support services; student experience; challenges and future trends in student support services

1.Literature Review

Studies show that the most important factors in education quality assurance are: quality of teaching/learning and the student support services system. (Hill et al, 2003). The most important pillars of HEIs are research, teaching, and student support services (Berlin Declaration on the Social Dimension, 2011, p.1).

To provide the required support for academic activities and stimulate personal, social, cultural, and cognitive development, the creation of efficient student support services that are focused on their necessities is very much needed. (Alina Ciobanu, 2013).

However, the lack of student support services by the HEIs has been one of the major barriers to students' success in higher education.

2.Introduction

The main objectives of student support services are students' retention, success, and satisfaction. It ensures the students' growth and development during the academic experience. Student support services should cover the pedagogical, technical, technological, and administrative aspects that affect the learner.

Student support services cultivate positive relationships among institutions and students, reducing stress and increasing students' attachment to the institution. It also increases students' retention, success, satisfaction rate, and reduces the achievement gap. It enhances the students' academic and personal development and social-emotional skills such as creativity, resiliency, and problem-solving.

For the HEIs, supporting and enhancing the student's academic, social, welfare, and support experience from

pre-entry to employment is censorious to success in higher education.

Areas and Types of Student Support Services

There are five main categories of student support services and all the services can be classified under these categories. (Gallagher; Promnitz & Germain, UNESCO (2002, pp.25-50).

These are mentioned below:

1. Learning support services.
2. Survival services.
3. Advisory services.
4. Recreational services.
5. General services.

While student support services functionality differs from one institution to another, certain expectations and responsibilities are common to most of HEIs.

Essential Student Support Services for Higher Education Institutions

1. Orientation/ Induction Programs and Students' Handbooks.
2. Student Admission, Registration, and Student Records.
3. HEIs Preparatory/Foundation Study Programs.
4. Academic Advising and Counseling Services.
5. Education Support Services.
6. Research Support Services.
7. Information Technology Support Services.
8. Study Material, Library & Communication Services.
9. International Students Support Services.
10. Student Satisfaction/Feedback, Climate, and Student Organizations.
11. Student Retention and Progression.
12. Medical, Health, and Safety Services.
13. Early Alert and Warning Systems.

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14. Residential, Catering, and Transportation Services.
15. Sports, Social and Recreational Services.
16. Entrepreneurship and Innovation Support Services.
17. Career/ Employment Services.
18. On-the-Job Training, Graduates Follow up, and Alumni Support Services.
19. Financial Aid Services for the Students.
20. Multicultural/Ethnic Minority Student Services.
21. Disability Services.
22. Community services.

Challenges and Future Trends for Student Support Services IN HEIs

HEIs should support student life on campus and as well as off-campus. Most of the issues regarding student support services are usually not fully addressed and it is needed to monitor the constantly changing teaching & learning environment. Students' counseling before they entered into higher education about the prospective professions, students' expectations, provision of adequate resources, lack of technological opportunities needed for the latest technology to enhance the quality of education, promoting independent learning, increasing and changing needs of the students, students motivation for the usage of technological services, absence of early alert and warning systems, lack of links across institutions for student support, inadequate financial help, identification and targeting the students-at-risk, social interaction between students from diverse backgrounds, and supporting students from pre-entry to employment are significant challenges for the implementation of a strong student support services system in HEIs. Addressing these challenges is crucial not only for the future of HEIs' in their regions but also globally. It is very essential that HEIs need to prepare their dashboards, portals, and online applications to address the issues regarding their student support services.

The most important way to handle the challenges faced by HEIs in administrating student support services is the purveying of a separate dedicated department of student support services, allocating sufficient resources, particularly financial resources, student awareness for support services, enhancing collaboration of teaching and supporting staff, and enhancing the HEI-industry and community partnership.

The student support services at HEIs' must be able to adapt quickly to changes due to the increase in advanced technologies for online education. E-learning programs have a significant impact on the way student services are provided. Students, communities, and industries are relying more on websites, e-mail, chat rooms, online portals, and online applications to attract and communicate in the technological age. Additionally, a student's ability to take advantage of online services directly through internet portals and android applications will greatly impact student support services and students' expectations.

3.Conclusion

HEIs need to expand the services keeping in view the needs and assortment of students to increase completion and success rates. It is imperious that higher education institutions provide services and programs that promote the quality of student life, meet its needs, and improve the intellectual development and well-being of students. Proper funding, identification of target students, and provision of alert and responsive student support systems are essential to address the issues regarding student support services. Extensive and clear strategies and systems for the identification of students that need support by the HEIs are mandatory. HEIs can enhance the impact of student support services by providing online forums, active and reactive social media services, taking feedback for implementing improvements, opportunities to engage with alumni, tracking and measuring students' academic and non-academic activities, and promoting online portals and applications usage.

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