

Helping students articulate: early engagement

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Academic Pathways Program, The College

Western Sydney University, The College provides opportunities for school leavers and mature-age students to participate and thrive in higher education. The College offers students a pathway to University study through its comprehensive range of University Foundation Studies, Diploma programs and Associate Degree courses for domestic and international students. The focus in 2017 for the Academic Pathways Program includes student retention, student engagement and successful transition to Western Sydney University.

The Course vUWS site Project

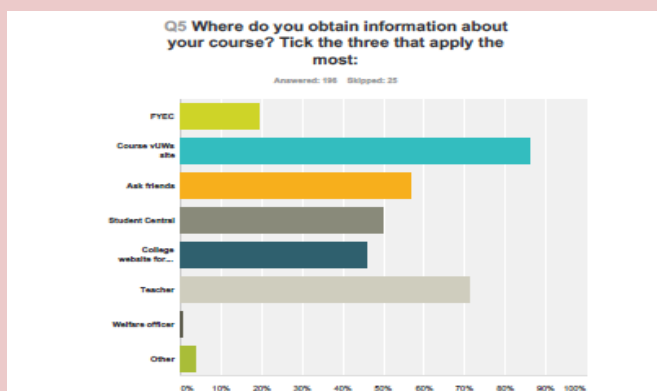
Background In 2015 the Academic Support Faculty with the assistance of the e-learning team developed an online learning management system for thirteen discipline areas to support students in their academic journey, one such site is Arts@TheCollege vUWS site.

Aim Explore student usage and their experience with navigation and the kind of information they would like to see on the sites.

Method In 2016 current students (N=218) were asked to complete a seven question survey on the vUWS site. The research was qualitatively & quantitatively analysed.

Analysis

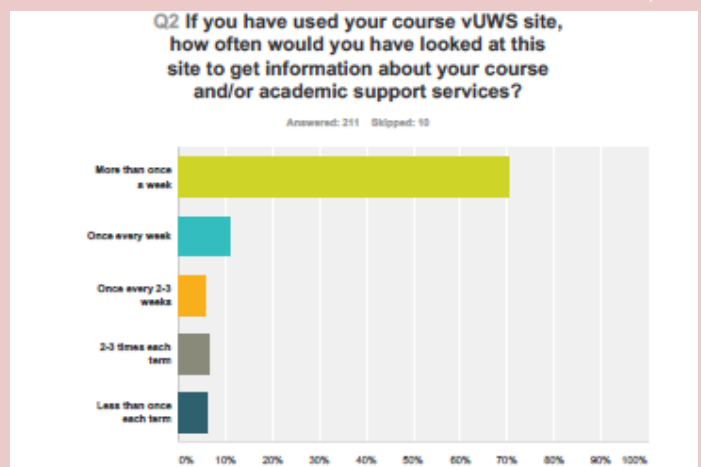
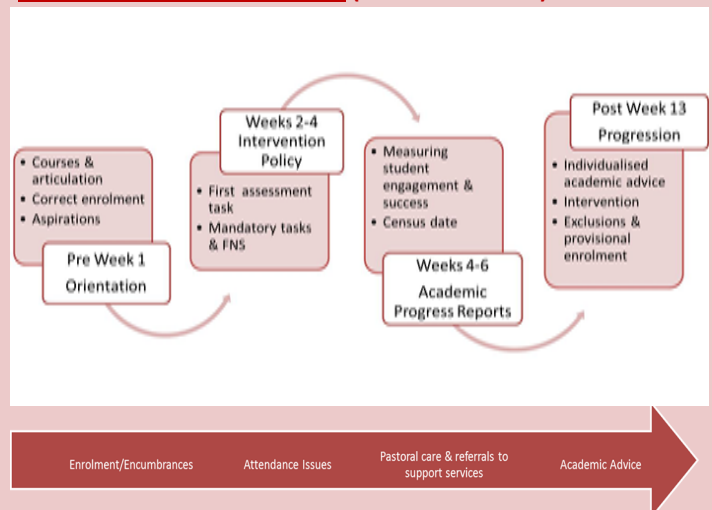
- ⇒ 80% of students access the online site more than once a week & more than half have indicated navigation to be cumbersome
- ⇒ 90% of students obtain information about their course via the online site and then their first year advisor
- ⇒ 80% of students highlighted the desire to receive further information on transitioning and their Bachelor course
- ⇒ 90% of students would like to see short videos where their College course can lead them into, plus short introduction videos from their first year advisors



Academic Support

Fosters a culture of collaboration by working towards a shared model of student success. By establishing foundational strategies, Academic Support facilitate a strong early alert and intervention process contingent on students' active participation in curriculum coupled with rigorous support structures.

The Academic Support Model (Kourouche 2017)



Conclusion

The results from the survey are being used to better inform an early engagement strategy including a seamless transition into University. In collaboration with e-learning, work is in progress to ensure site navigation is less cumbersome & efficient. It is evident that students view their current College Course as a 'transit lounge' awaiting articulation. An integrated approach to transition is currently being explored to develop a seamless transition into University. One initiative being assessed is a single course code for students at The College that covers both their Diploma and Degree studies. The pursuit of student transition success centres on early engagement with educational purposeful and supportive activities.

Devlin, M. et al. (2012). Effective teaching and support of students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds: Resources for Australian higher education. Melbourne: Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching

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Nelson, K.J., Smith, J.E., & Clarke, J.A., (2012) Enhancing the transition of commencing students into university: an institution-wide approach, Higher Education Research & Development, 31:2, 185-199, DOI: 10.1080/07294360.2011.

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