

Helping students articulate: early engagement

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Abstract

The poster will demonstrate the Academic Support Model used within the Academic Pathways Program, Western Sydney University, The College. This Model supports students during their first year and is based on a holistic approach. Academic Support, transitional pedagogy, pastoral support and academic administration together focus on providing individual support to students. Our student cohort is essentially made up of first in family, of low socio economic backgrounds and as recent as 2015 open access students. It is therefore critical that such a holistic model is inaugurated for early student engagement, retention, transition and articulation. In 2015 the Academic Support Faculty with the assistance of the e-learning team developed an online platform site for each of the thirteen discipline areas to support with retaining, engaging and transitioning students to Western Sydney University. In late 2016 a research project was initiated with the objective of reviewing these sites to increase student usage, retention and successful articulation.

Background

The vision of The College is one of transforming lives and providing 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, Associate Degree courses and English language courses for domestic and international students. In 2016, approximately 4000 students were enrolled across thirteen discipline areas over four campuses. ‘College students who enter a degree.....are performing at least as well, and, in many cases better, than those who gained direct entry with a low entrance rank’ (Western Sydney University Office of Strategy and Engagement 2014). The focus in 2017 for the Academic Pathways Program includes student retention, student engagement and successful transition to Western Sydney University.

Method

With a focus on retention, engagement and a seamless transition, survey questions were distributed to current College students. Hearing their voices is essential as we strive to improve the support services we provide to our students. Support services along with student engagement in learning are significant for student retention (Nelson, et al 2012).

Discussion

The results from the survey are being used to better inform early engagement strategies to help students articulate into their desired Bachelor course.

References

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.

University of Western Sydney (2014). Office of Strategy and Engagement, 22nd July 2014