Attempting to balance Intrusive advising in a non-intrusive context: ALL support for probation students

Abstract

This presentation concerns a one-year pilot in which ALL practitioners refined processes in regard to the provision of ALL assistance for students who had been placed on probation. I briefly address successful collaborations with other professionals to assist the students to get back on track through a post-first year program (PFY). I also self-reflect on my role in my attempt to navigate the recommended advisory model of intrusive advising proposed by the probation literature within an Australian university context. In mid-semester workshops, Careers, Counselling and Library professionals were engaged in collaboration with ALL for this cohort. Careers advisors were able to assist students to refocus on their goal for studying. Having a clear purpose and a sense of career possibilities assists probation students to be persistent with their study (Fraser 2012). Counsellors addressed the relevant issues of procrastination and perfectionism and offered ongoing one-to-one sessions to deal with anxiety which students identified as a major cause of their low performance. The librarian introduced students to data base searches based on assessment topics. ALL professionals followed up with semester planning and discussions on success predictors (Wilson 2009). However, while successful in terms of feedback and subsequent academic results of attendees, the workshops only reached a small cohort of the total numbers. Scholarship mainly from North America on probation processes emphasises that a proactive model of advising works best for probation students (Cruise 2003; Earl cited in Wilson 2009). For example, direct phone calls by advisors are recommended to students who have been notified of probationary status. Also, one-to-one sessions held fortnightly are proposed. Some universities even have systems of mandatory reduction of study load as well as student enrolment in a compulsory study skills unit. Results of such models are encouraging; one program had a rate of 70% pass rate. In Australia, the probation processes appear to be less intrusive (Schultz et al, 1992). As part of a process in my workplace, students are sent a letter from student services which provides them with a list of services including Academic Support and Development (ASD) that they can select to take up (or not). Some PFY students have informed me this means that "these services are here to use if you want to". In contrast, other students who had had a personal recommendation by discipline lecturers felt compelled to seek assistance, and later reset their academic success. The question is can direct referrals be extended as a condition of probation. Following the US model, I have put in place one-to-one sessions with a small cohort with some success but when discourses around retention do not frame these students as potential success stories, I am somewhat discouraged. The rate is problematized, it appears, as something that is not easily reversed.

References

Fraser, L. 2012 'A Value-Based Approach to Student Success & Building Trust with your Insitution', Career Education Review,