Quest for Student Success: A Cross-disciplinary Exploration of the Learning and Development Needs of Online Students in a Regional University

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The Research

- Background
- Aims
- Research questions
- Methodology
- Limitations
- Literature

Background to the study...

- Restructure
- Discipline-specific learning advisors
- Student success - academic skills and graduate attributes directly with students and indirectly through faculty academics
- Matrix model – horizontal and vertical teams

Aims and focus...

- to better understand the learning and development needs of students within the context of a new operating structure and begin to use this information to inform practice.

Research questions

- How do students and academics in the faculty define student success?
- What are the perceived learning and development needs for student success?
- How might we best meet the learning and development needs of students in order to assist them to achieve success?
- What role might technology play in meeting these needs?

USQ Student Cohort

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

USQ AS 100 UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

COMMENCING STATUS
- Continuing 69
- Commencing 31

GENDER
- 54 Female
- 46 Male

PROGRAM LEVEL
- Bachelor 56
- Higher Degree Coursework 15
- Enabling/Non-award 10
- Other Postgraduate 8
- Other Undergraduate 7
- Cross-International 2
- Higher Degree Research 2

ENROLMENT
- 71 Part-time
- 29 Full-time

FUNDING
- Commonwealth Funded 75
- International 15
- Domestic Fee-paying 8
- Research Training Scheme 2

AGE
- 1 17 or less
- 36 18–25
- 16 26–29
- 41 30–49
- 6 50 or more

ADMISSION BASIS
- Direct 60
- QTAC 21
- International 19

ETHNICITY
- 82 Other Australians
- 15 International
- 3 Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders

INTERNATIONAL
- Onshore 51
- Offshore 49

AREA OF STUDY
- 20 Business & Commerce
- 19 Education
- 15 Engineering & Built Environment
- 12 Health & Community
- 10 Pathway programs
- 8 Humanities & Communication
- 5 Sciences
- 4 Information Technology
- 3 Law & Justice
- 2 Other
- 1 Creative Arts & Media
- 1 English Language programs

ATTENDANCE
- Online 70
- On-campus, Toowoomba 17
- On-campus, Springfield 9
- *On-campus, Fraser Coast 3
- On-campus, Ipswich 1

RESIDENCE
- 84 Domestic
- 16 International

*teach out of students following transfer of campus to USC

AALL – Conference 2017

Methodology

- Environmental scan – internal and external
- Mixed methods – quantitative survey and qualitative semi-structured interview

Limitations

- Broad institutional scan
- Phases - moving in, moving through, moving out
- Student needs and perspectives between disciplines, cohorts and students in different phases

The literature

- Online learning focus

"learning management systems, library websites and databases, and Internet searching are now all integral to contemporary undergraduate studies. It is now difficult to imagine being a university student without these technologies."

(Henderson et al., 2015)

The literature – online learning benefits

- Operational improvement
- Quantitative improvements
- Qualitative benefits (Kirkwood & Price, 2014)

- Benefits of video to compliment course materials (Henderson et al., 2015)

The literature – online learning benefits - AALL

- SNAP.VU
- AALL Websites
- Embedded online approach for academic literacy
- Electronic 'just in time' sessions
- Online grammar checking tools
- Embedded online modules for 'at-risk' students

The literature – online learning issues to consider

- Students and Staff
- Institutional variables
- Pedagogical considerations

The literature – Students

- ## Student skills (Hendersen et al., 2015; Levy & Ramim, 2017; Hung, Chou, Chen, & Own, 2010; Smith, Murphy, & Mahoney, 2003)

- ## Technical skills (Peng, Tsai, & Wu, 2006)

- ## Attitudes to technology (Tsai & Lin, 2004)

- ## Culture and language background (Luyt, 2013)

- ## Time management (Hill, 2002; Roper, 2007)

The literature – Staff/instructors

- Time
- Technical skills
- Appropriate institutional support

The literature – institution

- Institutional support for students and online learning initiatives is vital (Concannon, Flynn, & Campbell, 2005)

The literature – pedagogical considerations

- Listening, observing and actively contributing (Hrastinski, 2009)

- Text, video and audio (An & Frick, 2006; Ching & Hsu, 2015; Hara & Hew, 2007)

- Ability to locate online resources is fundamental (Conncanon et al., 2005)

"needs to convince students that the engagement and time invested [in online interactions] are worthwhile."
Leslie-McCarthy and Tutty (2011, p. 29)

The literature – the potential of technology

- "identified educational need or aspiration" "explicit educational rationale" for technological innovations (Kirkwood & Price, 2014, pp. 25, 26).

- Transforming learning is a complex activity that frequently necessitates reconsideration by teachers of what constitutes 'teaching' and 'learning'. It requires sophisticated reasoning about the goals of any intervention, the design of the evaluation and the interpretation of the results within the particular educational context."

Student learning support

- What does all this mean for learning support and student needs within the context of USQ?

- Digital literacy and fluency
- Learning support resources
- Questions? Questions? Questions?

Questions?

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