Government Funding as Leverage for Quality Teaching and Learning

Professor Sabiha Essack*
Faculty of Health Sciences
University of KwaZulu-Natal

*On behalf of T Lingah, K. P. Mashige, N. Mtshali, I. Naidoo, P. Naidoo, F. Oosthuizen, S. Pillay and F. Suleman
Overview

- The Higher Education Funding Framework
- Literature Review on Strategies for Translating Access into Retention and Success
  - Curricula and Pedagogy
  - Student Support
- The Academic Development and Student Support Project
  - Learning Support
  - Teaching
- Achievements and Future Directions
Higher Education Funding Framework

- National budget for higher education institutions 100%
- Institutional restructuring 3%
  - NSFAS 6%
  - Other: including interest & redemption on loans & foundation programmes 2%
- Earmarked grants 8%
- Block grants 87%
  - Teaching input grants 56%
    - generated by Approved FTE student places
  - Teaching output grants 14%
    - generated by Non-research graduates & diplomats
  - Research output grants 12%
    - generated by Research masters & doctorates & publications
  - Institutional factor grants 6%
    - generated by Enrolment size & % disadvantaged students
Curriculum and Pedagogy

Curriculum
- Curriculum intervention focuses on curriculum design, content, pedagogy.
- Bridging, foundational or holistic, integrated models
- Contextualized and relevant curriculum content
- Generation and dissemination of indigenous knowledge

Pedagogy
- REALs created by connectivism and constructivism
- Collaborative learning, cooperative learning and learning communities
- Problem-based learning (PBL), case-based curricula (CBC), supplemental instruction (SI), structured learning assistance (SLA) and peer-led team learning (PLTL)
Student Support

Student Counseling Service
- A holistic approach to student wellness
- Supporting students with learning skills
- Personal counseling and/or psychotherapeutic services
- Consultation with faculty and staff
- Advocacy for student needs

Peer Mentoring
- Facilitate the induction and retention of students
- Provide psycho-social guidance and support
- Serve as positive, encouraging and affirming role models
- Demonstrate principles of accessibility, inclusivity, recognition of diversity
Academic Development and Student Success (ADSS) Project

- Overarching objective: student retention and success.
- The conceptual framework has three dimensions:
  - Student monitoring and support
  - Curriculum development
  - Capacity building of academic staff in terms of pedagogy
ADSS Project – Learning Support

- **2005**
  The base-line with student support consisting of a largely reactive SCS that attended to students on self-referral or referral from the discipline/School/Faculty.

- **2006**
  The Faculty of Health Sciences subscribed to the mentorship programme and appointed academic development programme (ADP) officers.

- **2007**
  Pro-active, targeted intervention by the SCS developing a questionnaire enabling the early identification of students encountering difficulties. The questionnaires elicited information that could be grouped into the broad categories of “academic” and “psycho-social” indicating the need for personal or group counseling.
ADSS Project – Learning Support (2)

**Mentors**
- Assigns 10 first entry students to a senior student
- Provides relevant and contextual academic, social and personal support
- 1st line of communication/reference for students navigating the transition from secondary to tertiary education.

**ADP Officers**
- Monitor student performance in formal assessments
- Identify students performing poorly
- Interview students and refer them to either to academic staff or the SCS as appropriate
- Serve as tutors covering academic content of modules one-to-one basis
Student Development Needs Assessment and Learning Related Interventions

- Time Management: 19%
- Study Skills: 21%
- Stress Management: 16%
- Exam Preparation: 17%
- Assertiveness Training: 7%
- Self Esteem Building: 4%
- Interpersonal Communication Skills: 11%
- Money Management: 5%

- Individual Counselling
- Student Development
- Academic Counselling
- Career Counselling
- Health
Student Performance

- Overall: Pre-Intervention (L1 + M) = 83%, Post-Intervention (L1 + AA) = 91%, p < 0.05
- Student Cohorts:
  - 2005: Post-Intervention (L1 + AA) = 57%, p = 0.049
  - 2006: Post-Intervention (L1 + AA) = 57%
  - 2007: Post-Intervention (L2 + AA) = 57%
Teaching Staff

- Lack of initial “buy in” and larger classes necessitated strong facilitation skills.
- Concern over lack of confidence amongst students to express their views.
- Engendered a collegial learning environment and gradually inculcated interaction and learning from both the students and facilitators.

Students

- Initial reluctance to engage
- Better understanding of content
- Enjoyed the participative nature
- Acknowledged the problem-solving and critical thinking skills gained.
- Preferred pedagogy despite substantial time required for preparation and self-directed learning.
Discussion

- The Faculty of Health Sciences adapted the recommendations of Laden (2004) where we:
  - Orientated and inducted students to facilitate the transition from secondary school and enable successful navigation of and integration into the higher education system using mechanisms such as peer mentors.
  - Implemented a monitoring and early alert system that identifies students encountering academic and other difficulties and allows prompt intervention.
  - Provided appropriate student welfare services by formalized collaboration between the Faculty and the SCS to facilitate student retention and success.
  - Are in the process of providing appropriate programmes, curriculum and pedagogy to facilitate and enhance students’ abilities to achieve academic and career aspirations.
Conclusion

- Teaching
  - Qualitative results show the beginnings of a culture of independent/self-directed learning auguring well for lifelong learning.

- Learning
  - Qualitative and quantitative responses attest to success of the proactive determination of learning-related development needs, monitoring of student performance and comprehensive, collaborative, consolidated and holistic student support.
References