

Multicultural College Environments

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No longer is there a typical college student. College campuses are the most diverse settings in the country, and Kennesaw State University is no different. Located in the suburbs of a large city, Kennesaw State University's main campus is twenty miles outside of Atlanta, Georgia. Because KSU is located so close to a large, diverse city, the student population reflects the population of the metro-Atlanta area. With a student population of just under 25,000, KSU is a large institution (Kennesaw State University, 2014). It is one of four comprehensive universities in the state of Georgia, and a public institution (Kennesaw State University, 2014). As a public school, Kennesaw State University serves the population of the state of Georgia. Therefore, the student populace reflects that of the state. When working with a large number of diverse students, the administration, faculty, and staff at Kennesaw State University must be aware of, and cater to, the growing needs of this multicultural student population. Specifically, those who work in admissions, academic advising, and the senior seminar program must promote the changes that are a product of college attendance to their students.

Admissions

The growth that a college education provides begins well before students start their classes. The admissions office is a student's first experience with a particular college campus. Many college applicants are no longer traditional white, eighteen-year-old men, therefore admissions offices need to be prepared to handle their diverse clientele. Applicants are men and women of all difference ethnicities and varying ages. Their parents may or may not have attended college, and their family's income could come from a wide range. The variation of student backgrounds creates a large array of needs from these applicants. The influence of the admissions office, as the beginning of any college career, can promote growth through higher education by beginning, or aiding in, the developmental process.

Chickering's Vectors

Traditionally, applicants were at the beginning of the college career because they enrolled directly after high school. Therefore, they had yet to make any progress along Chickering's Vectors. However, more college applicants are now adult or transfer students, and have reached varying benchmarks of their developmental journeys. In order to cater to each individual student, KSU can train their admissions personnel how to identify a student's development level, and cater to each student's needs. For example, if a transfer student applies online, submits all required documents, and does not contact the office with any questions, the automatically generated emails will be sufficient communication for this student. However, a high school student may require more guidance. Admissions officers have limited time, and those at KSU can effectively use their time by identifying and helping those students who need it most.

For those students who are beginning their developmental journey, college admissions can contribute to Chickering's first two vectors: achieving competence and managing emotions (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Completing a college application requires knowledge and skills, and is a beginning step toward achieving competence. Additionally, many students are rejected from institutions every year and must maintain their disappointment, managing emotions. Admissions officers at Kennesaw State University must aid applicants who are not admitted to their institution by providing feedback on applications and offering suggestions on alternative admissions options, such as attending a community college first then applying to transfer.

Technology

Technology is a wonderful tool for the admissions office at Kennesaw State University. It provides instant communication with applicants all over the world. KSU enrolls students from 128 different countries, so the admissions office must accommodate a large population of

international students (Kennesaw State University, 2014). The best means of communication with international applicants is through information on the website and email. KSU must provide detailed information regarding admissions policies, requirements, processes, and other vital information for international students on their website for easy retrieval. Additionally, many international students are in time zones that are not conducive to calling during business hours. Therefore, many communicate through email. KSU should have at least one counselor who is responsible for international students, and all emails should be returned within 24 hours.

Additionally, most applicants are of the millennial generation and have grown up with technology. They are the most comfortable working with an electronic platform and seek information this way (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Regardless of ethnic background, gender, or sexual orientation, most applicants today are comfortable with technology. KSU needs to market their institution electronically. The admissions office should have a steady presence in social media. An admissions representative needs to update their social media daily, and market all admissions events through this medium. Additionally, interest pages and applications should have an option for students to receive reminder text messages about deadlines, missing credentials, and on campus events.

Educated Staff

In any office in higher education, it is vital that the staff be educated on the traits and characteristics of the students they serve. This is also true of admissions offices. Regardless of major, student type, background, or age, all students must gain admission to the institution. Admissions staff at Kennesaw State University must be aware of the challenges and traits of every student they work with. Counselors should understand the needs of the applicant pool.

Additionally, the staff of the office, including tour guides, needs to be representative of the student population in terms of gender, race, international students, first-generation college students, and sexual orientation.

Instruction and Interaction

Millennial students require more guidance than any other generation, and the admissions staff at KSU must respond to this. In addition, they are also much closer to their parents, and these parents are more involved with college admissions (Howe & Strauss, 2007). KSU can create a line of communication directly from the institution to the parent, with the student's permission. Emails and printed materials should be designed specifically for parents, addressing their questions and concerns.

Additionally, higher education today is seeing an influx of first generation college students. This population can benefit the most from instruction and interaction from their admissions counselors. KSU can promote growth and understanding of the collegiate process by providing seminars for parents and students detailing how to apply to college. Additionally, admissions officers can collaborate with financial aid representatives to explain how to apply for financial aid. Providing this guidance helps students establish the first of Chickering's vectors, achieving competence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Academic Advising

Academic advising is a vital function on campus because it provides requirements and plans for their tenure at KSU. Because academic advisors play such a key role with the student population, they must be well equipped to work with every student on campus. They can do this by providing flexible office hours, electronic advising resources, and personalized advisement.

Flexible Advising

Today's college students are busier than others before, as most work and some non-traditional students have families (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Some parts of the advising process should be available in a flexible, online format. All degree requirements for every catalog year should be readily accessible on the KSU website. Millennials, international students, non-traditional students, and parents will benefit greatly from this resource. Academic advising should also create a series of "how to" videos, and place them on their website for information regarding registration, graduation applications, and other functions.

Additionally, many non-traditional adult students work during normal business hours and take classes at night. The academic advising office should have at least one advisor that works an alternative schedule in order to be available for these students. KSU's academic advising office should stay open into the evening, especially during high volume times. They should also offer web advising and advising via telephone to accommodate those who cannot come into the office for advising.

Individual Attention

As with any office on campus, it is vital for academic advisors to be available to their students. Millennial students prefer structure, which academic advising provides (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Advisors should follow up with their advisees multiple times during each semester to mark their progress and schedule future advising appointments. Attention like this is vital when working with first-generation college students, as well. Advisors should spend a few minutes at the initial advising session with each first-generation student to introduce higher education practices and terminology to the student, as they are unfamiliar with them. Advising

offices can also create web tools to explain things such as catalog years, course catalogs, transient courses, and other vital information for mass distribution to their students.

Senior Seminar Programs

Opposite of admissions staff and academic advisors, practitioners who work in senior seminar programs work with students who are reaching the peak of their developmental journey through college. They are preparing students to enter the workplace or graduate school. Regardless of gender, ethnicity, or age, all students require the aid of this program including resume writing, interview skills, GRE and GMAT preparation, and instructions on applying to graduate school. Senior seminar programs aid in the final two of Chickering's vectors: establishing identity and developing purpose (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Senior seminar professionals can help students do this is by having each student create a portfolio. The student has to clearly define their employment or graduate school goal, and create a portfolio of college work to support their goal. Additionally, each student should create a webpage linked to the class website. This webpage can house their portfolio, resume, recommendations, and other vital works.

Challenges to Overcome

Some college students require more assistance when leaving college for the workplace than others do. Students who attend institutions that are less diverse, such as single gender colleges or historically black colleges require an introduction to diversity in the workplace. Senior seminar professionals can help female students reach full understanding of their role in the world, as in Josselson's theory of identity development in women (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). They can also help African American students reach integrated awareness, the last status is Helms's people of color racial identity model (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Kennesaw State

University's program can help students by addressing these developments with students in the seminars. The seminar professionals can discuss how these developments can help students in the workplace.

Non-traditional students may also be working, and traditional students often have jobs and internships to balance with their course load. Senior seminar professionals can offer hybrid courses, in which the student can take the course online while coming to campus once a month. Professors can also offer flexible class times, in which the student can choose which section to attend each week or month.

Working with Others

Though college campuses are diverse, many students are secluded within their own generation of peers. Traditional students take courses during the day while adult students tend to enroll in evening classes. Business majors take business classes while science majors take science classes. However, in the workplace, young people must work with seasoned professionals and scientists must work with business professionals. The senior seminar program at KSU can prepare students to work alongside others who do not share their traits and characteristics. Senior seminar professionals can call attention to the working styles, characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses of each student. Opening a dialog with the seminar, students can increase their awareness of what they can bring to a diverse office, and what they need to improve upon to become a good candidate for the workplace.

Conclusion

Kennesaw State University is making strides in helping students grow and learn in our multicultural environment. Whether as an applicant, advisee, or graduating senior, each student has their own specific needs. It is vital that higher education professionals do all they can to

ensure these needs are met. Faculty and staff should utilize technology, get to know their students, explain in detail, and respect their students. Every student grows exponentially throughout his or her college career, and Kennesaw State University must promote this growth. Each student must be supported from application to graduation.

References

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