Background Reading

Appendix 1

Student Life

1 November 2002

Institutional Research Consultancy Unit, RMIT
BACKGROUND

Structure of documents and literature review on the analysis of Student Life

The findings of the investigation of Student Life as a concept and a practical approach to structuring student support and learning services are presented in a report with two appendices.

Report: The Student Experience: Rethinking Conceptualisations of Student Experience at RMIT

- Drawing on material contained in Background Readings n Appendix 1 and 2 this report attempts to identify distinct models and approaches to Student Life/learning and student support structures
- It also identifies areas for further research and investigation.

Appendix 1: What is Student Life?

- Initial overview of the breadth of practical activities undertaken under the Student Life rubric domestically and internationally.
- Initial overview of literature conceptualising Student Life.
- Overview of some literature providing a snapshot of what constitutes student life in Australia.
- Identification of some issues and questions arising from literature review.
- Identification of additional information required/areas for further research.

Appendix 2: Review of RMIT research and analysis of Student Life

- Student Feedback
- RMIT Union Surveys
- RMIT Learning Support Review
- Student Outcomes Survey
- Approaches to Student Provision
- and other RMIT specific research

The three volumes should then feed into and inform the production of a strategy for implementing a Student Life approach for teaching, learning and student support services at RMIT.
Background Reading Volume 1: Student Life
Reference Documents

Student Life: Practical Approaches
1. Student Life Departments: Selected Domestic and International Comparative Structures

Conceptualising Student Life: International Approaches

How is Student Life constituted in Australia?
10. AVCC – Paying their way: A survey of Australian University Student Finances, Executive Summary, 2000

Student Life and Learning Support Services: Some Strategic Approaches
14. Hicks, M. & George, R., ‘A strategic perspective on approaches to student learning support at the University of South Australia’
15. Queensland University of Technology, (2002), Student Centres and Student Services, www.qut.edu.au
23. NASPA Online, (2001), Bridges to Student Success: Exemplary Programs, www.naspa.org
Student Life: Practical Approaches

1. Student Life Departments: Selected Domestic and International Comparative Structures

The following is a snapshot of the type of activity undertaken at universities by departments or other organisational units called *Student Life*. It provides an initial overview of the breadth of concepts and activities undertaken under this rubric domestically and internationally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Life Approaches</th>
<th>Academic Support Services</th>
<th>Student Support Services</th>
<th>Student Union Services</th>
<th>University Service Structure</th>
<th>Student Organ. Structure</th>
<th>The term Student Life is used only as a web heading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
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<td>Curtin University</td>
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<td>Uni of Kansas</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Domestic Approaches**

**Curtin University of Technology**

The Business School of Curtin University uses the term Student Life as a heading for student services, career, and clubs and societies information for current and prospective students.

Services at Curtin are provided by the Student Guild or the university through its academic or student support service departments.

For more detailed information: http://www.curtin.edu.au/current/studentlife.cfm

**Deakin University**

Division of Student Life created in June 2000, bringing together student support services, student facilities and student and staff amenities in order to enhance student centred provision of services and to develop a sense of community amongst on and off campus students.

Services coordinated by the new Division are:
- Liaison with and support to University student associations
- Childcare liaison and support for staff and students
- Food services
- Residential accommodation
- Sport and recreation
And Student Services including:
- Academic skills
- Careers and Employment
- Counselling
- Chaplaincy
- Distance Education Student Support
- Disability Access and Support
- Financial Assistance
- First Year Student Orientation
- Health Services

For greater detail please refer to: http://www.deakin.edu.au/studentlife

**Monash University**
The term Student Life heading is used by various student organizations at Monash University to encompass their activities and services. The University lists its activities under Course & Administration Information, Support Services or Study Resources.

Student Life at Monash includes:
- All student organizations
- Clubs and Societies
- Accommodation services
- Transition from school to university programs

For greater detail please refer to: http://www.monash.edu.au/info/studyat/

**University of Melbourne**
The University of Melbourne uses the term Student Life as a heading in its orientation information to International Students.

Programs and services including academic support, clubs and societies, counsellors and medical services continue to be provided by the Student Affairs and Student Union organisational units.

For greater detail please refer to: http://www.unimelb.edu.au/international/whystudy.htm#2

**University of Technology Sydney**
Student Life is used as a heading in orientation material to UTS and living in Sydney for new students contained on the website.

Information contained under the heading includes services and activities undertaken by university departments (academic and student support services) and student organizations, including:
- On campus service and infrastructure information
- Information on Sydney public transport and tourist attractions
- A guide to eating out
- Events and entertainment
- Student organizations
- Study skills
- Work experience
- Student Services

Services continue to be provided out of the student service department of the university, academic support units and the student organizations.
For more detailed information: http://www.uts.edu.au/study/unilife/index.html

**International Approaches**

**Pace University**
Uses the term Student Life as a heading above its Student Services Division. The division plays a key role in developing the university’s culture by engaging the full academic community in collaborative activities. A Dean of Students heading the division communicates the interests and concerns of students to the academic and administrative leadership.

Services coordinated by the division are:

- Emergency Services
- Academic Support
- Residential Life
- Campus Services (bookstore, library and residential life)
- Athletics and Recreation
- Campus Activities
- Counselling Services
- Office of Multicultural Affairs

For greater detail please refer to: http://appserv.pace.edu/execute/page.cfm?doc_id=110

**Texas A & M University**
Mission Statement
“The Department of Student Life fosters growth and development essential to a positive university experience, and encourages students to become responsible members of society in a diverse and changing world”

The Department includes:
- Office of the Dean of Student Life
- Alcohol and Drug Education Programs
- Office of Greek Life
- Off Campus Student Services
- Services for Students with Disabilities
- Adult and Graduate Student Services
- Gender Issues Education Services
- Orientation for new students
- Student Conflict Resolution Services

For greater detail please refer to: http://studentlife.tamu.edu/homepage.asp

**Quincy University**
The term Student Life is used as a heading beneath which a number of student services, distinct from admissions and enrolment, fall.

Areas of activity under the Student Life umbrella include:
- Student Programming Board
- Academic Services (study skills)
- Athletics
- Campus Ministry
- Orientation
- Clubs and Organisations
- Student Services (Financial Aid, Library, Food, Counselling etc)
- Residential facilities
- Health and Fitness
For greater detail please refer to: http://www.quincy.edu/student-life

**University of Southern California**
The term Student Life and Services is used as a heading beneath which a number of student services, distinct from Academic Life, fall.

Areas of activity under the Student Life umbrella include:
- Curriculum information links
- Personal records administrative systems
- Campus Services (including childcare and financial services)
- Student Government
- Activities & Sport
- Academic Resources
- Academic Support Network

For greater detail please refer to: http://www.usc.edu/students

**University of Kansas**
The University of Kansas reorganised its Department of Student Life in 1997 in order to better focus its efforts to assist students in achieving their academic goals.

It has had a Dean of Student Life since at least 1994.

The Department of Student Life is currently undergoing a review and restructure.

For greater detail please refer to: http://www.ur.ku.edu

**University of Oregon**
The Student Life Office at the University of Oregon is dedicated to “helping students have the most successful experience they can while studying at the University of Oregon”.

The office provides a one-stop shop for students referring them to services and solutions to their needs or problems. Staff are available to students 24 hours a day.

Services run by the Office include:
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Education and support
- Student Rights
- Diversity Program
- Conflict Resolution
- Sexual Assault Prevention
- Substance Abuse Prevention
- Non-traditional Student Support
- Childcare
- Orientation

For greater detail please refer to: http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~stl/

**Michigan State University**
The Department of Student Life is located in the Division of Student Affairs and Services.
The department seeks to give students not only the opportunity to pursue academic skills, but also to develop new interests and skills, and to prepare for active participation in society.

Distinct services provided include:
- Campus life orientation
- Leadership development
- Student Activities
- Student Organisations
- Student Government Support
- Office of Greek Life
- Student Rights
- Housing

For greater detail please refer to: [http://www.vps.msu.edu/Slife/](http://www.vps.msu.edu/Slife/)

**University of Cincinnati**

The Department of Student Life is situated within Student Affairs, alongside International Student Services and the Career Development Centre.

“The Department of Student Life mission is concerned with creating a campus environment conducive to learning. Through programs, activities, and services, the Department influences the development of well-rounded students who will contribute to society upon graduation.”

The Department identifies learning as an activity made up of curricular and extracurricular activities

It identifies its major responsibilities to students as:

- Identifying and responding to the educational, developmental, and service needs of students;
- Encouraging self-awareness and empowerment;
- Promoting diversity, civility, and personal responsibility;
- Promoting purposeful and healthy interpersonal relationships;
- Promoting values that enhance character development.
- Fostering learning in a holistic and inclusive manner

Services and programs provided by the Department include:
- African American Cultural and Research Centre
- Ethnic Programs and Services
- Psychological Services Centre
- Office of Student Conduct
- Student Organisations and Activities
- Cultural events
- Women’s Program and Services

For greater detail please refer to: [http://www.soa.uc.edu/life/](http://www.soa.uc.edu/life/)
Conceptualising Student Life: International Approaches

2. Taskforce on Student Life and Learning, ‘Final Report Taskforce on Student Life and Learning’, (1998), Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

In 1996 the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) undertook a comprehensive review of its educational mission entitled Presidential Taskforce on Student Life and Learning.

The Taskforce had four goals:
1. Review and articulate MIT’s educational mission
2. Evaluate the interaction between student life and learning at MIT
3. Evaluate MIT’s current educational processes and identify changes
4. Identify resources required to support changes

It formulated MIT’s educational mission as:
The advancement of knowledge and education of students...through an educational program combining rigorous academic study and the excitement of research with the support and intellectual stimulation of a diverse campus community.

The review developed the following eleven key principles for education provision at MIT:
1. The educational value of useful knowledge
2. Societal responsibility
3. Learning-by-doing
4. Combining a liberal education with a professional education
5. Education as a preparation for life
6. Teaching the fundamentals
7. Excellence and limited objectives
8. Unity of the faculty
9. An integrated educational triad of academics, research, and community
10. Intensity, curiosity, and excitement
11. The importance of diversity

Issues identified by the review include:
- The combination of structured learning and informal learning is critical in order to educate the whole student
- The importance of recognising the changing nature of education
- The negative implications of time pressure on faculty
- The negative implications of time pressure (work and study) on students
- Orientation programs, integration of formal and informal learning, social activities and community space currently offered at MIT do not meet the needs of the institution for producing an environment conducive to educating the whole student
- The strength of departmental management has an adverse effect on cross-departmental activities and planning for formal and informal learning

Recommendations for change include:

- Implementing the education triad of academics, research and community as the principle underpinning all activities related to student life and education
- Creating collaborative (academic and other) advising teams for students
- Recognising and supporting faculty members and students who become involved in community activity
- Approaching the issues of housing, dining, first-year programs, and orientation as part of single educational program
- Making orientation about bringing undergraduate, graduate students, and faculty together into a shared experience
- Providing more attractive and convenient spaces for community interaction
- Providing more funding for activities that encourage community interaction.
- Creating a strategic planning group composed of the President, Provost, and Chancellor in order to better define how resources are located among department and cross-department programs.
- Strengthening faculty governance to reflect the three areas of the educational triad.


This study establishes which of 16 targeted, high concern areas University of Rhode Island students would rate as most to least important. 720 students were surveyed for the study.

- High concern areas for students were identified from literature and include:
  - Financial security
  - Career planning
  - Financial management
  - Time management

- Low concern areas for students but high concern areas for administrators and staff were identified from literature and include:
  - Sexual behaviour
  - Drugs and alcohol
  - Crime and violence

- Less involvement in their studies, and a decrease in student political involvement were noted in the literature

The study identified the following high concern issues for ranking: drug/use abuse, future career issues, social behaviour, sexual behaviour, use of time, consumer/finance issues, physical health, mental health, multicultural/diversity issues, gender issues, academic issues, alcohol use/abuse, sexual orientation, current employment issues, crime/violence issues and safety issues.

Overall the following were ranked by students taking part in the survey as most important:
- Future career issues
- Physical health
- Academic issues
- Mental health
- Use of time
- Consumer/finance issues

For greater detail please refer: [http://www.uri.edu/student_affairs/sqolas/repartindex.html](http://www.uri.edu/student_affairs/sqolas/repartindex.html)


The University of Strathclyde defines five key areas making up Student Life:

1. Finance  - income, expenditure and likely future debt
2. Academic  - course, workload and assessment
3. Personal - health, emotional issues, lifestyle and career aspirations
4. Interpersonal - relationships with friends, relatives, parents, partners, children and other students and staff
5. Housing

A student's well being is determined by the balance in which students can keep these aspects of their lives. Usually one or two issues, typically academic matters and money, predominate.

For greater detail please refer: [http://www.strath.ac.uk/Departments/CAP/student/becoming/intro.htm](http://www.strath.ac.uk/Departments/CAP/student/becoming/intro.htm)


Media Release announcing a new University of California Santa Barbara research project will investigate student life of college students, including their study, eating and social habits.

The study will be undertaken by the UCSB’s Institute for Social, Behavioural and Economic Research and is designed to follow students through every aspect of their lives for the duration of their degrees.


The commission explored and recommended changes in undergraduate education. The report refuses to divide issues of ‘academics’ from those of ‘student life’ including the social fabric of student experience, the physical infrastructure of the campus, and the effectiveness of administrative support across all areas.

The commission developed a guiding ideal and metaphor of the university as a good city. This ideal envisages a university which offers undergraduates an educational community that is “at once civic-minded and cosmopolitan, inclusive, diverse, dynamic, and welcoming, where students gain entry into and help develop an expansive community and the tools for exploration and change”.

Overall, though noting several successful initiatives, the commission concluded that overall campus life and individual student’s experiences are often disjointed and compartmentalised. Nor are undergraduates able to fully engage with the diversity of the University in support of their intellectual, ethical, and social development.

The commission made the following recommendations:
- Make the campus more interconnected, integrated, and permeable.
- Connect students to the community and the world.
- Treat the undergraduate career as a life-course journey, both intellectually and socially.
- Improve the information flow to undergraduates
- Create a student community that is diverse, inclusive, adventurous and socially reflective.
- Provide resources and nurture practices that renew the faculty commitment to undergraduate education and enhance student-faculty interaction.
After implementation of recommendations some of the successes include:

1. The arts of citizenship program course “community projects in the arts and humanities”

The arts of citizenship program fosters the role of the arts, humanities, and design in civic life through cultural projects with community partners. Michigan undergraduates take part in these projects through university course 312/313, “community projects in the arts and humanities”

2. The “pizza course” in the college of engineering

Curriculum 2000, the new undergraduate course of study in the college of engineering, called for the development of introductory courses based on integrative, inquiry-based teaching. Units include the chemistry of baking, the thermodynamics of managing heat loss, and operations analysis of queuing and delivery problems.

For greater detail please refer: [http://www.umich.edu/pres/undergrad/commissionreport/](http://www.umich.edu/pres/undergrad/commissionreport/)


A survey of 228 students at four higher education institutions in South Wales investigated their educational debt, finances, employment, and reason for pursuing higher education.

The survey found that students experienced significant levels of debt, with 31% of students surveyed taking out loans. A third of these had debt levels above 1,000 Pounds.


204 Finnish college students were interviewed about their lives as students.

Some significant findings included:
- Student years are no longer a classically academic life stage
- Today’s students in Finland divide life between study and part-time employment.
- Student culture has lost its independence and vitality
- Student Life has become fragmented
How is Student Life constituted in Australia?


Some important issues relating to Student Life raised include:

- A trilateral relationship between the student, the university and society most accurately describes the educative relationship in public universities.
- The make up of the student population is changing.
  - Due in part to expansion of the sector, the student population is changing and is composed of people of different ages, social and educational backgrounds, with different engagement in work and family, and different ethnicities.
  - While in the past most students experienced university as a linear progression from school to tertiary study to work, today work and study are more closely interwoven for mature age students and school leavers.
- There is clear growth in the number of students returning to study at the postgraduate level to upgrade their skills or change careers.
- Increases in fees and the changes in the nature of work have led to a change in the manner of engagement and expectations of education by students.
- Administrative and academic transactions and educational processes continue to be organised around the assumption that students are able to be on campus full-time.
  - Programming of academic programs also largely continues to assume full-time attendance on campus.
  - Night classes are no longer sufficient to provide the flexibility of study access necessary to match student work and family life.
- Nonetheless there is a continuing demand for a daytime campus-based experience from international students and a significant minority of domestic undergraduates.
- Student engagement in their education is seen as a key determinant in successful education outcomes.
- Student demand for flexible delivery of education and reduced classroom attendance should not be viewed as ‘disengagement’ or a deficit in the attitudes of students, but rather as evidence that students are increasingly playing a role in shaping their education.
- The increasing diversity of students taking part in tertiary education also means that there is an increasing breadth of learning experience and learning styles in classrooms. In this context a one-size fits all model of learning support services may not be effective. Individualised student learning contracts may respond to this tension, while simultaneously empowering students to take responsibility for part of their learning experience.
- Student support services can provide the key element in helping students “put the pieces together”. By recognising the multifaceted aspects of students’ lives, and they can help to ensure the right configuration of programmatic, support services, learning support and administrative services for each student.

10. AVCC – Paying their way: A survey of Australian University Student Finances, Executive Summary, 2000

A survey of 34,752 domestic undergraduate students was conducted in the second semester of 2000 at 19 Australian universities. The survey built on four previous national surveys undertaken in 1974, 1979, 1984 and 1991. The main themes covered included: student income and expenditure, and the impact of financial hardship on study.
Key Trends
- Financial hardship amongst students is significant, with students combining: government income support (38.7% of students receive some form of income support), debt (10.7% of students obtain loans averaging $4,000 in order to continue their studies), and part-time or full-time work to finance their studies.
- Financial circumstance has influenced the choice of course (11.1%), university (17.4%) and mode of study (23.3%) of students.
- The amount of paid work undertaken by students both during the semester and semester breaks has increased substantially since 1984.
  - 72.5% of all students work during the semester in 2000 compared to 49.5% in 1984.
  - Full-time students work an average of 14.5 hours per week, and part-time students 35.5 for males and 30.1 for females.
- Increased work commitments are adversely affecting university studies.
- 24.1% of all students, and 41.9% of part-time students reported sometimes or frequently missing classes due to paid employment;
- 53.1% of full-time students, and 74.5% of part-time students reported that paid employment affected their studies somewhat or a great deal.

For greater detail please refer to: [http://www.avcc.edu.org](http://www.avcc.edu.org)


This report provides a comparative analysis of perceptions and behaviours of 2,609 first-year undergraduate students surveyed in 1999, and students surveyed in 1994 at the same seven Australian universities.

The major issues arising from the report include:
- The overwhelming majority of students continue to balance the desire to improve their job prospects and the desire to study in a field of interest to them.
- One third of students who enter university directly from school do not feel ready to make course choices.
- Two thirds of students do not feel well-prepared for university study.
- Increasing numbers of students withdraw from at least one subject.
- One third of students seriously consider deferring during their first semester.
- There has been little change in the level of students’ academic application and orientation.
- The most striking difference between 1994 and 2000 is the change in work and study patterns for students. There are an increased proportion of full-time students who work part-time to 42%, and an increase in the number of hours worked per week to 12.5 hours.
- There is a trend to less attachment and engagement in a range of aspects of university life and academic work from students who work longer hours.

The report also surveyed students on their use of student services. The following table in the report summarises responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student service</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Health service</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student union cafeteria</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>Health Service</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Support Services</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Student Housing Service</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Union Sports</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>Counselling Service</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Union Clubs</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>Financial Aid</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Study Skills Assistance</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>Women’s Resources/ Support Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service</td>
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<td>4%</td>
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</table>

In responding to the Crossroads Ministerial Discussion Paper, NUS raises the following key issues in regard to the learning experience of students:

- Though increased academic support services are recommended to arrest increasing attrition rates, there has been a substantial decline in staffing levels involved in academic support.
- The number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Staff involved in academic support services declined by 6.4 per cent between 1996 and 1999.
- The number of FTE staff employed to assist students with academic problems is lower in 1999 than it was in 1991, even though student numbers increased massively during the same period.
- Students experience many problems in the area of health, sexual health, sexuality, housing, conflict with parents or other parts of their families, mental health and financial issues, which can adversely affect their ability to study successfully.
- Student support staff, typically consisting of counsellors, financial advisors and the like are employed to assist students with these ‘life issues’, are in decline.
- The number of FTE staff employed in student support services by universities has declined by 13.8 per cent between 1994 and 1999. In 1999 there were less FTE staff employed to assist students with ‘life’ issues than in 1993 despite the concurrent increase in student numbers.
- Students are ‘disengaging’ from university life, because they work longer hours to finance their studies. As a result student expectations are lower now than at any other point in the Australian university experience, making measures of student satisfaction unreliable tools for assessing the quality of student experience.

For more detailed information refer to:


The purpose of this paper is to provide a focus for consideration of a strategic approach to workforce development in TAFE institutes. It sketches the broad context or ‘big picture’, by summarising the strategic direction the TAFE system has been responding to over the last decade, and by considering the workforce-related challenges ahead as Victoria makes the transition to a knowledge-based economy. It then focuses on where we are now, outlines some major areas for attention, and suggests a strategic approach to the work that needs to be done in those areas.

The paper proposes that learners will occupy a different position in the TAFE system. They may be less institutionally loyal and less attached to location and learning communities. The human and social side of their needs has to be managed, and the quality of advice, guidance and service will need to be high.

In addition, the knowledge-based economy involves building communities. Because communities are no longer seen as disposable or economically insignificant, there is an emphasis on new patterns of employment and continuous upgrading of skills through life.
Education and training are seen as an accessible and renewable resource for everyone, and a learning culture is established – one that supports the participation of the whole community. Therefore, TAFE institutes need to establish better relationships with learners and better services for them, including guidance, support and customer feedback processes.

**Student Life and Learning Support Services:**

**Some Strategic Approaches**

14. Hicks, M. & George, R., ‘A strategic perspective on approaches to student learning support at the University of South Australia’

Important issues raised include:

- Seven approaches to student learning support have evolved at the University of South Australia. Six of these approaches focus on student support staff working directly with students, the other involves cross departmental teams made up of support staff and academic/faculty staff.
- The conceptualisation of support in higher education must take into account the relationship between the student and the learning experience and the nature of the professional role played by various staff involved.
- Two interrelated strategies must structure student learning support. Firstly, the need to shift away from deficit models. Secondly, a reconsideration of the boundaries between the various professional groups and their practices in providing support.
- The need to use the knowledge gained by student learning support staff through direct service provision, to assist academic staff in the development of subjects.
- The Seven Approaches to Student Support at the University of South Australia are:
  1. Individual Support
  2. Generic Programs (Workshops on essay writing etc.)
  3. Faculty Based Programs (learning support is integrated into mainstream curriculum)
  4. Programs for Targeted Groups
  5. Supplemental Instruction for high risk subjects
  6. Specific Subjects for Credit (ie. English as a Second Language)
  7. Professional Development
    - Creation of cross-departmental teams to bring together specialised expertise to address specific student learning support issues within a subject. Teams are made up of some, or all of the following staff: Study advisers, librarians, professional development experts, counsellors, international student counsellors and careers advisors.
- In evaluating it is important to consider the cost of the approach, its support of the local values framework, and if it increases the competitive edge of the university.
- In analysing the seven types of support it was found that the most effective approaches were those which have significant components of support embedded in subjects.
- No one approach meets the needs of all students within the university.


15. Queensland University of Technology, (2002), Student Centres and Student Services, [www.qut.edu.au](http://www.qut.edu.au)

QUT has established Student Centres on each campus as the first point of contact for students seeking information on administrative, course or other student matters.

Key functions of the centres include:
- Assisting students with face to face enquiries regarding admission, academic credit, enrolment, fees, student ID cards, transport concessions and other enquiries
- Providing a place to obtain and lodge application forms and other general forms to do with administrative issues or student services
- Running a Student Info-Line assisting students with enquiries.
- Acting as a central publications access point (i.e. Orientation book, Guide for Students with Disabilities)
- Providing a gateway to student services run by the university service areas and student organisations

For greater detail please refer: http://studentservices.qut.com/advice/studentcentre/


Student learning support is integrated via curriculum that utilises a triangulated approach at the Australian Institute for Public Safety.

Modules were developed in each program to provide instruction, modelling, and workshop development time for students in writing and associated stylistic standards.

Pedagogical strategy

Research around study skills development points to improved outcomes for students who undertake this work in an academic ‘context’, rather than as a field of ‘separate study’

A triangulated approach to developing study skills involves structuring a learning relationship amongst teacher, student, and study skills supporter. In other words, lecturer and study skills teacher do not act as two discreet, unrelated influences on students, but rather work in a triangulated relationship. The study skills teacher provides instruction, modelling and development feedback to students, while the lecturer evaluates student writing according to the standards and academic norms of the subject area.

As an example, a lecturer who has experienced significant difficulties with students’ essay introductions might recommend some study skills attention to this issue. The study skills demonstrator might instruct and model on this issue, and provide time for the development of introductions during workshop time. Students would also receive feedback on the appropriateness and quality of their introductions – or other writing – from the subject lecturer at developmental points.

The detailed concerns of every tutor and lecturer cannot be addressed in the space of one short semester, however even two or three partnership arrangements can reap enormous rewards. Teaching staff will be invited to work with the study skills development co-ordinator to address issues of direct relevance for their students.

Subject delivery consists of two contact hours for each year level per week. Students are divided into two groups for workshopping purposes. This would create two hours of delivery at first year and two hours of delivery at second year per week.

Napier University developed a program to learn how to improve retention rates and understand why some people don’t succeed eight years ago. The Student Retention Project (SRP) focuses on:
- Detailed retention-related research including the publication of yearly student retention statistics
- Student support initiatives
- Staff development activity

The SRP has measurably fulfilled its aim of improving student retention. There has, for example, been a 15% increase in first year students passing all their modules since 1995/1996, and student retention is firmly embedded as an issue for action and discussion at all levels of the university.

While the majority of universities approach retention in an ad-hoc manner, the SRP took a long-term approach, allowing accurate analysis of ‘what works’.

Common mistakes in addressing student retention include:
- Trying everything to see what works
- Assuming good practice spreads organically
- Focusing primarily on student support issues
- Assuming that caring staff are enough to get the job done
- Researching research to ‘drop-outs’ or to one-off projects
- Assuming that the work can be faculty led

Vital strategies for improving student retention ‘by design’
- Assuring high quality data and academic credibility
- Accepting long-term focus and engagement
- Providing practical support and incentives for staff
- Establishing the infrastructure for embedding change
- Reviewing learning, teaching and assessment strategies.

Napier has found that students who withdraw are remarkably similar to those who stay. There is no easy answer to be gained from simply looking at the backgrounds and experience of those who drop out.

For more information: http://www.exchange.ac.uk


Student affairs work:
- Takes place in an environment of competing demands, frequent change and ambiguous actions
- Incorporates a wide variety of information, ideas, actions and interactions within the university
- Includes interactions with a diverse group of individuals and groups, including students, faculty, administrators, alumni, parents, and political stake holders

In order to be effective student affairs administrators must be able to absorb cross departmental and cross sectoral information and act across organisational boundaries.
- This process can be referred to as Boundary Spanning.
- Boundary Spanning can be defined as “the intra-, inter-, and extra-organisational transfer of information, ideas, resources, and people across boundaries”.
- Student affairs work should respond effectively to students and student centred concerns. Given that student life spans many boundaries both within and outside the university, it is essential that student affairs work mirrors this interaction this in its work.

A survey of 42 senior student affairs officers from the south-eastern United States, found that all engaged in boundary spanning activities at a high to moderate level.


The IBM Best Practice Partner Group researches best practice and innovations in student services in conjunction with 23 partner institutions in the United States. Each of these organisations has undergone a cultural shift, providing services from a student perspective rather than an internal institutional perspective.

Some trends in student service provision identified include:
- Processes are redesigned from a student perspective
- Technology is applied only after the processes have been redesigned
- Barriers to information are removed by providing integrated information access
- Consistency and excellence of the service experience are developed at each touch point (in person or e-mail, phone or web service)
- As the institution learns more about the expectations of students and the needs of staff, an evolving model is planned
- Services are true to the culture and values of the institution
- Focus of services shifts from transactional to experiential
- A recognition that proposed changes must have the support of the entire executive team

Four key trends are:
1. Brand and image
   The brand, quality of service must be consistent regardless of how the students interacts with the institution.
2. Creating and sustaining change
   Creating and sustaining change involves changing the culture of the institution, firstly, to provide services from the student perspective (process redesign), and secondly, to train and support staff in providing them.
3. Lifelong relationships
   Colleges and universities often develop their relationship with prospective students and their parents at middle school.
4. Technology to support and improve student experience
   In the past technology has merely been installed over existing processes. New trends involve creating new paths for services, and then selecting technology to complement the end objectives.

Best practice models are defined as having the following features:
- Student satisfaction and success
- Service processes from the student’s perspective
- Added value with each person-to-person transaction
- Choice (time, place, and service contact)
- Variety of models for one-stop centres
- Variety of models for Web portals
BACKGROUND READINGS

- A mixture of self-service and interaction with staff (generalists and specialists)
- Empowered, skilled frontline staff
- Cross-functional teams
- Service model seen as strategic to the institution
- Executive support and participation
- Shift from transaction to relationship

Two such models are examined in more detail:

1. One-Stop Student Centres
   - The primary reason for creating one-stop student centres is to address student concern that they were given the run-around in their dealings with the institution and that staff were uncaring.
   - Allow students to make decisions and access information in a variety of formats (on papers, web services and personal support from generalist and specialist staff.
   - To meet student expectation the front-line staff members must have a breadth of knowledge spanning multiple areas

2. Web Portals
   - By 2005, it is projected that 80 per cent of U.S. colleges and universities with enrolments of more than 1,000 FTE students will have implemented web portals
   - Institutional paths to web portals typically have four generations:
     Generation 1: Content
     Organised from the internal institutional view, terminology and organization mirror the physical organization and processes of the institution.
     Generation 2: Content in Context
     Organised by ‘customer’ segment (prospective students, current students, visitors, faculty and staff etc.)
     Generation 3: Customisation, Personalisation and Community
     Organised from student-centred view and transaction-based, often an equivalent of the physical one-stop shop
     Generation 4: High Tech/High Touch
     Organised to create a positive experience and relationship with institution


Student affairs organisations are confronted with changes in their contexts and clientele:
- Firstly, the uneven success of students from underrepresented groups and general demographic shifts
- Secondly, the need for increased institutional accountability and revenue scarcity

A new role is emerging for Student Affairs organisations. They share the orientation of faculty, students and administrators and are hence able to span borders between all three:

“Truly, student personnel workers have the opportunities to be central figures for campus improvement in an era when resources must be perceived as newly combined rather than as new.”

Student affairs professionals can become:
- Institutional integrators, creatively and collaboratively integrating student and institutional development
- More centrally involved in the direction of the institution
This new role for student affairs calls for changes in the programs and services offered to students and the professional skills employed by personnel.

In order to serve as integrators within the institution, student affairs professionals must:
- Assess and understand the institutional environment
- Foster collaborative problem solving
- Develop collaboration with faculty
- Disseminate strategic information on students, their expectations, needs, interests and abilities
- Contribute to the quality of academic experience
- Develop skills for a broader role.


This booklet contains a blueprint of questions that can be used to evaluate first-year experience, broader campus experience or campus self-assessment.

The questions are divided into sections on:
1. Academics
2. Support for Unique Student Populations
3. Campus Administration, Organisation, Policies and Climate
4. Campus Processes, Procedures, and Activities
5. Student Life and Campus Services

Student Life is defined by functions typically included in Student Life Departments at U.S. institutions, including extracurricular activities and resources, campus problems and issues, Greek Life, residence life and commuter life.


- New technologies, changing student demographics, demand for greater accountability, concern about increasing cost of higher education, increased focus on multiculturalism and equal opportunity combine to create new challenges for Good Practice in Student Affairs.
- New approaches to Good Practice must be developed with regard to the core values of Student Affairs work: the “long-standing belief that higher education has a responsibility to develop citizens capable of contributing to the betterment of society… and help students reach their full potential”, through:
  - An acceptance and appreciation of individual differences
  - Lifelong learning
  - Education for effective citizenship
  - Student responsibility
  - Ongoing assessment of learning and performance
  - Pluralism and multicultural
  - Ethical and reflective practice
  - Freedom of expression with civility

- Principles of Good Practice developed within this framework:
  - Engages students in active learning
  - Helps students develop coherent values and ethical standards
  - Sets and communicates high expectations for learning

IRCU, CR, Vol. 1, Student Life, 1/11/02
- Uses systematic inquiry to improve student and institutional performance
- Uses resources effectively to achieve institutional missions and goals
- Forges educational partnerships that advance student learning
- Builds supportive and inclusive communities.

http://www.naspa.org/resources/principles.cfm

23. NASPA, (2001), Bridges to Student Success: Exemplary Programs, Washington

Ten programs were chosen from 150 submissions to the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators as being exemplary programs in their field.

Two characteristics could be found amongst all ten programs:
- Creating marshalling of resources to expand opportunities for students
- Collaboration between students, administrators and faculty in various departments

For greater detail please refer to: http://www.naspa.org/publications/index.cfm

24. Phoenix University: Online

The University of Phoenix, is one of America’s largest private universities and is unique in offering targeted, student centred academic programs through distance education in locations across 22 states. The University’s mission parallels that of RMIT’s in that it specifically targets working adults. Programs are vocationally orientated and designed to meet the needs of students who combine work and study. Therefore programs are developed with a focus on convenience and flexibility, in relation to schedules, locations, and administrative processes. University of Phoenix offers a wide variety of Bachelor’s, Master’s, and non-degree programs. Students must be over 23 years of age and in employment to be eligible to enrol. If they are not employed, students must have access to an organisational environment that allows application of the concepts learned in class. The University’s website also cites that degrees can be completed in only 2-3 years, “faster than traditional universities”. While this raises questions about the quality and standards of degrees, Phoenix University does tend to receive positive press in the U.S. and has experienced significant growth over the last decade.

To meet the needs of working students, classes take place during the evenings and curricula is designed so that students can apply learning to their work settings. In addition students take one class at a time, and classes last from five to six weeks, and each class builds on the previous one. This enables students to succeed in one subject before moving on to the next in team focussed tutorials. Each individual is assigned to a team of three to five students who meet weekly to discuss lecture material and prepare assignments. University of Phoenix believes that it is easier to grasp new material when it is relevant to a student’s life. Instead of relying solely on lectures, we use simulations, seminars, group discussions, student work-related projects etc.

Online students are taught by 7,000 faculty members, most of whom are part-time employees of Phoenix who have full-time jobs elsewhere. Some academic critics complain that Phoenix Online has stripped faculty members of their central role in

1 See The Chronicle of Higher Education, 28th October, 2002
higher education and replaced them with instructional-design consultants. Phoenix counters that professors at traditional universities who attempt online education are learning as they go, and often give students a bad experience as a result.

Academic critics of for-profit education in the U.S have argued that Phoenix Online takes in millions of federal student-loan dollars that could go further in helping minority students were they spent at less-expensive, public institutions. Compared with community colleges or state universities, the total tuition for an M.B.A. from Phoenix Online is about $25,000, for example, whereas Georgia State charges in-state students a total tuition of $10,500 for a full-time M.B.A. degree.

**Phoenix Outcomes**:  
**Network access:** 40 percent of students have broadband connections to the Internet; students gain access to online courses from 300 different Internet-service providers.  
**Graduation rate:** 65 percent of students who start a degree program eventually earn a degree.  
**Degree programs:** 25 programs are offered in 16 fields: accounting, administration, business administration, e-business, computer-information systems, education, e-education, general studies, health-care management, human-resource management, global management, information technology, management, marketing, nursing, and technology management. **Most popular degree programs:** B.S. in management, B.S. in information technology, and a general M.B.A.  
**Flow of students into courses:** 8,000 students begin a new course each week.  
**Class size:** Capped at 13 students. Typical class size: 11.  
**Loans and employer reimbursement:** 48 percent of online students receive some federal grants or loans to help cover tuition; 60 percent receive some employer reimbursement.

More details are available at:  
http://www.universityofphoenixcampuses.com/2/index.jsp

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2 As reported in The Chronicle of Higher Education, 28th October, 2002
Student Life: Some Considerations

Some issues and questions arising from the literature review

• Is our concept of how student’s lives are constituted in Australia sufficiently developed to inform our practice?
• Is the term Student Life a useful way of characterising student experience and needs on and off campus?
• The question of student disengagement in the context of changing work and study patterns is an important area to come to terms with, if we are to consider making changes to student learning, support services and attrition rates.
• Is the student academic support and student service model implemented in the United States through Student Life Departments a good model of service provision for RMIT?
• Are there alternative models, for example the University of South Australia or Queensland University of Technology models, which offer a superior blueprint for change?
• What principles of good practice should be considered as essential to structuring and restructuring Student Life and Learning Support Services?

Some additional information required and areas for further research

• How can we further refine what constitutes the reality of student life in Australia? Has there been significant change to what constitutes student life since increased diversity and participation in higher education?

• There appears to be a strong commitment to Student Life Departments in the United States. However it is unclear what research or conceptual work preceded the creation of these departments, how successful they have been, what resource implications they have had for the institutions nor how much they differ from each other. A questionnaire is being developed to test these questions and will be circulated to both Student Life Department Representatives and Institutional Research Staff of U.S. institutions.
• The term and applicability of Student Life has yet to be investigated systematically in the context of Europe, New Zealand and Canada. To date the literature review on Student Life has not captured information from these places. Issues to be considered for further investigation should include how Student Life is conceptualised and how student support services are provided?
• Are there universities in Australia other than Deakin attempting to implement a Student Life model for the provision of student support services? If so what are they called? How do they differ from each other? Have they been evaluated?
• Is Student Life being promoted as a concept by the Australasian Council of Union Managers Association (ACUMA)? If so are Student Life activities and concepts becoming increasingly wide spread in the work performed by student organisations with service arms and links to ACUMA?