

A Crash Course in the Praxis of Student Community Development and using Student Engagement as a Key Retention Strategy

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Tighter budgets and increasing demands are putting pressure on tertiary institutions in a time when we are struggling to understand and adjust to the complex needs of our newest generations of students. The ground is shifting beneath us and we are struggling to keep up. One of the trends in this moving landscape is the increasing importance of the Co-Curricular space within tertiary institutions. Many factors including graduate capabilities, employability indicators, student diversity, and the escalation of public education are creating a need to focus on the development of students more holistically. Australian Universities are no longer places that simply develop the future professional or academic. They are now charged with developing the future thinker, leader, citizen and whole person – aspects of which cannot be effectively facilitated in the traditional lecture theatre.

Lessons from our colleagues around the globe are indicating that the student experience is key to student retention and that student engagement equates to persistence and iterates into increasingly engaged alumni (Tinto, 2006; Finke & Finke, 2008; Kuh, 2008; Harper & Quaye 2010; Crisp & Delgado, 2014). So how do we begin to answer this call to build an engaging tertiary experience through the co-curricular space?

This workshop will explore how praxis around student community development and student engagement can become a centre-point for the solutions we are not currently addressed in traditional structures that set the curricular (academic) and extra-curricular (support/community) spaces apart.

Participants in this workshop will have a chance to explore a number of simple but powerful theories and models borrowed from other parts of the world including orientation theory, North American community development praxis, leadership for social change, and broader student development theories. Each of the theories/principles/models covered have proven to be powerful tools in creating significant positive change at the Queensland University of Technology.

Student Retention

Student Development

Student Engagement