Student narratives driving the business of student services: A students as partners approach to quality service delivery

Dr Christie White

Students as partners is a growing trend in tertiary education (Dollinger, Lodge & Coates, 2018). Usually, the process of engaging students in decision-making at the University is most commonly seen in governance functions such as student representatives or in the curriculum and/or learning design and delivery of courses (Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014; Judd, 2019; Judd, Sahama, Morgan & Forde, 2019). There is limited literature that reference the mutual value that service organisations within universities and students can gain by engaging the student narrative in the design and delivery of services. Across the sector, there are excellent examples of student services departments capitalising on the student narrative to improve student outcomes such as in the delivery of services or development of strategy, for example, proactive health campaigns or institutional mental health strategies. Mutually beneficial outcomes can be achieved from, not only listening to our students, but authentically engaging them in the process of design in order to innovate and strategically evolve services (Dollinger, Lodge & Coates, 2018). This presentation will share the journey of implementing a students as partners approach as a case study where student voices, Student Success Leaders, became a key driver of the student services business; where students are at the heart of service design and delivery aiming to “challenge and eliminate power imbalances, as well as contribute to opening dialogue, and questioning preconceived assumptions” (Judd, Sahama, Morgan & Forde, 2019, p.5).

References:


Learning outcomes
- Participants will gain an understanding of the students as partners approach in tertiary contexts, both current theory and application
- Participants will learn the application of the students as partners approach to the student services context
- Participants will leave with a model of strategic student engagement that could be applied within their own contexts

Presenter
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Dr Christie White is the Executive Director of Student Success and Wellbeing at the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) where 32% of the student body are from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Her role is focused on achieving strategic outcomes for the University, enabling students from diverse backgrounds to not only access and participate in higher education but succeed as well. Christie’s portfolio oversees a range of support services including counselling, health and health promotion, disability support, career development, welfare support, multi-faith, and scholarships. Her doctoral research developed a theoretical framework for higher education services to understand success factors for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and assist students from such backgrounds to access support during their studies. Christie is also the President of the Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association Inc. (ANZSSA).