Measuring engagement of students who are experiencing significant academic challenges

Research questions: Do students that attend the Library’s Academic Skills Adviser consultation service achieve an increase in GPA? Are referred students engaging with their unit’s Blackboard (Learning Management System/LMS) site?

Student success & retention @ QUT

QUT’s Student Success Program (SSP) uses a number of indicators to identify students who may be at risk of disengaging from their studies.

For example, the SSP intervenes when:
- First Year students achieve a semester GPA of <4 (out of 7) and continuing students a GPA of <3 or multiple fail grades;
- Students enrol in a unit they have previously failed;
- Students are not engaging with their unit LMS; or
- In selected units when students do not submit or fail assessment.

The Student Success Program (SSP) refers coursework students to the Library’s Academic Skills Adviser (ASA) consultation service. The ASA service provides individual academic study support for referred students.

Literature

“An institutional commitment to enhancing & supporting student engagement can be seen as a measure of the quality of a university” (Nelson, Duncan & Clarke, 2009)

Study Design

Data relating to referrals, consultations, Learning Management System (LMS) hits and GPA was brought together and analysed. The available data range was from 2009 to 2016.

Results – First Year Students

Passing GPA
84.4% of consulted first year students (n=232) had a passing GPA (4 or higher) at the end of semester vs 65% of referred but not consulted first year students (n=51).

Average final GPA
Consulted students had on average a final GPA of 4.87 vs referred but not consulted students (4.27).

Results – Continuing Students

Improved GPA
59.1% of consulted continuing students (n=352) had an improved GPA vs 50% of referred but not consulted students (n=103).

Observations

Consulted students
Necessary to separately identify & analyse for first year students (passing GPA) & continuing students (GPA change).

LMS engagement
There are significant variations in engagement with the LMS for referred students compared to the rest of the students in a unit. Referred students generally access the LMS either much less or more frequently than other students in a unit.

What’s next:

- Dive deeper – Interrogate the data to conduct further analysis of the reports at the course, unit and identifier level
- Investigate engagement opportunities – Identify specific courses and units for engagement with academic staff
- Reach out to others – disseminate the findings to other support for learning areas at QUT

Project team: Joanna Logan (Quality & Planning Manager, Library); Carole Quinn (Manager, Student Success Project); Murray Lane (Student Success & Retention Developer); Nicholas Kays (Team Leader, Development). Thank you to Daniel Mockler & Sominya Bajpai

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