Chapter 6

Thriving Through Relationship Building:
Framing Tomorrow's Success by Enhancing Student Development and Learning

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ABSTRACT

The United States of America is facing a global crisis (COVID-19) that has forced a significant strain on the academic structure and learning environments. From an institutional perspective, this requires more innovation in the approach and well-being of students, especially first-year students. This chapter addresses how living learning centers aided in the support and academic success of students during a global pandemic. The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of how LLCs can impact the success of students as they transition and acclimate to the college setting as first year students. This chapter will also discuss how LLCs can enhance student success efforts in all capacities at institutions across the country.

INTRODUCTION

The United States of America is facing a global crisis (COVID-19) that has placed a significant strain on the academic structure and learning environment. From an institutional perspective, this requires more innovation in the approach and well-being of students, especially first-year students. This requires academic institutions to utilize intense strategic planning processes which are the lifeline to continuous progression within an organization. Some would argue that it is difficult to build and support a com-

munity that is 100% virtual (remote). It is imperative that planning is increased to create a productive learning atmosphere and experience for students when looking at retention and success endeavors amidst unforeseen circumstances. Further, the global pandemic requires enhanced support in areas such as mentoring, programing, and engagement. Issues that arise in a strategic plan often pertain to an institution's organizational mandates, mission, and values (Bryson, 2011). Notably, strategic planning is an organization's process of identifying its strategy and making decisions to enhance its functionality. The context in which specific questions are asked will determine how they affect the creation of ideas for strategic functions and a winning union that creates public value (Bryson, 2011).

During the strategic planning phase, the mission of the organization will either be explicitly or implicitly written, while establishing the best possible plan for the benefit of the organization. Additionally, it is important to investigate all sectors of the educational experience, as higher education administrators start to evaluate the future of post-secondary education. It will either increase or decline, based on the economic management of the organization, especially in higher education. When people make more money, they invest less in education. For example, if you are financially stable without educational credentials you will not see a huge need to pursue an advanced degree. Additionally, the demand for higher education increases when people make less income. In addition, more minorities and people of color are seeking higher education. Thus, an organization's strategic plan should encompass everything required to support and retain students with diverse backgrounds. Higher education institutions with significant impact on individuals are expected to last a lifetime. Although academic institution have been around for centuries, as a society we are in a much more competitive era of academia. In many regards, higher education is becoming the minimum bar for upward mobility in professional careers.

Indiana University is faced with core changes such as economic, societal, and technological which require it to be more focused in actions and resourceful in investments. For the past several years, Indiana University has looked at ways using strategic planning such as the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges/threats (SWOC/T) to reevaluate the industries core mission of education and research improvement. Indiana University has we witnessed great progress, including the implementation of the Bicentennial Strategic Plan to help foster a sense of community amongst faculty, staff, and students. In the volatile political environment of the United States, as a leading institution, Indiana University's vision and voice should match its academic rigor.

The students should have the social and academic support they need to graduate as leaders in the wave of technology, business, social, and political progression; as Indiana University intends to grow and matriculate through the third century at IU. This chapter will reveal high-impact practices (HIPs) and developments within the Jellison Living Learning Center (JLLC) and the Luddy Living Learning Center (LLC) as both successfully navigated the global pandemic with class, dignity, safety, and forward thinking enhancing the student experience despite challenges. Embracing the student experience while elevating the community, despite unforeseen circumstances, takes grit and sacrifice.

CULTURE OF CARE THROUGH HIGH IMPACT PRACTICES

Students are not always aware of the resources available at their institution to help them reach collegiate milestones. "Cultivating caring relationships with students who all too often feel unseen and disconnected from school and the education process is key to reaching those students" (Callahan, 2020). Living Learning Communities allow staff, faculty, and students to break trust barriers that can often lead to

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