

Changing Roles in Student Affairs: A New Landscape for Academia

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Abstract— This paper has been evolved in the backdrop of vibrant and changing paradigms of the responsibilities and functionalities of Student Affairs in academic institutions and it presents the evolving roles of Student Affairs department in the current environment of academia and learning. A new landscape of activities and approach is presented to cater the upcoming demands of students and universities' portfolios. The challenging scenario of personality development, industry requirements, new job trends, skills needed by the corporate sector and the influx of infotainment and information technology are considered while presenting this abstract landscape. This research contribution is crafted in the milieu of experimented techniques and experience gained by the authors. Student Affairs is presented as the hub of activities for the university and one window operation is suggested while discussing the various roles like event management, academic and personal counseling, media and publicity, skill development, physical and emotional quotients enhancement and to act as a liaison between academia and industry .

Keywords- Student Affairs; Education; Management; Personality Quotients; Institute of Space Technology

I. INTRODUCTION

Academia has multifaceted dimensions and it has diverse roles to play. Students and the research executed by them are considered as the product of any university. In the present value-driven and competitive environment, it is a quality requirement that all departments and faculties of any educational institution work in concordance with each other to achieve the higher goals. Institutions are marked and graded by the personality of its students and it is the utmost responsibility of Student Affairs department to inculcate the high personality traits among the students through its coordinated efforts and by performing its appropriate roles and functions; those should be all student-centered.

In 1937, the American Council on Education (ACE) sponsored an invitational conference for educational leaders whose interest in students extended beyond the classroom. The conference resulted in a report, *The Student Personnel Point of View*, which became a foundation document in the field of professional practice known as Student Affairs. A revision of the report was published by ACE in 1949. Both documents helped to create an understanding of the role of student affairs in higher education. In 1987, *A Perspective on Student Affairs: A Statement Issued on the 50th Anniversary of the Student Personal Point of View*, was presented by NASPA - National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) [1], to stimulate greater

understanding of student affairs among leaders in higher education [2]. This paper is the extension of these concepts and ideologies.

Student Affairs (SA) department is considered as the centre of activities in any university or institute, irrespective of its size and population. Traditionally, SA department is concerned with the well being of students in all affairs either it is an administrative, academic, social, physical or psychological requirements of the students. With the dawn of new trends in education and the competitive environment among the educational institutions, new and refined roles of SA have emerged. Presently, nearly all the universities have their Student Affairs department but they are not either fully equipped or efficiently functional with all the required roles and responsibilities. This research paves a way for them to follow this role model for the development of students and institutions.

The concept of mentoring in higher education was first addressed in 1911 by engineering faculty at the University of Michigan[3]. Mentoring involves the domains like psycho-social development, vocational trainings, academic and research support, physical activities, career counseling, social integration and satisfaction. SA is concerned with more than mentoring as it acts as the bridge between student and university administration.

The Handbook of Student Affairs Administration and professional associations, NASPA and ACPA outline the various roles of SA but this paper outlines a new landscape for the academia while highlighting the roles of SA in the new millennium. This paper exclusively outlines the A to Z roles of student affairs and presents the one window operation in which student has to interact with SA only for all its queries and problems. They have to submit their inquiry to SA and it is the responsibility of the SA to resolve all their issues in addition to the provision of counseling and personality development through other activities and plans. SA will act as a router to facilitate the students and to develop the sense of ownership among the students.

This paper presents and elaborates the A to Z roles of SA in section II while Section III highlights SA as a hub to develop personality quotients of the students that includes the intelligence, socio-cultural, emotional, physical, spiritual and aesthetic quotients. Section IV provides the case study of Institute of Space Technology (IST), Islamabad, Pakistan, where the Authors implemented the emerging roles of SA and Section V depicts the one window operation and the role of education management software and total quality

management issues in SA. Section VI concludes the article with some recommendations.

II. A TO Z ROLES OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

SA office has to perform several roles in academia due to the changing environment and demands of the education system and students. Presently, SA is considered as the nucleus of all activities in any university. It is the focal point of all external and internal activities. It is not only concerned with the personality development of the students but also it develops and creates the image and outlook of the university. It is the image builder of the university and its products; the students and the research and publications. The Authors have outlined the following roles and responsibilities of SA in the present scenario.

A. Researcher

SA should act as a Researcher [4] to get the information of its phenomenon; the students. Research should be done at four levels; at the time of university admission, at the middle or half time of their studies completion, at the time of degree award and after getting the job. Research should constitute the qualitative and quantitative analysis about the intellectual, social, physical, emotional, financial, and spiritual quotients of the students. This can be helpful for the SA to design, implement, analyze and upgrade their activities and plans according to the results of those surveys and information.

B. Event Manager

SA is to perform the role of an Event Manager as SA is concerned with managing the events that may include the Receptions, Welcome and Farewell Parties, Orientations, Annual Dinner, Annual Prize Distribution Ceremony, Convocation, Student Competitions, Job Fairs, Open House, Industrial and Excursion Trips, Get-togethers, Sports activities, Inter university competitions, Trainings, Workshops, Conferences, Seminars, Cultural and Musical galas and many more. SA should develop the standard operating procedures for executing the events and it should aptly perform the pre-event and post-event management while following the standards of event management including event designing, budgeting, planning, advertising and executing.

C. Project Manager

SA is related with Planning, Scheduling, Leading, Executing and controlling various projects so SA should be acquainted with the project management skills. SA officials should be the good project managers with high level of inter and intra-personal skills including leadership, communication, coordination and stress management.

D. Public Relation Officer

SA has to act as the public relation officer (PRO) in the present changing times so SA should aptly perform the duties of PRO in order to build the rapport of the university with the outside world including academia, industry, media and general public.

E. Media Coordinator

SA is responsible for the majority of the events related with student and university, so it performs as the Media Coordinator of the university and coordinate and collaborate with print and electronic media for the publicity and image building of the university. SA should be creative and artistic with the sense of aesthetics for portraying the university in media circles.

F. Academic Counselor and Advisor

SA acts as the academic counselor and advises the students about their academic queries and selection of major while analyzing their skills and interests. SA should have the vision about the changing demands of industry and corporate sector and should foresee the future to guide the students.

G. Graphic Designer

SA is concerned with Publications and Publicity of the university and students, so it should have the aesthetics for designing and love for arts. SA should know about the ins and outs of the society, fashion, fade and culture to give a real look to the artistic endeavors.

H. Publications

SA performs the role of Publications expert as it is linked with the university publications like the student magazines, news letter, student hand books, prospectus, project booklets, conference proceedings, seminars and workshops leaflets, information and admission posters etc. SA officials should have the good literary tastes and be the unbiased critic of literature and writings to produce masterpieces of arts.

I. Publicity and Marketing

University's publicity and marketing is the task of SA through students' development and their participation in other universities and forums. SA grooms the students to present university on other platforms while developing their skills and personality. Another area of publicity is by participating in University and Education Exhibitions. SA has to search for the best opportunities for publicity and marketing in terms of different mediums and platforms. SA officials should be equipped with good marketing skills too. SA should design souvenirs and other gadgets of university for promotion purposes.

J. Protocol Officer

SA acts as the Protocol officer for the national and foreign delegations and visitors to the university. SA is the source to develop academic and non-academic linkages of the university. SA officials should have a pleasant personality with basic knowledge about other languages and cultures to communicate cordially with the guests and visitors.

K. Emotional Counselor

SA has the sole responsibility of enhancing the emotional quotient of the students and giving them counseling by creating the friendly environment at the university. The freshman suffer from the home-sickness syndrome and feel

alienated at the start while the final year Students at any university are always posed with some unknown threats and fears of unknowns in the future job scenario and practical professional life and it is the responsibility of SA to soothe them out and do the stress management for them while holding motivational sessions and talks.

L. Industry-Academia Liaison officer

SA acts as the Liaison officer between the industry and the academia. It develops the relationship among the student, faculty and industry for execution of research, internship options and job possibilities. SA arranges meetings between the professionals of academia and industry to develop the environment of research and development and convince the industry for R&D collaborations between academia and university. SA officials should arrange visits to Industry in order to give the true feel of technology and professionalism to the students and to develop a courtesy relationship among the partners.

M. Sports and Leisure

SA develops the physical quotient of the students by creating and managing the sports and leisure activities for the students. The staff of SA should have the sports man ship and should be aware of the significance of sports and leisure activities for the development of a healthy personality.

N. Workshop and Conference Fascillitator

SA organizes skill development workshops, subject seminars and conferences for the intellectual development of students and faculty. These are the best platforms of interaction and socialization in the form of knowledge sharing and innovation. It gives an opportunity to student and faculty to grasp the vision of burgeoning technology, research and skills. It can be the source of creating positive attitude among the students for various cultures, groups and people.

O. Alumni coordinator

SA also acts as a bridge between the graduates and the current student for guidance and harmony in the form of Alumni Coordinator and by arranging different platforms and events to familiarize the both. Alumni can be a source of great motivation for the current students and they can contribute in introducing the fresh graduates with their parent industry and can provide guidance and information about the contemporary technology and research.

P. Internships and Job Hunt

SA acts as the source for providing internships to the students and helps them in job hunt and interview planning. SA should plan sessions to guide students about developing their curriculum vitae and giving them the vision about higher studies and job opportunities. SA coordinates with industry so it can get, demand or create internship options at different public and private organizations.

Q. Career Guidance

Career guidance is the core responsibility of SA and it performs by counseling, workshops, seminars, experts and

by creating the environment for the awareness and learning of the students.

R. Discipline maintainance

SA also makes the rules and regulations for the students in order to observe discipline in the university. SA performs the role of security and safety officer for the students by providing them equal opportunities of life and living. SA ensures that the rights of all students should be protected and no discrimination in the form of age, sex, gender, region, language, ideology, political or religious thoughts is observed.

S. Student Organizations and Societies

SA helps the students in formulating societies, clubs and organizations, for cultivating the sense of owner ship, in the fields of academics, leisure, sports, arts or fun. Student societies and clubs are the best place for socialization and nurturing creativity among the students. It also helps the students to develop their leadership, planning and managerial skills. It empowers the students and prepares them for decision making and risk management. They learn the art of event management and event execution by organizing different events too.

T. Inter-Academia Collaborations

SA is the representation of university in other academic institution as all inter-university correspondence related with student-exchange is done through this department. SA should develop good relations with other universities by arranging several interaction programs to develop a greater knowledge and experience sharing youth community and forum.

U. Problem Solver

SA acts as a problem solver for all the academic and non academic queries and problems of the students. SA should have a friendly disposition and acts as a healing and cure centre for the students where they can share their problems and get the solutions rather than being frustrated and annoying for others.

V. Intra-Uni Assistance

SA provides all intra-university assistance to students. SA is the hub for students to interact with faculty, student advisors, administration, finance or admissions

W. Student-Faculty Bridge

SA acts sometimes as a bridge between faculty and students for coordination and support. SA provides students the link to communicate and collaborate with the faculty for their academics, research and personal matters.

X. Resarch Support

SA provides the research support to students in the form of finding research projects with the faculty or industry. SA arranges internal or external funding for the research projects and sometimes provides the laboratory / experimentation facilities out of campus.

Y. *International Community and Culture*

Globalization has resulted in the increase of foreign student influx in the universities and SA performs this new role of assimilation of culture and providing assistance and facilities to the foreigners. A large number of foreign students are coming to local universities for education and it is another responsibility of SA to provide them basic information about the culture, society, city and country in addition to their academic requirements. SA should take care of their socio-cultural needs and make them familiar and acquainted with the local culture and people.

Z. *Scholarships and Trainings*

SA helps the students to search for scholarship and trainings. SA coordinates with private, public, national and international organizations and industries to seek scholarships fellowships and trainings. SA performs the administrative and legal tasks for getting the scholarships and facilitates the students.

III. STUDENT AFFAIRS: A HUB FOR PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT QUOTIENTS

The traditional three R's of education system are reading, writing and arithmetic but the Arts is added as the fourth R of basic learning and education. SA acts as the centre of Arts and artistic expressions for the students. SA provides the platform to enhance and develop the personalities of the students. The academic formal education is more concerned with the cognitive development but SA facilitates to develop the aesthetics among the students. Apart from the administrative responsibilities, SA is concerned with developing the 'Whole-self' of the students while managing such activities that inculcate awareness, vision, self expression, creativity, positive attitude towards each other, inter and intra-personal skills, communication, team management and leadership traits. Student Affairs develops and upgrades the Intelligence Quotient of the students by arranging workshops, conferences and lectures. The Physical Quotient is enhanced by the sports activities and leisure trips. The formation of different societies, clubs, alumni chapters, inter-university competitions, intra-university events and social gatherings create their socio-cultural and emotional quotients. The spiritual quotient gets its power due to mutual interaction while the financial quotient achieves its bases as the development of whole personality. Student Affairs enriches the Aesthetic quotient of the students through its overall activities, involvement and impressions.

IV. CASE STUDY: INSTITUTE OF SPACE TECHNOLOGY

Institute of Space Technology (IST), Islamabad, Pakistan is a degree awarding institute/University, offering undergraduate and postgraduate Engineering programs in Communication Systems, Aerospace and Materials Sciences and Engineering [5]. The Authors have executed all the roles of SA at Institute of space Technology, Islamabad, Pakistan for two years and have found a significant difference in the rapport of the university and personality building of the students.

SA at IST was the hub of activities during the period of Feb 2008 - Sep 2009. SA cultivated a congenial yet stimulating learning environment on campus. SA established fourteen student societies and clubs in the area of Engineering, Sciences, Arts and Sports. SA executed more than eighty co-curricular events as the event manager in this little duration and developed the atmosphere of creativity and imagination among the students. SA arranged first International conference on Aerospace science and Engineering (ICASE 2009) at IST and also performed the role of protocol officer for the foreign delegates. SA celebrated the World Space Week (WSW 2008) as a community service at IST and created awareness among the masses about space technology and ranked in top five all over the world.

SA applied the role of researcher and got the data about all the students while planning and managing the events and activities at IST. SA implemented the principles of Total Quality Management in all its affairs by developing the standard operating procedures with student-centered approach. SA worked on the concept of "whole self" of the students and inculcated the sense of ownership, love and leadership among the students. SA empowered the students for managing the events with their own leadership and imaginative skills. SA implemented the awards and punishment rules to enhance the abilities of the students and also managed the events like convocation ceremony and the annual prize distribution ceremonies.

SA started the annual and quarterly student magazines to activate their intellect and make them a contributor in the field of literature and writings. SA also published the quarterly Newsletter to highlight the academic and co-curricular activities of the university. SA acted as a liaison between Research and development organizations and academia for the research collaborations, student projects, industrial visits, Internships, scholarships & grants and job opportunities for the students. SA worked for the Professional Development of students by arranging technology seminars and managerial / general life skills development workshops. SA initiated the Alumni chapter online and also arranged get-together for creating an environment of interconnection and solidarity among the pass-outs and the present students. SA started an Inter-University Challenge competition (IIUTCC) for creating the platform for youth of different universities to share their ideas and visions. SA also worked on the development of physical muscles of the students by creating various sports and leisure activities. SA also worked on the cosmetics of the university by introducing designing and arts at different levels, either it was for publication, information or for publicity and admission campaigns.

IST was the test bed for Authors to implement the A to Z roles of SA and have found a tremendous change in the image of university and in the personality traits of the students through various surveys and questionnaires at different times under the role of researcher. It has been observed that for quality education and for the conducive learning environment, SA should perform its roles and duties efficiently and effectively.

The Authors have observed that selection and recruitment of the staff for Student Affairs department needs extra vigilance and care as this job needs multifunctional and multidimensional personality traits. The officials should have artistic plus managerial skills. They should be aware of the advancement of different disciplines and at the same time aware about the socio-psycho and cultural trends and needs of the students. SA managers must possess the communication and leadership skills with strong acumen for event and project management. The unbiased and cosmopolitan attitude adorns the SA professional and makes him a friend to the students where they can grow with the sense of ownership and with contribution.

V. ONE WINDOW OPERATION

The changing roles of SA dictate “one window operation” for the effective mentoring and development of the students. This concept was implemented at IST, Pakistan using the Student Affairs Management Software (SAMS), specifically developed by the IT department of the University. One Window operation is developed on the idea that all students should contact SA for their academic, non-academic, social, psychological, emotional, physical, health, housing/mess, commutation, administrative, jobs, scholarships, internships, research, trainings, student societies/clubs and all other related issues and they get the response from the SA within specified time. This is shown pictorially in fig. 1 below.

One window operation is controlled by the SAMS, that is accessed by all the students and they can email their queries and request to the SA and it is the responsibility of the SA to analyze the query and send it to the respective department and present the solution to the student through email within given time or update the student about the latest developments regarding his/her query. This one-window operation has streamlined the SA activities and created the sense of satisfaction among the students. This model can be tailored according to any existing set-up of any educational institution.

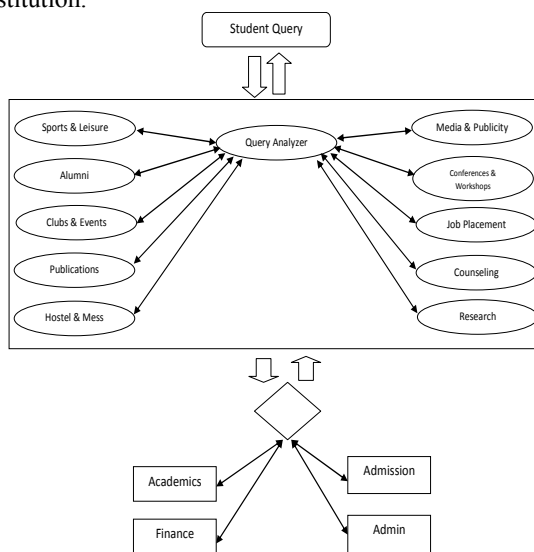


Figure 1. One-Window Operation.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research contribution is the result of two years extensive experimentation and implementation of different roles of Student Affairs at Institute of Space Technology, Pakistan by the Authors. The changing trends of educational environment and increasing emphasis on the personality development of the students and professionals and due to the high competitive demands by the employer, Authors have suggested the A to Z roles of Student Affairs and presented the idea of one window operation for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the SA. This research revealed the importance of SA in enhancing the intellectual, emotional, social, physical, aesthetic, financial and spiritual quotients of the students and suggested SA to act as a liaison between student, faculty, administration, outside world, academia and industry.

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