BulSU's Undergraduate Retention Program

Rationale

The quality of a university's educational experience is measured in part by undergraduate student retention and graduation rates. Hanover Research (2010) reported that the high level of retention, success and completion of students are highly correlated with institutional effectiveness in delivering what students expect, need and want. Thus, the need for a Student Retention Program arises from the university's commitment to our students in providing quality higher education by ensuring that they will have the best chance to successfully complete the courses and programs in which they enroll.

The Proposed Undergraduate Retention Program works to build a support system that fosters equitable opportunities for all different types of students. There is an evident need for more robust programs to enhance retention and graduation rates including the quality of life that students experience inside the university. There is also a distinct need to better serve students especially now that everyone is living in the shadow of this global pandemic. The University more than ever is committed to providing support, engagement and motivation to all our students so they may thrive in their chosen academic programs and achieve academic success. The Bulacan State University takes pride in its institutional success and shared responsibility for retention, inclusion, and fostering a sense of belonging among students, alumni, faculty and staff including the administration.

A. Objectives

1. To create a consistent and effective student retention program geared to improve educational experiences of students through referral, advice and support in relation to their well-being, academic progress, and career development.

2. To deliver comprehensive plans of actions which include purposeful programs, events, services, and activities that promote student development within and beyond the classroom.

B. The Undergraduate Retention Programs

1. The College/Campus Retention Program Task Force (CRPTF)

1.1. Function and Responsibility

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A College Retention Program Task Force (CRPTF) will be created by each college/campus to provide students with adequate educational experience in order to improve the quality of student life and learning. This task force will be composed of selected faculty and students who will assist in the implementation of the University's Retention Policy and Program. This task force is meant to support and coordinate with the different colleges/campuses in order to scout experts to provide expertise in various areas of service at the college including extension, training, advocacy, mentorship, and academic support.

1.2. College/Campuses Retention Program Coordinator

Under the CRPTF program is the designation of the College/Campuses Retention Program Coordinator to head the CRPTF who will initiate the coordination and implementation of the Undergraduate Retention Program in their respective academic units. The peculiarity of the different programs of the different colleges necessitates a unique approach to the university's retention program, thus the Retention Program Coordinator is tasked to do the following:

- **Advise.** Provide comprehensive advising to not only on students' academic needs but also on their personal concerns
- **Advocacy.** Advancing equitable treatment of students in the college system and beyond through internal and external advocacy. Internal advocacy works primarily through the participation and leadership of the task force. External advocacy would come in the form of networking and relationship-building with other units, departments, colleges and universities on best practices for serving the underprivileged students.
- **Training.** Providing support in the development and implementation of college or campus trainings on student challenges whether academic or non-academic.

it is recommended that the College/Campuses Retention Program be deloaded by three (3) units as head of the CRPTF.

2. Academic Support Program (ASP)

2.1. Purpose of the Program.

Retention literature reveals that academically unprepared students are more drop-out prone. Academic institutions should ensure that students have all the opportunities to acquire the skills/competencies needed for academic success. Academic support programs can improve students' chances of finishing the program and become successful in their field. This Academic Support Program is designed to help students who are experiencing academic difficulty and academic-related problems through the use of assessment, remediation, and advising to help students identify, examine, and resolve the underlying causes of their academic difficulty. There will be two types of academic support programs available in the University.

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2.2. Types of Academic Support Program

a. Academic Mentor-Assisted Study Support (AMASS)

The Academic Mentor-Assisted Study Support (AMASS) allows students to meet individually or in small groups with an academic mentor to plan strategies for their academic success throughout college. The academic mentor may create a student road map that sets academic and career-related goals to help guide students towards the completion of their degree. The academic mentor may also provide workshops regarding time management, learning strategies, study skills, stress management and preparation for taking examinations.

b. Peer-Assisted Study Support (PASS)

PASS is an academic support program that will offer peer assistance especially for challenging academic courses. The college should identify potential students who have strong academic credentials and who could serve as peer mentors. In the PASS a weekly study session will be scheduled where students compare notes, discuss readings, develop tools, share learning experiences and learn study skills that will help them achieve academic success in a friendly environment. The study sessions will be facilitated by peer mentor leaders who have previously and successfully taken the course as recommended by the college. The peer mentor must exhibit attributes worthy of emulation by other students in the college.

We are looking at the possibility of providing scholarships for peer mentor leaders through the Office of Student Scholarships, the SSC/LSC, as well as the PTA. Continuous consultations with various offices in the university are also being made to provide possible honoraria or allowance if the scholarship option is not available.

c. **Library Services Program**: The LSP provides resources, skill development programs (within and parallel to curriculum), services and spaces that enable student academic success. Online resources include Research and Learning Online, library guides, reading lists, databases, electronic books and journals. Experts are available to help students develop a range of research and learning skills through individual consultations. The Library Services may also deliver free face to face classes or online consultation during this pandemic on a range of research and learning skills including expectations at university, time management, academic research, writing and communication, and exam preparation.

3. Academic Advising

Advising provides the most significant mechanism by which students can directly interact with an academic adviser in the program and clarify their academic, educational or career goals as well as relate these goals to academic offerings. Academic advising will provide students with information and resources so they will have a clear understanding of academic requirements, policies and procedures so as to graduate on time. While many models of advising now exist, a

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critical element to advising is ensuring that students are connected to those faculty who will advise and guide them throughout their academic experience and help them meet their academic and career goals.

Academic advisers will also be in-charge of advising students who would like to shift to another program whether inside or outside their college. They will also address similar issues through a series of scheduled individual or group sessions.

4. Re-Entry Interview

In the context of BulSU, returning students or students planning to re-enter the university under the same or new program should meet the college secretary or program chair to discuss the reasons for leaving and returning to the college. The re-entry interview will help students to decide and create goals and map out a completion plan for the chosen programs.

5. BulSU e-Learning Community Program (BulSU eLCP)

The BulSU e-Learning Community Program is a forward-thinking, participatory and proactive approach to undergraduate retention during this global pandemic. It is designed to facilitate a successful e-learning or online community to promote positive academic experiences and share challenges that students are possibly experiencing especially in an online learning environment. This program also aims to help students in the transition and adjustment to this new normal college life. This may be created via Facebook Community or Facebook Page which may be private to ensure that only bonafide students enrolled in the university may join through a verification process. Posts and comments will be reviewed and screened by the page management team to guarantee a safe online environment.

C. Availment of the Undergraduate Retention Program

The availment of the program will be based on referral by the class adviser. Not all programs will be available to everyone in its first phase of implementation. Delinquent students will be prioritized to ensure that they will receive the support they need within the college.

D. References

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*** *The guidelines were approved by the EXECOM during its meeting held last February 24, 2021.*