



POLICY

Higher Education Staff and Faculty Working in Learning Assistance-Related Fields

TOPIC: Learning Assistance

Authors: Schotka, R. and Bailey, G. (2023)

General Statement: Postsecondary faculty and staff working in learning assistance-related fields (e.g., academic support, tutoring, mentoring, coaching, academic accommodations, remediation, and developmental education) strongly endorse the need for sustainable programming and secure funding in order to ensure access to services and enhance students' pathway to academic success.

Specifically, that:

- Learning assistance programs are uniquely positioned to be both dynamic and responsive to the evolving needs of postsecondary education and student learners.
- Learning assistance has a rich pedagogical history consistent with the best educational research. Learning assistance programs often pilot innovative pedagogy before it is adopted in the mainstream and should be rewarded for risk-taking in an age of accountability where "business as usual" is unacceptable.
- Individualized, small and large group learning outside of the classroom supports students' efforts to achieve their short and long-term educational goals. Engagement in a variety of academic support services allows them to grasp challenging course content while increasing their self-confidence, motivation, persistence, and willingness to embrace new learning strategies in order to achieve their academic goals.
- Tutoring, as part of intentionally-designed and collaborative learning¹ experiences from trained and evaluated staff, is considered a high-impact practice that positively influences students' academic success and institutional retention efforts.
- The very nature of academic support in the 21st century involves a level of customization on each campus that directly ties to their unique setting, student demographics, and the prioritization and value placed on student success.
- Learning assistance programs have grown over the past several decades to meet the needs of increasingly diverse student populations in higher education, at both public and private postsecondary institutions. They are uniquely positioned to provide comprehensive academic support to first-generation students, low-income populations, historically marginalized students, English Language Learners, adult and traditional-aged

¹ Kuh, G. D. (2008). High-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter. American Association of Colleges and Universities: Washington, D.C.

learners, part-time versus full-time students, and students with a range of disabilities and mental health challenges.

- Learning assistance programs both facilitate and support student learning and content mastery both outside of class and through targeted services embedded in the curriculum (such as PAL, SI and embedded tutoring).
- Learning assistance staff partner with faculty to help support the teaching and learning needs in today's college classroom, which includes both neurodiverse and neurotypical populations.
- Iterative and purposeful assessment helps ensure that students' learning support needs are being met and contributes to the fulfillment of the institutional mission through efficient and cost-effective practices. Institutional research, both formative and summative, helps shape how academic support is offered at the institutional level.
- Institutions benefit from investing fiscal resources and staffing towards learning assistance programs, which demonstrate the greatest impact on student learning and student success metrics. In doing so, the institution fulfills its mission, fosters equity, and facilitates opportunities for social mobility for its graduates.
- Learning assistance programs merit sustainable funding not only to support the delivery of current academic support services but also deliver cutting edge, innovative, and responsive services that facilitate the ability to scale up to more broadly serve our campus communities.
- Learning assistance programs contribute in direct and tangible ways to critical student success metrics at each institution as well as providing a direct return on investment (ROI) in the form of increased tuition dollars, retention rates, and graduation rates.

Therefore: Organizations representing faculty and staff affiliated with learning assistance in higher education support sustainable funding levels that facilitate growth and change in order to keep pace with the evolving demographics and needs of the students we serve and the populations we embrace.

"Student-ready colleges take an intentional, systemic, holistic, and transformative approach to ensuring student learning and ensuring that every student receives what is needed to be successful." (McNair, p.6, 2022²)

² McNair, T. B. (2022). *Becoming a student-ready college: A new culture of leadership for student success* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass: Hoboken, NJ.