Special Supplement

In order to reflect the importance of the impact of and innovative responses to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the editors have prepared this Special Supplement. It is a stand-alone section of the book.

Life in the time of COVID-19
Higher education Student Affairs and Services responses to a worldwide pandemic – short-term and longer-term challenges and opportunities

Authors:

Annette Andrews | Bekele W. Ayele | Lisa Bardill-Moscaritolo | Stephanie Deveze-Delaunay Michael Handford | Keith B. Humphrey | Shafiul Islam | Roger B. Ludeman | Qi Li Adriana Perez-Encinas | Tiina Piipponen | Vianna Renaud | Birgit Schreiber | Robert Shea Louise Staunton | Juan Williams-Kudin

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Overview

Birgit Schreiber
Roger B. Ludeman

At no time has higher education been so comprehensively impacted as it has been by the COVID-19 pandemic, demanding complex and innovative responses. The effects of this global pandemic can be found in countries, communities, and on campuses everywhere, causing unique educational, economic and social challenges and deepening existing ones. Student Affairs and Services (SAS), students, institutions, living and learning communities and higher education stakeholders are compelled to innovate and collaborate more effectively, especially across borders and regions, to mitigate the impact of this crisis on education, society, culture, attitudes and practices.

There are over 50,000 tertiary education colleges, universities and institutes worldwide serving 200 to 300 million students and communities. The impact of this pandemic is of epic proportions and institutions are scrambling to find ways to continue the learning and development process and doing so in a safe environment for students, teaching faculty, administrative staff, and support staff. Some institutions will not survive this crisis. Others will be forced to reinvent, retool and rethink their mission and how they deliver on their goal to educate, conduct research, and provide a meaningful service to society and advance social justice in their communities and the globe.

Student Affairs and Services (SAS) practitioners and scholars, the subjects of this book, have now been challenged to respond to this crisis in ways that innovate and invent new avenues, to continue to preserve their efforts to meet student needs, to enhance student learning and development, and to advance social justice for all.

This Special Supplement will focus on perspectives from around the world describing the efforts of SAS to innovate to deliver services, design educational programs, and continue to champion equality, inclusion, human rights and social justice within their higher education contexts. The reports in this special supplement focus on unique consequences of COVID-19: changes in learning outcomes and research priorities; changes in SAS status, with emboldening SAS in some regions, while outsourcing in others; tensions between institutional autonomy and regulatory bodies; concerns about how to promote EU goals of social inclusion and collaboration in times of reduced mobility; worries about the deep schism between student groups and our concern that COVID-19 is causing wider divides. There are also amazing opportunities to accelerate online access and to innovate around original ways to reaching and developing students, it also appears that countries who have experiences social-political or other crises are somewhat better equipped to deal with this global crisis situations.

All regions share the concern about how to care for students adequately and ensure their return, if possible, to a safe home. They are concerned about maintaining services if not with facemasks then remotely, and are concerned about students' visas, accommodation and health care. The concerns is about COVID-19 driving our students back into homes which are sometimes not safe, into communities which are not always aligned with goals of higher education. COVID-19 is also depriving some of our students of work study opportunities, casual and part-time work, which provide essential income to many of our students.

Apart from these more obvious challenges around student wellness and teaching and learning continuity, we are aware of the risks that SAS is focusing mainly on crisis responses, essentializing SAS to a narrow range of response services which aim to provide a service to the pragmatic aspects around learning.

The COVID-19 crisis has laid bare the inequalities in our education system. When we confidently hoped that education would be a social equalizer and a social mobility avenue, we are now staring in the face of the deep rifts between the connected and the unconnected. But it is not only the access to internet connection that is dividing our world. We are also divided on issues of access to facilities and resources, clean water, safe homes and adequate health care. We are also divided on issues of institutional autonomy and regulatory bodies, on political control of our institutions and funding formulas, and institutional and student readiness for innovation.

COVID-19 has increased our fear: fear of contagion, which has led to a contagion of fear. Fear of each other. A fear that we may not be able to mitigate with online chats, webinars or learning platforms, a fear that we may not able to address when students hunch over their keyboards.

When studying at higher education institutions is reduced to mastering content, then the overall aims of higher education are missed. When engaging with tertiary education, students should develop

a consciousness of their role as agents in social justice, leadership awareness and competencies, critical thinking and acting, and an appreciation for inclusion, diversity and pluralism. The assertion is not that this cannot be developed elsewhere, but that many opportunities of student development are missed when the university experience and teaching and learning are reduced to an online engagement. These are the real challenges for SAS – how do we advance these graduate attributes and competencies when online learning of modularized learning units becomes the norm? How do we utilize the COVID-19 crisis as a student, staff and institutional learning experience?

This has become the challenge for the post-Covid-19 world: how do we ensure our students become agents of social justice, develop a sense of belonging and empowerment to be part of knowledge creation, and ultimately develop the kind of attributes that equip them to shape the world into a shared place where fear of the other is replaced by care for each other.

This is the time for SAS to shape and offer solutions, give direction and support to imagine the post-COVID-19 world as one world, where we share risks around crisis, share resources to combat crisis and advance social justice so that we are all equitably equipped to face the next crisis.

In the following supplement, a selection of authors was asked to offer perspectives of SAS in their contexts: Australia and New Zealand; Asia with a focus on China and Bangladesh; Europe with a focus on the UK, France, Spain, Finland and Ireland; Africa with reports from Ethiopia; the USA and Canada, and South America with a reflection from Chile.

The USA and Canada

USA: Fast forward to a new normal

Keith B. Humphrey

In the frenetic pace of moving services to a virtual environment, helping staff transition to working from home, and emptying our residence halls it is essential to ensure that our students are learning from the changes brought about by the pandemic. The learning may not be from the well-articulated learning outcomes that guided our efforts pre-pandemic, but learning is happening in the moment and we need to utilise this opportunity for the lessons it can bring us.

Student Affairs and Services (SAS) staff have always been among the most flexible professionals on campus and are used to having their role changed based on the prevailing conditions on campus. In this new "fast forward" environment the ability to be nimble and pivot quickly will benefit both the student and the campus that they serve. And, the contributions made through this flexibility will further solidify the importance of SAS to the smooth functioning of any college or university.

College students have always faced challenges that prompt resiliency, but the pandemic opens up new challenges and exacerbates long-standing issues in the United States. Students will be facing challenges related to cost of attendance as personal and family incomes change, meaningful engagement with their peers that define the personal development experiences of an on-campus experience, and potential widening of the stratification that occurs in higher education between the haves and have nots. These issues are particularly prevalent in the United States as higher education becomes more of a privilege than a right in our society. The rapid shift to online learning and engagement can unintentionally leave behind students who do not have the technology or connectivity to be successful in a virtual environment. Student Affairs and Services staff on many campuses have

been redeployed into traditional "case management" roles, calling every single student on their campuses to check-in, see how they are doing with the transition to online learning, and ensuring that they have the technological resources to succeed. The campuses with the most financial resources are able to provide students with technology and hot-spots to remain connected. Others are opening their parking lots so that students can sit in their cars and utilize campus Wi-Fi to take classes. The difference in learning outcomes can be staggering in this environment and the impact of the gap will not be known for years to come.

This moment puts a renewed emphasis on the leadership that SAS professionals place on social justice. Being vocal advocates for the under-served students will become even more of a high priority for professionals. Their roles are likely to become much more focused on traditional social work problems of housing and food insecurity, child-care, and taking steps to reduce poverty through programming. Student development can't be side-lined by social work, and finding the sweet spot where both principles can coexist and support each other is essential to that every student succeeds and earns their degree.

Canada: Student Affairs and Services (SAS) making significant contributions

Robert Shea

The pandemic commonly referred to as COVID-19 has facilitated an unprecedented higher education conversation across Canada. A conversation about the relevance, delivery medium, cost, value, and quality of a university and college education. This conversation has not only been the purview of academic, institutional leaders and students but rather external community members, government, parents, students, not for profit and for profit enterprises and think tanks. This conversation goes to the foundation of what we value as student services practitioners, including student engagement, student leadership, student development, social justice, equity, financial aid, and enrolment management services to name just a few. These discussions have highlighted the value of our daily work but are also a call for us to develop a medium through which to continue the discussion.

While many people in our communities have suffered both physically, socially and psychological there were many heroes around us. The value of student services work is better understood on many of our campuses. In an unprecedented move the Government of Canada pledged 9 billion dollars towards student employment and support programs for students impacted by a lack of summer, part time and work integrated learning employment opportunities (Usher, 2020). This realization of a need for investment in our student summer and work integrated learning needs is borne from the work that occurs daily on each of our campuses around financial support, student employment and career development.

In the early days of pandemic planning in Canada the focus was the support and safety of our university and college student community. In mid semester student services practitioners facilitated the safe movement of thousands of university and college students from student housing. Cooperative education/work integrated experiential learning placements, and study aboard placements. It was not just the support and safety of students that became the raison d'etre of student affairs and services in Canada. The COVID-19 pandemic began to highlight the amazing core competencies and skills of student services professionals. The value of student services to the post – secondary education community was highlighted and heightened.

When leaders of institutions were deciding how to navigate the complexities of moving classes from face-to-face and bricks and mortar to new avenues, they quickly realized they needed much

more information. Student affairs and services professionals effortlessly entered the discussions on student engagement in remote learning, equity of access to online learning platforms, and the importance of student engagement … all with a student development lens.

The future is uncertain, time will tell. But one thing is for certain. If Student Affairs and Services is going to maintain the considerable recognition it so deserves student service professionals must reflect on the value they bring to the table during this unprecedented time. To maintain the recognition, appreciation and understanding of SAS on our campuses our profession needs to ensure its value and place for many years to come. It is up to student service leaders, individual professionals, national and international associations to document the innumerable impacts Student Affairs and Service brought to the academic, research, and public engagement missions of our institutions.

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   http://higheredstrategy.com/coronavirus-20-so-that-student-support-package/

Asia with a focus on China and Bangladesh

China: The impact of COVID-19 on China's Higher Education, a catalyst for change

Qi Li

In the wake of COVID-19, college and university campuses are closed, classes are taught online, and there are many unknowns as faculty and students plan for the next semester. COVID-19 has caused considerable disruption, upheaval, and uncertainty; however, it can be catalytic for developing adaptations and coping mechanisms for institutions of higher education (IHE) to better manage crisis in the future.

First, COVID-19 has shed light on effective crisis management strategies. Specifically, the Chinese government has been playing a primary role in coping with the pandemic. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China set up a Central Leading Group to deal with COVID-19. So did the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the IHE across the country. Currently, in every institution, there is such a leading group at the institutional level, functioning as the decision-making entity to address COVID-19, with a subordinate one at the college level. This structural design is conducive to a rapid centralized response and a clear line of command. Other effective strategies include closing campus, staying home, mandatory reporting of personal health and geographic information, and more. Given that more than 70 % of public health emergencies in China took place in K-12 and collegiate settings and over 80 % of these occurrences were infectious diseases (Qiu & Li, 2007), the foregoing strategies have significant implications for IHEs.

Second, COVID-19 has changed the traditional role and function of online classes in higher education. To reduce the negative impact of COVID-19 on learning, the MOE has made 24,000 free online courses available to IHEs nationwide on 22 education platforms jointly developed over the years by the MOE and large 'ed-tech' companies. Some top-tier IHEs have made their MOOC Demo courses accessible to other institutions. Meanwhile, colleges and universities across the country moved classes online and experimented with online platforms, such as Tencent Meeting, Zoom, and ClassIn, to name a few. While it is still early to evaluate the effectiveness of online classes, this practice is clearly effective in coping with the disruption and accomplishing the policy goal of "disrupted class, but

undisrupted learning." What impact will online classes have on student learning outcomes? Can online classes achieve long-term sustainability? This type of questions must be answered before policy makers and higher education leaders can strategize future directions of online classes after COVID-19.

Third, COVID-19 has created a new normal in student affairs and services divisions (SAS). To adapt to an entirely virtual campus, SAS have moved programs and services online. Based on interviews with students and staff, this new normal requires the SAS staff to be familiar with WeChat, Zoom, Tencent Meeting etc. so that they can build an information hub and online community for students and engage them, collectively or individually, whenever needed. It also requires the SAS staff to be service oriented and to stay responsive to their student needs. Overall, this new normal is characterized with the following major features: detecting, checking, and reporting any symptoms related to COVID-19 in student groups; monitoring online classes to identify students most in need of financial, technological, academic, or emotional support; making emergency funds available to those from families affected by COVID-19 or those who cannot afford computers or internet access at home; and hosting virtual career fairs, providing training, and posting job openings for graduating students.

In short, COVID-19 has drastically changed teaching, learning, and social life in higher education. While it has caused disruptions and uncertainty, it is also catalytic for long-lasting change. Given the relative high incidence of public health emergencies in college and university settings, it is all the more important that colleges and universities across the country have an effective crisis management plan in place to minimize potential risks and liabilities. Higher education, as well as SAS, need to dynamically engage with the new opportunities created by this global pandemic.

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Bangladesh: The impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education: A drastic need for Student Affairs and Services

Md. Shafiul Islam

The tensions between the regulatory-government bodies and the private and public institutions of higher education became one of the focal points of discord during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The national Ministry of Education is responsible to look after the tertiary level education which presently includes 52 public universities[1] and 105 private universities[2] run by private entrepreneurs or board of trustees.

The Ministry of Education declared closure of all educational institutions on March 18, 2020, and requested the tertiary level higher educational institutions (HEIs) authorities to prepare for teaching-learning activities using online platform.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh is considered the apex body to oversee all activities of both public and private higher educational institutes in Bangladesh. But, in fact, it has no regulatory authority rather than `advising' or `recommending' for improving the activities.

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1 Public university means the government of Bangladesh provides all necessary funds to meet the expenditures of the universities
2 Private university means the government of Bangladesh does not provide any funds. It is run by private entrepreneurs/board of trustees/ board of governors

In the pandemic Covid-19, the UGC could not play any vital role in higher education due to its legal limitations. But, in the meantime, a decision over adopting online teaching-learning activities by private higher educational institutions, taken by the UGC caused controversy. The authorities of private universities had shown interest on going to online teaching-learning activities but the UGC went against it and instructed the private HEIs `not to go' online during COVID-19 situation in the country. It is assumed that the UGC's instruction came, apprehending mal practice and low quality of some private HEIs as there are wide allegations about poor quality education against some private HEIs in Bangladesh.

Later, the UGC came back from the decision and went in favor of online teaching-learning activities for HEIs in the country, considering impacts of COVID-19 on higher education due to prolonged closure.

On the other hand, no public universities have shown interest on adopting online teaching-learning activities during this long unexpected closure period, except forming a committee on 'Online Education Learning Policy' and conducting a questionnaire survey, the UGC could not make any remarkable decision in this regard.

While there are no 'typical' SAS at Bangladesh Universities there are some service provisions for students. There are administrative units, such as 'Student Adviser' at Rajshahi University[3], and 'Teacher-Student Centre' both at Dhaka University[4] and Rajshahi University. At the Rajshahi University authority opened a web site about coronavirus and through its ICT Centre issued different awareness information and advice. The academic activities were suspended on March 18 2020 and it continues till further instruction.

Every university in Bangladesh has a number of residential dormitories related to the campus. The dormitories were closed due to COVID-19 situation. The students were instructed to vacate dormitories by March 22 2020 of all public universities. So far it is observed that no initiatives have been undertaken for the welfare of students by the authorities of dormitories. There is no such provision to support students during such situations in the country. The closure of dormitories was thus a primarily administrative process without much attention given to assisting or supporting students around the challenges this caused.

The challenges around 'working from home' are mainly around that there has not been any 'work from home' culture and this requirement has thus caused much stir among the academic and administrative staff of the higher education institutions. At present the HEIs do not have infrastructural facilities and staff lack the technical know-how to work from home.

Even though the UGC advised the academic and faculty staff of public universities to use online platforms for teaching-learning activities this was only sporadically taken up by staff and students and only partially recognized by institutions. Considering the logistical and infrastructural facilities, teachers of public universities believe that the public universities are not ready for using 'online platform' teaching-learning activities in the country. In addition, the socio-economic conditions of students of public universities are also important factors for consideration, causing almost insurmountable challenges for the use of online facilities for teaching, development and support.

Time is required for HEIs in Bangladesh to ready themselves and their students to use online platforms for teaching-learning and the authorities of HEIs should take steps to support this development, not on for the immediate COVID-19 crisis, but also for the post-COVID-19 Teaching and Learning.

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3 Established in 1953 in the northern part of the country
4 Established in 1921, located at the capital of Bangladesh

Middle East with a report from the United Arab Emirates

The United Emirates with a report from the American University of Sharjah

Lisa Bardill-Moscaritolo

In the United Arab Emirates (UAE) the Ministry of Education (MOE) guides teaching and learning decisions. On February 28, the MOE announced that no educational institutions could hold sports activities, competitions, and gatherings on-campus or off-campus of more than three people to limit the possibility of spreading the Coronavirus. Student travel was canceled as well as campus events and activities. Indoor fitness centers were closed, and Student Affairs and Services worked with students in the student center and residence halls to abide by social distancing and other safe hygiene practices. Student Affairs continues to work with the student organizations and student government leaders moving activities and projects to a virtual platform and to help students stay connected to their respective universities and to each other.

A week later, the MOE decided to suspend classes for four weeks and move to a remote learning period for most of March and possibly resume after spring break. Student Affairs created flexible and adaptable options for what would come next and how these options would impact residential students and those who left for spring break return. Ultimately on April 2, it was announced schools would remain closed for the remainder of the spring semester.

Many students across the UAE could not travel home since the ratio of international students to local students on college campuses is 48.6 % which is "one of the highest in the world" (Kamal & Trines, 2018, para. #22). The American University of Sharjah, for instance, was ranked by Times Higher Education as the number one university in the world with the most significant international student population of 84 % (Minsky, 2018). With a large international population, staff was highly involved in helping students manage travel restrictions, travel quarantine, and communicating changing curfew timings, and Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) necessary when leaving campus or on campus to ensure their health and well-being.

Overall, students comply with UAE laws and directives, so the level of respect demonstrated to the Student Affairs for the most part was respectful even when decisions impacted their comfort. For example, alcohol is prohibited on all college campus in the UAE. In Sharjah one of the seven UAE Emirates is the most conservative emirate and there are 'decency guidelines' (Masudi & Ali, 2013) that in turn impact university policies such as curfew timings, a dress code, and inappropriate contact between males and females. Given this regulatory background, the Covid-19 rules were an extension of how social engagement is guided.

Services like food and other retail outlets became more limited as the pandemic went on because of the limits of essential staff and third-party vendors that could come to campuses. In the UAE, it is a way of life, to have food delivered from a diversity of restaurants via motorbikes with a food box attached. Along with local directives on food safety and handling, creating new guidelines on how residential students can accept deliveries was one of the ways SAS managed the community's safety. To understand the magnitude of deliveries in UAE, 60 % of customers use delivery apps, and 87 % of restaurants are listed on these apps, compared to the US, where 18 % of customers use delivery apps (Lewis, 2018).

UAE offers many entrepreneurship and leadership opportunities for students, and many of these moved to a virtual platform, so students can still compete. Universities continue career fairs and internship activities and enrollment events with the best technology platforms.

The MOE has not decided how students will learn in the coming fall semester. Likely universities will operate online or in a blended learning approach with a low-density model. Student Affairs should embrace the remote learning tools for a blended approach to student services and student affairs programs and education, using both in-person and digital platforms to enhance student learning and development. Students value the time they have on college campuses, and SAS is eager to feel the energy of a vibrant campus, but the hope is as we return to the university life we love, we need to remember and adapt those lessons post COVID19.

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Australia and New Zealand

Australia and New Zealand: COVID-19 government and Higher Education: Swift responses and a shift in student population

Annette Andrews

In Australia and New Zealand[5], COVID-19 consequences due to border closures[6], quarantine, isolation and social distancing are producing multiple challenges[7][8] for students and the higher education sector. Significant job losses are predicted[9]. Some independent HE providers are concerned about viability[10]. COVID-19 ramifications have impacted enrolments, on-campus attendance, course costs, pedagogical frameworks, the student experience, Student Affairs and Services (SAS) resourcing and business models challenged to rely less on international enrolments and students seeking the on-campus experience.

As the pandemic escalated, international students, without funds adequate for 6 months, were encouraged to repatriate to their home country. Repatriation flights were also organized post border

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5   This report focuses primarily on Australia and New Zealand as CO-VID-19 cases in Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Tonga and amongst the islands of the Pacific remain low and no reports on the impact in the higher education sector in these countries were available. See: news report: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/13/coronavirus-in-the-pacific-weekly-briefing (13/05/2020)

6   https://www.voanews.com/science-health/coronavirus-outbreak/australia-closes-borders-response-coronavirus-crisis

7   In Australia forecasts predict an $8 billion hit over time with more than $3 billion predicted for 2020

8   https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/409632/how-coronavirus-could-cost-our-universities-and-polytechs-100m

9   https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/media-item/uni-union-talks/

10 https://www.theeducatoronline.com/he/news/covid19-how-are-universities-responding/270329

closures. Commencing and returning students were invited to study online from home or suspend their enrolment. Universities, Polytechnics, Technical and Further Education institutions suspended on-campus classes, delayed semester commencement and rapidly enhanced the breadth and depth of online learning and teaching (curriculum, assessment, tutorial support, learning resources)[11]. Face to face student services were 'paused' and service delivery relied on web-based resources, email, telephone consultations and video conferencing. Laboratory based research was suspended. Staff and postgraduate research students were required to 'work from home'. Universities rapidly uploaded their full course catalogue for online delivery achieving in months what might otherwise have taken years.

Both nations experienced the loss of economic advantage bestowed by the international students' contribution to the local economy[12]. Disruption to 'business as usual' resulted in resources for student welfare being provided by governments[13][14][15][16]. Web directories pointed to support options[17][18][19]. Financial packages were offered by universities[20][21][22][23][24][25][26][27]. Food and care packages were distributed. Some domestic students, financially impacted by business closures, benefited from national economic stimulus measures[28][29].

Concerns, about graduate career opportunities in a world economy recovering from Covid-19, are high[30][31] and students' anxiety and psychological distress is exacerbated. Counselling services have migrated from primarily offering face to face services to 'mirror' services using phone and real-time video e-communication. Psychoeducational workshops delivered by Zoom or similar (synchronistic) or digitally (asynchronistic) are being deployed. Prior concerns about privacy and confidentiality appear resolved through use of enterprise systems (LMS, CMS) and business applications that have resolved concerns about privacy and confidentiality and reportedly delivered benefits including 'big data' desired to drive business models and resource allocation.

11 https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/coronavirus-almost-all-australian-universities-head-online

12 For every dollar spent on university fees, international students spend $2 - $3 in the local economy. A significant benefit to the local community

13 https://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/English/student-support

14 http://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Further-education/COVID-19-Bulletin/COVID-Bulletin-for-Tertiary-Students-Support-Package-Announcement-14-April.pdf

15 http://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Further-education/COVID-19-Bulletin/COVID-Tertiary-Student-bulletin-14-5-20.pdf

16 https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/media-item/ua-welcomes-victorian-support-for-international-students/

17 https://www.zdnet.com/article/australian-universities-begin-moving-classes-online-to-tackle-covid-19-outbreak

18 https://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/English/student-support

19 International education is Australia's fourth largest export, worth $39 billion per year

20 https://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/english/study-in-australia-student-support/australian-education-provider-list

21 https://unisa.edu.au/Media-Centre/Releases/2020/coronavirus-updates/

22 La Trobe University – Support(i)ng the health and wellbeing of our students while they transition to the new COVID-19 world. https://www.anzssa.com/resources/anzssa-e-newsletter-archive/anzssa-e-newsletter-aprilmay-2020#La%20Trobe

23 https://unimelb.edu.au/coronavirus

24 https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/students/money/hardship-fund

25 https://students.unimelb.edu.au/student-support/coronavirus/financial-support

26 https://enz.govt.nz

27 Students enrolled at VU were able to apply for support from the Hardship Fund in addition to supports provided by the New Zealand government to domestic students. https://www.covid-19.unsw.edu.au/information-students#fin

28 https://treasury.gov.au/coronavirus

29 https://www.labour.org.nz/c19-econ

30 https://www.ibisworld.com/industry-insider/coronavirus-insights/coronavirus-updated-reports-list/

31 https://www.ibisworld.com/industry-insider/press-releases/ibisworld-monitors-the-coronavirus-impact-on-industries-around-the-world/

Online offerings supported by 'interactive' pedagogy enable student engagement via remote, flexible and hybrid learning modes. Despite sector concerns about quality assurance[32][33], student experience outcomes[34] and students missing out on the 'full university experience', the potential cost savings and enhanced flexibility, attributed to online learning, suggest that it is unlikely that universities will retreat from their rapid boost to online offerings.

The dedicated SAS provided by institutions are well placed to positively contribute to the personalized support, offering value-add to the student experience, in order to nurture the success of the sector going forward. Personalized support, plus learning engagement, underpinned by a growth mindset framework, and facilitated by empathic teaching and support staff are important nurturing ingredients to benefit the students' online experiences and success for the sector going forward. Opportunities for student services in an academic cycle occupying 50 weeks per year and requiring 24/7 responsiveness lie in constant innovation, effective partnerships and collaborations with both academics and outsourced providers.

Europe with a focus on the UK, France, Spain, Finland and Ireland

UK: COVID-19 has greatly impacted the state of Higher Education in the UK and Europe

Vianna Renaud
Stephanie Deveze-Delaunay

Currently student affairs and services (SAS) have been greatly challenged by the crisis situation created by COVID-19 throughout the UK and Europe. Since the beginning, most institutions, if not all, have created cross-disciplinary emergency working groups. Whilst in the UK they have included members of the institutional academic body, professional support staff members, including those in student affairs and services, and key senior management staff. It has been common for subgroups to also be formed, and therefore these have been focused on education and professional practice, future student experience, recruitment and admissions, estates development and campus operations, it and research progression focusing on research activity. These working groups will continue meeting as the crisis progresses which will form the basis on if and how teaching and campus life will look like for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Student outcomes are of the utmost importance and therefore, many institutions in the UK have adopted a 'No Detriment' Policy to reassure students that they will not be disadvantaged due to the situation. This has greatly helped to reduce anxiety and stress, which is a main focus on campus. Mechanisms to best support students have been demonstrated through revised assessment methods.

Regular communication has been a key focus for university senior management. The message has been one of continuous support for both students and staff and has been shown through weekly emails, FAQs for students about COVID-19, and podcasts, all available from the university website.

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32 Lin Martin: https://campusmorningmail.com.au/news/teaching-learning-and-assessment-challenges-in-a-covid-19-environment/
33 Michael Sankey: https://campusmorningmail.com.au/news/michael-sankey-responds-to-lin-martin-on-line-teaching-is-delivering-learning/
34 Andrew Harvey https://campusmorningmail.com.au/news/helping-disadvantaged-students-deal-covid-19/

Unfortunately, universities in the UK were already looking at cost cutting measures. Now with COVID-19, great changes to the staffing of SAS teams are expected to be seen in the near future.

At present most, if not all, campuses have been shut down with professional staff members working from home and remotely. Therefore, SAS have been mostly managed remotely. This will continue to be the case until governmental policies say otherwise, and has been echoed at universities across Europe.

Student internships and placements have partly continued throughout the COVID-19 crisis. Whilst most employers have put their placement students on furlough, ended their placements, or have asked them to work from home, work experience and alternative forms of work experience are still felt to be critical to the student experience. This emphasis has been echoed in France, shown through the confirmed support of students continuing their placements at home. For instance, supervised volunteering in society has been recognized to replace some work experience internships and the French Ministry of Higher Education has created a task group to support the pedagogical continuity of this. The importance of placements within the EU has also been shown by the funding of the SPRINT program, a European partnership dedicated to establishing best practice and guidelines for university internships and work experience.

The SAS field has had to adapt quickly to a new delivery and engagement style. Therefore, a greater need of flexibility and adaptability, as well as upskilling on online delivery is necessary for staff.

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EU: Reflections on mobility advising in COVID-19 – A European perspective

Adriana Perez-Encinas
Tiina Piipponen
Louise Staunton

This reflection covers different aspects of Student Support, student affairs and services (SAS) affected by COVID-19 from the vantage point of different international relations offices in three European countries, namely Ireland, Finland and Spain. For a higher education institution, it is key to provide students with quality support services and to think about the international student experience while also representing the needs of students in the provision of services. Institutions seeking to attract and retain international students are adopting student services and programming to meet their expectations (ACE, 2016), in order to not only create a global and international campus, but also to offer an inclusive environment that meets the expectations of international students, academically, socially, culturally and personally (Perez-Encinas, 2018). In this sense, the needs of students and all

support services involved with the student journey should be provided by higher education institutions rather than outsourcing these, especially during this pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented crisis globally and has forced us to work from home with different tools and uncertainty. All institutions have put all their efforts into transferring most of their services to digital. The physical contact with students and in-person consulting has not been possible. Nevertheless, a great effort from institutions and different stakeholders has been made to provide a comprehensive service virtually.

One of the examples is the case of Trinity College Dublin and how it has responded to the crisis by putting in place immediate and urgent supports to provide a comprehensive service in the altered reality presented by the impact of COVID-19. As an institution, it is adapting on a continual basis to meet and anticipate student needs while actively creating new and innovative ways to deliver traditional SAS virtually ensuring that students are fully supported during the immediate crisis and looking ahead to the challenges of reopening in the coming academic year, particularly in ensuring health and safety of new and returning students.

Another case is how the international office at Metropolia University of Applied Sciences in Finland dealt with the closing of the schools, cancellations of international exchanges. Whilst most of the services can be offered digitally and we have reached students effectively, what is missing is the impromptu, personal and informal interactions and discussion with students. Without this This may mean that we only understand parts of the student experiences when we don't have personal contact.

For Universidad Autónoma de Madrid in Spain, the academia has also done a tremendous effort to convert all the lessons to a virtual environment. The calendars have been adapted and the principle of flexibility is in place. We might take into account the different circumstances of professors and students' access to technology and to interact with it in a virtual classroom. For sure, this has led to much lesson learning in how to provide a better support service in the future.

In conclusion, there has been a digital revolution in our institutions which has utterly changed our normal operating environments. Achieving the goal of enhancing institutional student learning outcomes including social justice, diversity, pluralism, intercultural education, citizenship and leadership, service learning, and overall personal development, is an aim that those in professional student services keep at the top of the agenda. Achieving these overarching goals is about how these services are structured, how they operate and according to which principles and values they are offered. In the same way as institution/organization/service unit have to design their services based on their overarching principles and goals, so too is the same effort needed in developing on-line services and digital environment with the same overarching goals in mind.

In fact, we see the digital leap that all of us experienced in our organization as a positive advancement. We see as an advantage the use of digital platforms and tools later for different kinds of operations and collaboration. In some cases, we have been already been using these new technologies but this was not the case across the whole institution on a coherent level. In that sense, we see this forced-situation (despite the difficulties and complexities it has brought) as beneficial for the administrators, academics, students and the institution itself. It brings more flexibility to work and study life, even though it requires more adaptation, research, technology investment, training and implementation by all. Digital has been converted to the "new normal" in higher education and the question is how can we make all this learning sustainable in the immediate and long-term future.

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Africa with a report from Ethiopia

Ethiopia: The response of Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions to the COVID-19 crisis: SAS is a high focus area

Bekele W. Ayele

Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have never faced a disastrous challenge like COVID-19. On 16th March 2010, the Prime Minster of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), Dr. Abiy Ahmed, declared the National State of Emergence and the closure of schools and HEIs. HEIs were instructed to deliver their curriculum in distance and open learning (ODL) modality on 17th March 2020. No institution had been prepared to adapt and offer their curriculum and student services from the face-to-face modality to an ODL. However, the paradigm shift from the traditional brick and mortar educational provision to ODL model has been unavoidable to make HIEs and students avoid the repercussions of the disruption of the regular academic calendar.

The Ministry of Higher Education and Science (MoSHE) spearheaded the national response of HEIs to Covid-19. Immediately after the confirmation of the pandemic, it established Multi-Disciplinary National Taskforce, which is entrusted to undertake COVID-19 Research (MOSHE, 2020). A national study was conducted to identify priority areas for the Ethiopian government to allocate resources. These areas include: physical distancing, non-pharmaceutical intervention (NPI) and cultural aspects (indigenous knowledge). Emphasis is given to social problems of the pandemic as identified by the study, setting a bold research agenda that is locally relevant and attuned to Ethiopian reality. Ethiopian HEIs have been instructed by State Minister, MOSHE, to consider these areas and aligned their respective research priorities and put them into planning and action. These shall be the responsibility of the HEIs COVID-19 Research Taskforce which is led by research and community Services Vice Presidents (RCSVP). The priority areas indicate that Student Affairs and Student services (SAS) are also identified as COVID-19 research priorities making SAS a high priority and focus area for Ethiopia.

All Ethiopian public HEIs provided transportation to all students to go back home when these institutions were closed. Afterwards, it was declared that the teaching and learning process would be conducted via ODL. ODL is an important alternative model to increase access to, equity and quality of education. The Ethiopian government has also given priority to national capacity-building essential to the establishment and management of efficient ODL systems (Yilfashewa, 2008). Despite many challenges around implementation, reaching underserved populations, internet access and learning readiness, the national flagship university, Addis Ababa University, announced it will hold this year's graduation ceremony virtually.

Most students of government HIEs came from the deep rural areas, where wide spread internet connectivity is costly or not accessible. Many students struggle to return to campus impacting access to education (Altbach & de Wit, 2020). In addition to the setbacks by internet fragility, cost and

access, there have been no guidelines for quality assurance of the ODL modality in Ethiopia (Ethiopian Education Roadmap, 2018). This coupled with lack the capacity on how to structure and offer course in ODL modality on the part of most lecturers, could compromised the quality of education substantially.

Presently, there are no students on campuses and SAS such as accommodation, counselling, health clinics, recreational centres, clubs, libraries and laboratories, etc are closed and not functioning. Employees working in these sections are considered as non-essential workers. There have not been any attempts to delivery students' support service in ODL, or via online avenues. The dormitories are transformed into Quarantine Centres. This change in SAS functioning and use of facilities has caused much concern across Ethiopia. Especially the 236 private HEIs might keep SAS functions closed to students.

The laying-off of academic and none academic staff in Ethiopia is unconstitutional under the National State of Emergency. However, most private HEIs are already struggling to survive the first wave; a few have started downsizing, while others are closing some of their branches or units and are laying off what they consider to be redundant staff, which includes SAS divisions (Wondwosen, 2020). Despite these serious challenges, most HEIs responded to COVID-19 by donating money, sanitary items, essential supplies and offering their buildings to be used for quarantine and storage purposes. ETB30 million (nearly US$1 million) were raised by private institutions for the cause (Wondwosen, 2020).

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South America with a reflection from Chile

Chile: Covid-19 crisis upon crisis: Challenges for Student Affairs and Services

Michael Handford
Juan Williams-Kudin

Since mid-October 2019, Chile has been experiencing a deep political and social crisis whose most visible expressions are the enforcement of strict curfews, and frequent mass protests and strikes in the streets around the country. In that context, the normal progress of the 2019 academic year in Universities had to be modified as many higher education institutions lost months of regular face-to-face teaching. The effect of all this was that the 2020 academic year, which should have commenced in early March, began several weeks later in many institutions, particularly those in the state sector. Therefore, when the first measures were put in place to contain coronavirus in mid/late-March, hundreds of thousands of students were only just beginning the current academic year.

The Chilean higher education sector is a highly-decentralized system. Therefore, on one hand, each institution is taking most of the actions and efforts as an autonomous entity. However, all these efforts require the inequalities at the root of the system itself to be addressed.

As a summary, we highlight the following actions which have been taken by most Chilean universities, both state and private:

1. Ensure the continuity of online access using remote technology. This means a) distribute devices to students who do not have computers with sufficient resources for the necessary programs, and to students that do not have computers at all; b) distribute internet access chips for those devices; and c) provide remote teaching programs for academics.

The current post-October 2019 and coronavirus crises have left many students and their families in a more precarious economic situation. For these reasons, it is the Universities themselves that have tried to absorb the costs associated with the measures outlined above. Nevertheless, due to logistical difficulties, especially in rural and densely-crowded urban areas, these actions have not yet ensured that all enrolled students have consistent access to 'remote classrooms'. Additionally, many students are trying to manage in economic and domestic conditions that are far from suitable for successful learning.

2. Remote work of staff members, including Student Affairs Directorates, to support the students. This means a) provide psychological support to the students; b) arrange online group workshops to support stress or other psychological effects; and c) maintain services which require attention by social workers, such as social certificates and scholarships.

As far as we have seen, in most institutions, the supply of these services does not yet keep up with the increasing demand, as students and staff are continuously trying to adapt to constantly changing situations. Almost all of these actions have been implemented in a little over a month and the prior experience of most institutions in these matters is scarce for events on this scale. In due course, a critical evaluation of the actions taken will certainly be needed, so that the Student Affairs Directorates are better prepared in times of crisis in the future. This evaluation will also provide lessons learnt so that this pandemic can offer learning opportunities for students, staff and institutions.