Session 4 - Strategic Priorities

University Innovation Fellows

October 2018

Varna Free University

After conducting some interviews with students, more research has been done on student culture at Varna Free University.

1. **We found the problems of integration and isolation due to the lack of a student community, the sense of belonging to the university environment was not developed and as a result of this there is a general lack of willingness on the part of students to take advantage of resources and seek opportunities. For this reason, students do not get involved with university life and do not seek innovation and entrepreneurship at the Free University of Varna.**

**Difficulty:** The low interest, ambition and subsequent flight of students in higher education has become a matter of great interest and importance for the universities of the world. Every university wants to attract more students and create and keep the best students talent. Where is the problem? Many students quickly feel uninspired, get bored and start hunting for something new.

For this reason we have some ideas that could be introduced to our university to stimulate student’s life, improve the experience and awaken the innovative and creative spirit of young people.

**Solution:** From the beginning of their admission to the university we have make the students feel served by the administration and the student community.

It would be good to do anonymous interviews once to new students and every three months below to get honest comments. Sometimes it is much easier for students to tell how they really feel in an anonymous survey.

It is a good idea to use a tool such as Google forms to create a survey and send it to the students.

 Ask students questions like:

* How do you feel?
* What do you think about the people around you, teachers and students, what do you think of the common mood?
* Give us your good idea! What will make the greatest improvement in your studies, the other students or the Varna Free University?
* How satisfied are you with your studies and opportunities for personal and professional growth?
* Do you have a good relationship with your mentors?
* Are you satisfied with the food services, the sports bases, the technological elements offered by the Free University of Varna?

**Solution:** Find out what the students are passionate about in they free time.

Are they like to biking? Are they like to do some sport? Do they write a personal blog? Do they want to backpack around the world learn new language and meet different countries?

Know what the students in our university is passionate about will help to connect with them and show them that the University team and student community actually care about their interests.

Frequently we must ask our mates and students about their passions and even try to find ways to integrate their interests into the university daily.

For example:

* If someone does the studies of Business Administration and Management in Faculty of International Economics and Administration but he have a passion for art in the free time, then suggest that he or she shadows someone in Faculty of Architecture from Department of Art for a day.
* If a student loves to play paintball and comment that no has anyone to play with, it’s a possibly good idea offer to help him forming a casual university team.

1. **We have make sure that new students get to know the whole team of they Faculty and most of the students from they Bachelor's or Master degree programs.**

**Difficulty:** An new student who feels cared for and is surrounded by people who bond with him/she is much more likely to feel happy and engaged at the studies, University life and team work. We all get to know our professors, docents, assistants pretty well, but it’s also important for new university students to build relationships with them.

**Solution:** We can invite the whole University to a one games weekend - one for every Faculty in the Gardens of the Varna Free University or in Varna Sea Park every new student year for the University. The University can offers a games (think board games or pool/Ping-Pong/darts), aerobic, zumba classes etc.

1. **Learn to keep students happy.**

**Difficulty:** Many students quickly feel uninspired, get bored and start hunting for something new.

**Solution:** Start a learning club.

We can encourage the students to become more involved in teamwork by invite them to think in bigger. Start a learning club where students select books or videos related to their study program to enjoy all together. We can choose a day in which everyone comes together in a conference room to analyse the topic and the implications for their studies and future work plans.

1. **​​Have completely open brainstorms IDEA BLACKBOARD = IDEA BOX.**

**Difficulty:** Stimulate student’s improve the experience and awaken the innovative and creative spirit.

**Solution:** Have completely open brainstorming options on blackboards in different parts of the University buildings in which to eliminate the limitations and let the students share important ideas. Focus the discussion on an area of ​​the University that we would like to improve.