Engaging Student Voices in Educational Technology

Higher education is an institution centered on students. While the faculty and researchers behind higher education are crucial components of the educational system, the system exists first and foremost to help students learn and grow. Their engagement is among the most important indicators of the success of any institution in higher education. This applies to the content presented, the conversation between students and faculty, and the technologies used to connect.

Unfortunately, students don't always engage with their classes or content to the extent higher education wishes. The formatting and implementation of new technologies can leave students confused and frustrated. What should be a convenient step into the future becomes a barrier to the learning and growth at the center of academia. Universities are stuck paying for complicated software that hinders their growth. Instructors feel burdened as they attempt to help students understand the online formatting, and students feel uninspired and distracted from the content that should be their primary focus.

Student engagement and faculty

Faculty are the backbone of higher education. They serve a wide variety of crucial functions, each of which requires a high level of focus and specialization. The software used to teach and interact with students needs to be as streamlined as possible. When it's not, faculty must expend energy and resources trying to learn needlessly complicated procedures, causing increased stress and taking away from the wonderful contributions they have to make in higher education.

While this alone is enough to encourage higher education to seek simple, easy-to-use technological solutions, it is compounded when students are factored in. When students aren't able to understand the software needed to submit assignments or access educational materials, they turn to their educators to help them. These educators are then further burdened with the task of explaining the technology used in class, a task that falls outside of their job duties and further eats up their time and energy.

What's worse, the faculty rarely have a thorough enough grasp on the entire scope of the software to adequately explain it to students. When this occurs, students often wind up frustrated with the instructors, leading to decreased engagement with the content and a general distaste for the university staff. Lack of engagement leads to a vicious cycle wherein the instructor has a hard time helping students grasp the material and students increasingly disengage with the coursework.

However, when student engagement is high, faculty are able to perform their duties far more efficiently. Students are excited to learn, meaning instructors are better able to teach. They are able to devote their energy fully to imparting knowledge to their pupils, resulting in better academic outcomes and more job satisfaction.

Engagement and academic integrity

Academic integrity is one of the core issues facing higher education. The introduction of online submission platforms has helped institutions improve honesty and originality, but there are still many ways that academic integrity can be compromised. One of the biggest factors is student engagement.

When students feel incompetent around the technology used for submissions, they are more likely to commit accidental plagiarization, as they may be unaware of the tools available to help them with things like proper citations. This is all the more likely when students don't enjoy the interface. Unfriendly interfaces discourage students from exploring the many features their university compiles, meaning they may miss out on resources that would help them individually and the institution as a whole.

Additionally, when students aren't engaged with the technology, they may miss features that would discourage cheating. Things like similarity-checking software go a long way in discouraging students to attempt cheating, as it erodes their confidence that they can outsmart the system. However, unengaged students may miss these features entirely, leading them to attempt to cheat regardless. Even if the software catches them, this is a loss for the university, as they are now forced to deal with the cheating student where they may otherwise have had the student produce original work.

When technology proves strenuous to students, academic integrity also suffers in the sense that "technological issues" become a more viable excuse. If academic software is difficult to understand, students may genuinely have issues submitting work. The issue becomes that an instructor must try to determine when students are being honest about tech issues or when they are simply disengaged and not doing their classwork. This is an impossible task, and ultimately undermines academic integrity by introducing an element of ambiguity,

These issues are remedied by employing an engaging, user-friendly interface instead. Students are excited to explore the features of the software, as doing so is easy and straightforward. This makes students feel that the software is a benefit, helping make their academic journey easier and setting them up for success with less tedium. They are far more likely to utilize tools to help them properly cite their sources. They are also less likely to attempt to cheat, as they will have a clear understanding of the safeguards against dishonesty the university has put in place.

Student engagement and enjoyment

Finally, student engagement has a massive impact on the subjective experience students have in academic institutions. Students want to be engaged, want to learn with excitement and feel themselves grow intellectually. This feeling is far more likely to occur when students are interacting with one another and engaged with the course materials. The software employed by universities has a large role to play in the success or failure of an institution to keep its students engaged.

When the software is clunky, unintuitive, and unhelpful, students miss out on many of the best elements of the academic experience. They may not be able to interact with one another in an organic manner, and may even be frustrated by their inability to access comments from other students on collaborative assignments. The social aspect of college is one of higher education's primary draws, and depriving students of this leads to disappointment and a sense of intellectual isolation. Couple this with the fact that submitting assignments can become burdensome and it becomes clear why a sound interface is so critical to student enjoyment.

The solution

In an effort to make the academic process simpler and more straightforward for all involved, we here at TransACT offer technological solutions designed to keep students engaged. We do this by emphasizing the importance of student feedback and crafting our interfaces with the student experience in mind. By doing so, we ensure our software makes students feel connected and supported throughout their academic journey.

We also monitor our users and ask students for their feedback. This feedback is taken into consideration in designing our future products and updating our existing offerings. By directly responding to what students like and dislike, we tailor our platform to suit student needs in the here and now.

TransACT emphasizes simplicity and customization in our academic software. OneCampus by TransACT's rSmart is designed to install easily and allow for quick mastery. In turn, this allows instructors to better teach students how to utilize the platform while also allowing students to grasp the layout with minimal learning time required.

How TransACT keeps students engaged

Thanks to OneCampus' customizable layout, students are able to format their interface so they are always able to access the pages they need with little effort. They don't have to worry about learning every individual feature, but can instead set up their accounts so that all the things they need are readily available. Students stay engaged because they are never forced to learn tedious and irrelevant procedures. Our software even tracks usage automatically, conforming to the user's natural patterns to make use easier and less tedious without any effort on the part of the student.

OneCampus also offers customized notifications. By reminding students only of what they find relevant and useful, OneCampus keeps them actively involved with their studies. Students come to realize that the notifications are always important to them, meaning they won't ignore updates or reminders. By focusing on relevancy, notifications serve to boost student engagement by serving only to enhance their learning experience and complement their preexisting academic strengths.

Alongside the emphasis on customizability, TransACT is committed to keeping things as simple as possible for our users. We do this in a few ways. To start, we centralize the entire suite of applications a university has on offer. This means students don't need to bounce between websites or platforms to access the functionality they need. By placing all their tools in one location, OneCampus keeps distraction to a minimum and allows students to focus solely on their academic work.

Simplifying interactions between students and faculty is another way in which TransACT seeks to keep students engaged. By providing a straightforward communal space on our platform, we increase students' ability to converse and share ideas. The same goes for student-to-faculty interactions. Students are able to ask questions or schedule meetings with instructors without hassle, making it easy to stay on track in their courses.

Let students learn the way they want

OneCampus is a platform designed using student feedback, both direct and indirect. Students enjoy the flexibility to customize their interfaces while enjoying easy access to all the features they may need. By keeping them at the center of higher education, universities employing OneCampus ensure student learning happens as efficiently and enjoyably as possible.