

Fontbonne University Needs Assessment Department of Student Affairs

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SWK 351: Generalist Practice III

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ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

Fontbonne University is a Catholic institution located in Clayton, Missouri. The mission of the university is to provide transformative education committed to the common good, inspiring students to become global citizens who think critically and ethically to create a more just world (Fontbonne University Website). Fontbonne University was founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in 1923. The curriculum is built on serving the needs of the community. It is a small university that commits itself to fostering respect, integrity, community, excellence, service, justice, and faith (Fontbonne University website).

Fontbonne University services nearly 1,400 students. The university started as a school for women but is now a diverse community. It embraces faculty, staff, and students of various backgrounds. Since the nature of Fontbonne University is Catholicism, God's presence is recognized in all creation connecting the mission and vision of inclusiveness, openness, and diversity.

The University assists students with academic success, food, housing, clothing, personal care items, textbooks, financial distress, and counseling needs through the Student Affairs department. A case manager within the department handles the cases and manages the donations and function of the services. Although the provision for services is part of Fontbonne's assistance, the case management position is new to the department as of 2022. After the director of student success and support moved from the university, the Dean of Students made an inquiry about student needs. She posed the question "What do students need?" The Dean of Students collaborated with the leadership team. She and the team determined that there was a need for face-to-face communication with students for addressing student issues. She then hired a case manager to provide one on one service and support to students.

Fontbonne University Demographics

According to (Fontbonne University Website) Fontbonne University has a total enrollment of 944 students. Included in this number are 682 undergraduate students, with 90 percent being full-time students. Overall, there are 59 percent female, 41 percent male, 33 percent students of color, and 3 percent of students are non-U.S. residents. There are 75 percent first-time freshmen with full-time status living on campus. Within the student body of Fontbonne University 24 countries are represented.

BASIC NEEDS, GPA, AND QUALITY OF LIFE

One third of undergraduate students are affected by housing insecurity (Leung et al., 2021). Although universities and colleges offer housing, attainability can be a barrier for some students. Tuition and lodging costs can exceed the amount given in financial aid causing students to seek off-campus housing. The need to provide for housing and food motivates students to pursue employment which impacts academic studies.

Food insecurity is prevalent within the college community. Limited access to food causes students to lose concentration which can contribute to poor academic performance. Food insecurity can also lead to students dropping out of courses. Although college campuses provide meals for students, financially all students are not able to afford a meal plan. The provided resources are not enough to solve food and housing insecurity of students (Karlin et al., 2020). The experience of food insecurity can cause feelings of shame or embarrassment and hinder students from seeking assistance.

Academic performance can be affected when students experience food and housing insecurity. The completion rate of students affected by food and housing insecurity is lower than that of students who are food and housing secured. Food insecure students rank in the lowest 10 percentile of GPA while food secured students rank in the highest percentile (Weaver et al., 2020). Students who are unable to reach their goal of graduating move on to low paying jobs. The cycle of food and housing insecurity continues when students do not have stable employment.

Introduction to the Community Assessment

Our group is assessing student needs and provision of those needs by Fontbonne University. The goals of the community needs assessment are:

1. Identify barriers of the university to assist the needs of students.
2. Identify access of services for students.
3. Identify student satisfaction of services provided by the university.

The Student Affairs department of Fontbonne University does case management for attending students. Services provided by the student affairs department help to ensure the success of students. Students are most likely to be successful when their basic needs are met. Basic needs such as food, shelter, and water are essential for everyday living. Lack of basic needs in students' lives could impede academic success. Without adequate housing and consistent access to food and water students' ability to concentrate and perform in courses deteriorates. Non-completion of courses or failing grades can lead to dropping out of college.

METHODOLOGY

The social work students conducted a needs assessment survey using Survey Monkey. The purpose of the needs assessment is to obtain information from current Fontbonne University students about the availability of student's services within the Fontbonne community. The survey is a convenience sampling strategy for a cross-sectional survey design that has a series of questions pertaining to quality of life, GPA, and basic needs. The survey is accessible online to current Fontbonne students and will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Survey participants must be 18 years or older and currently enrolled at Fontbonne University. Participants must also read English and have access to the internet. Recruitment was done by invitation of the Fontbonne social work survey group. The survey was accessed through social

media and email of enrolled students at Fontbonne. Responses are tallied by the Survey Monkey data system.

The assessment survey contains validated measurements used from Robbin et al. (2022) 2-item Hunger Vital Sign, 6-item questions from the national Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), and the World Health Organization Quality of Life (WHO-QOL) form. The two questions from the 2-item Hunger Vital Sign measure food security status. It asks questions such as, "Within the past 12 months, I worried whether my food would run out before I got money to buy more," and "Within the past 12 months, the food I bought just didn't last and I didn't have money to get more". The 6-item SIPP survey asks questions pertaining to housing security and prompt "yes" or "no" responses. The WHO-QOL survey asks eight questions pertaining to student's quality of life with 5 ranges of choices for the best answer (WHOQOL, 2000).

Part of the survey contains qualitative data collection by interviewing the Student Affairs case management department. The purpose of the interview is to see how students are serviced, what services are currently available to students, and possible barriers to student's receipt of services. The recorded interview was conducted in a 45-minute time period. The interview questions were focused and linked to the needs assessment questions identifying student's basic needs, quality of life, and GPA performance. The notes from the recorded interview are transcribed by the social work students who conducted the interview. The interview was prepared with no identifying data. Included in the interview session were three current Fontbonne University social work students and the Student Affairs case manager Maddison Schneider.

RESULTS

The total participation responses from the survey were 49 students out of the 944-student population at Fontbonne University. Some questions were not answered and were not included in the survey responses.

Demographics

Out of the 49 participants 83.33% were female, 12.50% were male, 2.08% were non-binary and 2.08% identified as something else. A vast number of the participants were white/Caucasian (77.08%). Most were Hispanic/Latinx (12.50%) and 8.33% were African American/Black, 4.17% were Asian, 2.08% other, and there were not any who are Multiracial, Middle Eastern, or Native American/First People. There were 4.17% part-time students, 91.67% full-time students, and 4.17% enrolled as other. The average age of participants was 19 years of age. Most ages range from 18 years to 23 years old. Within the age range of 35 years old to 45 there were three participants. The grade point average (GPA) of participants ranges from 20 earning a GPA of 3.5 or higher, five earning a GPA of 3.0 to 3.3, and six earning 2.0 to 2.9 GPA on a 4.0 grading scale. The quality of life of student participants showed reports of 21 (44.68%) as good, 14 (29.79%) as very good, 9 (19.15%) as neither poor nor good, and 3 (6.38%) as poor.

Measures of central tendency were used to evaluate the results. The number of students who used student resources at Fontbonne were 59.52%. When asked what kept students from using student support 11,11% responded “I do not have time to get help from student support and success, 80.56% selected “none of the above”. The number of students satisfied with Fontbonne University’s support in providing assistance for help with basic needs (such as food, books, and housing) was 47.62% while 23.81% were neutral. Another 16.67% were very satisfied. When asked “what could Fontbonne do to improve support for basic needs resources you require” eleven out of 49 students gave a response. Some of the responses to the question mentioned afore were “Send out anonymous surveys more often to check in on the individual needs of students”, “Cheaper or free books and better food and housing options”, “Improve my living conditions on campus”, “Advertise them more”, and “Make it free”.

Resources

There are a number of students enrolled in a meal plan. Out of the 49 student responses to being enrolled in a meal plan 17 (35.42%) were not enrolled, 9 (18.75%) were enrolled in a 7-week plan, 9 (18.75%) in a 10 week-meal plan, 12 (25.00%) in a 14-week plan, and 1 (2.08%) in a 19-week meal plan. Students using personal transportation were 41 (87.23%), 1(2.13%) using public transportation, 3 (6.38%) were walkers, and 2 (4.26%) use other means of transportation. In the past 12 months 7 (14.58%) students worried whether they would run out of food before they got money to buy more and 41 (85.42%) did not worry. In the past 12 months 6 (12.50%) students answered “yes” to the food they bought just did not last and they did not have money to get more, while 42 (87.50%) answered “no”.

When asked about living arrangements 5 (10.64%) of students answered “yes” to within the past 12 months I (or my family) have lived with others beyond the expected capacity of the house or apartment, while 42 (89.36%) answered “no”. When asked the question within the past 12 months, I (or my family) moved in with others because of financial problems, 1 (2.13%) answered “yes” and 46 (97.87%) answered “no”. Students were asked about employment status and 34 (70.83%) work part-time, 3 (6.25%) work full-time, 2 (4.17%) are retired, 1 (2.08%) disabled, 8 (16.67%) unemployed, and 5 (10.42%) reported as other. According to the case manager for student success and student support Maddison Schneider, the most utilized service for students at Fontbonne University is the emergency fund. The emergency fund is a grant that students do not have to pay back and can be used for housing assistance and tuition. Resources for financial assistance is sought first from an outside source, if there are none available the University provides the emergency fund. Other resources such as textbook rental, food, personal care items, and referrals for services are provided.

RESPONDING TO THE NEED

The number of responses in the survey do not reflect the total outcome of student needs at Fontbonne University. The needs assessment was a sample of student’s responses to start a conversation about how student success and student support services were meeting the needs

of the students. The case manager of student success and student support services has moved her office from the third floor to the first floor to ensure students are able to locate her for services. Upon gathering information and interpreting the data from the survey there are three recommendations for student success and support. The first recommendation is to list the provided services of case management within the website so that students know what services are available. Second, utilize marketing tools such as posters with services and contact information and a visible department sign outside the office door (so that students know where to go for services). The posters should be displayed around campus and in residential halls for student access. A third recommendation would be to hand out information pamphlets during student enrollment to inform students of the provided resources. The mentioned recommendations are in response to a statement from the survey "Advertise them more" and also in reference to the interview conversation about limited access of information on the University's website.

CONCLUSION

The needs assessment for Fontbonne University was a way of evaluating the provision for student's basic needs. The projected goals presented for the assessment which included, "identify barriers of the university to assist the needs of students", "identify access of services for students", and "identify student satisfaction of services provided by the university" were addressed in the findings of the survey. Fontbonne University's department of Student Support and Student Success provides available services that can meet student's basic needs. After interpreting the results of the participants, appropriate recommendations for the improvement of services were provided. According to the responses of students such as, "Advertise more", "cheaper or free books", and "better food and housing options" more students are in need of services. The Student Support and Student Success department has the ability to service more students through a wider scope of marketing for student access. Although this survey includes a small number of participants, it gives an idea of what students are experiencing at Fontbonne. As case manager, Maddison Schneider should continue to assess the needs of the students and student's ability to access services.

References

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