

TKU MAKES HEADWAY WITH STUDENT SUPERVISION

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Timing appears to be the key to successful counseling work rendered to college freshmen. According to research in higher education in Taiwan in recent years, all freshmen go through a critical period that usually falls between the second and the sixth week of the first semester of their college life. It is a make or break period, as statistics show that those who dropped out, suspended, or transferred to another university later already demonstrated signs of strain or unhappiness to their new environment in the first six weeks of college. Hence, student advisers, be it a faculty member or counselor should know how to look out for those signs at the right moment. In light of this, a seminar devoting to this issue will be held at the beginning of next semester to relevant staff and faculty members to enhance supervision skills. On top of this seminar, a series of workshops, real and virtual, organized by the Center for Learning and Teaching will be launched to help new students adjust to challenging environment.

No one understands this “nip at the bud” effect more than Chiang Ding-an, the Dean for the Office of Student Affairs. He urges all departments in various colleges to host as many interesting and captivating orientation activities as possible in the first six weeks of a new semester. It’s important, he points out, to pull all resources available to a department together to make new students feel “at home” and build trustful relationship early on. According to his office, 148 students dropped out or suspended their studies in the first semester of 2007.

If timing is what defines the Office of Student Affairs, meticulous student care is the mission of the Center for Learning and Teaching. Shyu Hsin-Yih, the Director of the Center, and her staff have arranged workshops that coach learning strategies such as “Time Management”, “Excel in Exams”,

“Easy Understanding of Texts Written in Other Languages ” , and “Golden Memories” . These workshops can be taken on-line with the help of TAs who can deal with students’ questions after workshops. These workshops are proactive measures helping students to reduce learning anxieties, Hsu explains

Moreover, an on-line supervision system designed for the class adviser, who is usually a faculty member at the department where his or her students belong to, should monitor students’ academic progress more effectively. This system, which became accessible on-line in late May, according to its creators, should reduce TKU’ s high drop-out rate. Chiang Ding-an explained that this system allows teachers to put down students’ names in the system who fail their mid-term exams and who in their view may fail half of their required courses at the end of semester. These names will become automatically available to the class adviser who has then the responsibility of interviewing these students in question so as to arrange any necessary following, remedial steps to address students’ difficulties. By logging on to this system, staff and faculty members concerned can have an immediate overview of students who are “on the verge” of failing to meet minimum academic requirements this system definitely can shorten reaction time to urgent problems so that students in need can receive help at the right moment. It’ s all about timing. A video-link room is also open for class advisers to speak with their students via a camera if students can’ t make it to college. Such a technology, again, can save time, which is crucial in reversing certain problems.

Chiang Ding-an is confident that the new technology and a heightened sense of timing will make supervision on freshmen more effective. Flora Chang, the President of TKU also promised to raise the budget for such supervision so that quality will become even better. (~Ying-hsueh Hu)