Research Article

Students Perspectives on Participation in Student Affairs and Development Programs: A Participatory Inquiry

Wilter C. Friales, PhD[1], Shayne Sales, MAED[2], Jethro Carl H. Arandallo, PhD[3], Sr. Pacita Babiera, OND[4]

Abstract

Student services have always been regarded as an essential aspect of every academic institution. This study aims to gain insights from the perspectives and experiences of college students on their participation on various student welfare and development initiatives being implemented by the university. This paper explored how students have perceived these programs and services based on their experiences and what they recommend for the improvement of their participation on the different student development initiatives delivered by the school using participatory collaborative research design. This is considered participatory in the sense that the researchers and the participants are active components of the various units under the Student Affairs and Services (SAS) of the university and Collaborative approach was evident in all phases of development of this study from the conceptualization down to the analysis of data. Based on the narratives and shared experiences of the participants of this study, it can be noted that while the different programs and services of the university on student affairs are already in-place and functional, there are still areas which need to be given attention for continued improvement. Improvements can be on students' engagement, relevance and effectiveness of the programs considering the changing landscape of the environment affecting the learners, and essentially for an informed decision-making.

Keywords: Student Perspectives, Student development programs, Participation, Participatory Inquiry

Introduction

Student services have always been regarded as an essential aspect of every academic institution. In the context of multicultural academic diversity, stimulated by globalization, it is necessary for all aspects of university life. In the paper of Cibanu (2023) she articulately mentioned that many aspects of student life, on an academic, social or cultural level, become more difficult to understand and manage with a population that finds itself in a state of continual growth and diversification. To this effect, the creation of efficient student services that are focused on its necessities, in order to provide the required support for academic activity and stimulate personal, social, cultural and cognitive development, is needed. She further explained the role of these student services is influenced by the beliefs and values of the institution and by the manner in which the policies are elaborated, by the content of curriculum and services, and by the degree of knowledge regarding the development of the students and the way in which the environment outlines their behavior.

Supporting and enhancing the student experience (academic, social, welfare and support) from first contact through to becoming alumni is critical to success in higher education today for both the student and the institution. Thus, it is always within the mandate of an institution to evaluate and generate significant feedback from all stakeholders on the delivery of the program for continued improvement.

Student affairs professionals, whose mission is to focus on the whole student, have developed programs and services to promote students' emotional, social, and cognitive development. More research needs to be conducted to understand the experiences of students while in such programs. While institutional evaluations on the delivery of student development programs and services are conducted in schools as bases for improvement, most data are generated from surveys, and less likely drawn from the actual experiences of students themselves. Some may argue that perspectives and views are based from the conceptual understanding, perceived knowledge or simply what individuals believe they know about the matter, thus, they are regarded as just information which do not provide much substantial inputs for any program enhancements practically because they are not always drawn from actual experiences of individuals. As in the study of Patchan, Schunn & Correnti (2016), it was mentioned that although feedback is often seen as a critical component of the learning process, many questions about how specific feedback features contribute to the effectiveness of feedback remain.

However, for this research, students' perspectives are being highlighted and given much significance. In the context of student development delivery, learners' views or perspectives are crucial in the sense that it can provide unique insights into the program especially if it concerns them. They can be able to identify areas that are relevant to their needs and experiences. Involving students by getting their own feedback promotes a sense of ownership and engagement allowing them to feel even more valued in the institution. Giving importance on their perspectives fosters a student-centered approach, enhances their overall educational experiences, consequently, promotes satisfaction and ensures continued improvement.

This study aims to gain insights from the perspectives and experiences of college students on their participation on various student welfare and development initiatives being implemented by the university. This paper explored how students have perceived these programs and services based on their experiences and what they recommend for the improvement of their participation on the different student development initiatives delivered by the school using participatory collaborative research design. This is considered participatory in the sense that the researchers and the participants are active components of the various units under the Student Affairs and Services (SAS) of the university and Collaborative approach was evident in all phases of development of this study from the conceptualization down to the analysis of data.

Related Studies and Literature Reviewed

On Student Affairs and Services. A long-standing belief within the academy is that graduate student success is based primarily on students' academic abilities and aptitudes (Golde, 2000; Lovitts, 2001). As a result, many institutions have focused their attention on reexamining characteristics of the students they admit by implementing tougher admissions standards. However, Lovitts's study of doctoral students found that students' academic abilities were not the primary contributors to their lack of persistence. Rather, there were other aspects of students' emotional, social, and cognitive experiences that played more critical roles in student success. Social integration and peer relationships are particularly important (Gansemer-Topf et.al 2006).

Student Affairs and Developmental Initiatives in NDMU. The university established the Student Support Services Committee for a comprehensive and coordinated support services for personal, social, emotional, spiritual, leadership and character development bullet of students and the development of learning climates that are conducive to student achievement. The Student Support Services committee are qualified and competent to serve the students population. There is an office to manage the student support services: The Guidance and Testing Center, Gender and Human Development Office, Office of the Student Affairs

and Development and Prefect of Discipline, The Campus Ministry, Health Services, and the Sports and Athletics Office. To ensure support for student development and welfare and to provide a holistic approach to student affairs and services, we comply with the requirements to provide programs that cater to the special needs of the students. We aim to assist them with their financial, psychological, and physical needs. *CMO N0.9, Series 2013, Sec. 8.4 & 8.5.* Our programs for students with special needs are designed to provide equal opportunities to people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, single-parent and married students, sons and daughters of OFWs, physically and emotionally challenged students.

NDMU's student development initiatives are designed to coincide with this holistic approach, supporting student growth in ways that mirror the beliefs of St. Marcellin Champagnat, the Marist Brothers' founder. According to Marist educational beliefs, education should be used to build "good Christians and good citizens" by emphasizing character development in addition to intellectual achievements (In the Footsteps of Champagnat, 2023). This vision is key to NDMU's goal, which is to develop students into compassionate leaders and responsible citizens founded on the ideals of faith and services. Student development programs at NDMU are often divided into three categories: leadership and formation activities, social activities, and institutional programs. Leadership and formation exercises are designed to help students develop leadership abilities, providing them with the tools they need to lead their peers, organizations, and communities. The Marist Leadership Formation Program, capacity-building workshops, and team-building activities all aim to foster skills such as empathy, teamwork, and ethical decision-making. (Marist Leadership Formation Program Module, 2023 ed.) Social activities such as University Intramurals, Club Festivals, and Colleges Week allow students to engage in leisure and artistic activities. These activities not only allow students to unwind and enjoy their time outside of the classroom, but they also help them form relationships with their peers and generate a strong sense of community at the university. Institutional programs including the Holy Spirit Mass, Notre Dame Day, and Immaculate Conception Day represent NDMU's Catholic and Marist culture. These activities promote spiritual reflection, social worship, and the reinforcing of shared ideals. Religious and institutional activities foster a sense of shared identity and purpose among students, teachers, and staff, reaffirming the essential principles of the university's Catholic mission.

The *Guidance and Testing Center* is in charge of helping the students to develop their personal, social, academics and career. It also helps create a positive, self-directed student experience by providing support, guidance, counseling and development opportunities for the empowerment of students in achieving their full potential. The Guidance and Testing Center is composed of the Guidance Director, Guidance Counselor, and Personality Development Facilitators.

The *Gender and Human Development Office (GAHD)* is a unit under the Guidance and Testing Center. The GaHD was established to mainstream gender into the mandated functions of the University to promote the principle of equality between men and women. The GaHD Coordinator plans, implements, and evaluates the programs.

The *Office of Student Affairs* and Development and Prefect of Discipline plays a vital role in the realization of the University's comprehensive program for the academic and community engagement activities of the students. It also supervises the activities of the Student Government and the various student clubs and organization

The *Sports and Athletics* develops and implements the Wellness, Fitness and Sports Programs of the University for its students, student-athletes, faculty and staff. The Sports and Athletics office encourages the participation of all stakeholders in various wellness, fitness and sports programs and activities. The different wellness, fitness and sports programs of the office emphasizes healthy living, sportsmanship, fair play and teamwork. The office also trains student-athletes who will represent the university in inter-collegiate competitions and other sporting events.

On Students Participation

Participating in extracurricular activities builds teamwork, communication, relationships, and a sense of belonging, all of which help students to develop socially and be successful in school. Participation in extracurricular activities demonstrates the importance of community involvement It is also believed that participation in various types of extracurricular activities is related to growth in certain psychosocial areas of development. There can be numerous studies to support such.

There are studies that focused on the significant contributions of student participation to the development of various school programs. In a particular study, it describes student participation in the undergraduate medical curriculum at Ghent University as an example of curriculum change initiated and driven by students. It aimed to encourage peer students to foster student participation at their own schools. It described the organization of Student Workgroup on Medical Education (SWME) and the process of curriculum change leading to the six-year long medical program in Belgium. It also investigated whether student participation contributes to the students' personal development by gaining skills relevant for future leadership roles. It was found out that students who actively participate in the evaluation of their undergraduate medical curriculum become important stakeholders in decisions related to the design of the school's curriculum. Research and reports on student participation in curriculum change are scarce, and not much is known about how students personally benefit. It described the structure and activities of engaging students in designing and improving the curriculum and presented an example of a major curriculum change led by students, and assessed the perceptions of the students on how engagement in student curriculum committees strengthened their leadership skills (Dhaese, 2015).

In another research, it mentioned that the role and contribution of students to the governance of university departments is a relatively neglected area of inquiry. This study investigated the factors which student representatives perceived to help or hinder their effectiveness as student members of departmental committees. Twenty students from a range of disciplines were interviewed about their experiences in the student representative role. Students reported complex motivations and conceptions of the representative role and were particularly sensitive to the perceptions and expectations of academic staff. Role ambiguity was the greatest challenge reported by student representatives, and the overall effectiveness of the role was perceived to be reliant on the willingness and ability of academic managers and staff to engage in constructive dialogue with students. It is argued that universities need to adopt a more proactive approach to the development and support of student leaders and representatives. Lizzio, A., & Wilson, K. (2009).

Students Perspectives and Feedback on School Improvement Matter

A study on Students' perspective on quality in higher education shows that students have a multifaceted perception of quality in higher education. Students seem to prefer perspectives that put them in the center of the process, though not necessarily only as active participants and co-creators of the higher

education experience, but potentially also as passive consumers (Jungblut, J., Vukasovic, M., & Stensaker, B. (2015)

Increasing student involvement into the educational process, when not only the academic staff and administration participate in the improvement of higher education institution's activity, but also education customers – students. Monitoring student satisfaction with education quality has become an integral part of the educational process not only in a number of European universities, which have used this monitoring for decades, but also in Russian universities, which are interested in education quality improvement. (Razinkina1, et. al. 2018)

Based on the student-centered teaching philosophy of Constructivism, student satisfaction was adopted as a standard measuring teaching quality. Various factors of student satisfaction, including teacher quality, curricula construction and hardware facilities, were determined to construct an analysis model. By examining three main factors related with student satisfaction, the conclusion is that student satisfaction was affected by teachers' teaching attitude, teaching materials, teaching equipment in colleges and universities, so the specific recommendations were proposed to improve student satisfaction in higher education. (Guo, 2016).

Scholars studied student satisfaction and methods improving satisfaction in higher education from various perspectives, enriching the definition of student satisfaction from multiple aspects (Tsinidou et al., 2010; Tamim, 2013; Wilkins et al., 2015; Ahmad, 2015). Enache indicated that student satisfaction is becoming an important objective for universities and society as the role of the tertiary level institution is being questioned (Enache, 2011). Moreover, he concreted a marketing approach to the student satisfaction problem. Hill et al. pointed out that the most important factors were quality of lecturer/ classroom delivery, quality of feedback given to students during lessons and on assignments and lecturer-student relationships in the classroom. Student satisfaction is not determined solely by the students' teaching and learning experiences but rather by their overall experiences as a customer of a particular institution (Hill et al., 2003).

On Generating Students' Feedback for Improvement

In the literature, a number of studies have been conducted generating students feedback for the enhancement of programs and service. Feedbacks are information to assess a program implemented and most of the feedback are reflective of their views and perspectives drawn from personal experiences. Thus, to say that student voices are not given highlight as significant inputs in order to know how these programs and services become helpful, relevant, responsive to their growth and needs is quite vague in that sense. There is a wealth of studies on student developmental programs and services from various higher educational institutions in the Philippines and abroad where students' views and perspectives are given significance as inputs for improvement. Many research studies support using students' opinions to improve schools (Bechtel & Reed, 1998; Campbell, Edgar, & Halstead, 1994; Corbet & Wilson, 1995; & SooHoo, 1993). In these studies, Klingner & Vaughn (1999), noted researchers in the area of student inclusion, demonstrated that using student feedback to evaluate teachers and programs was valuable in improving educational quality. For example, a process used in one American school of business for incorporating meaningful student input into the curriculum review and planning process is described. The paper explains how the survey and focus group were used, summarizes the results provided by each diagnostic venue, and discusses how the diagnostic information is currently being used in the college's curricular design process and how this feedback from students allows improvement (McCuddy_et.al, 2008). Similarly, a study to investigate student perceptions of course content based on online, traditional and blended course delivery

methods was conducted. Results from the survey indicate that delivery methods play a key role in student learning. To increase student productivity and performance instructors need to incorporate a variety of techniques. These techniques of good teaching and learning stem from student perceptions and the Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education (Hodge, et. al, 2004). There is a study that explored Western Cape primary and secondary school learners' experiences regarding the provision and utilization of support services for improving learning. A qualitative interpretive approach was adopted and data gathered through focus group interviews involving 90 learners. Results revealed that learners received and utilized various forms of learning support from their schools, teachers, and peers. The learning support assisted in meeting learners' academic, social and emotional needs by addressing barriers to learning, creating conducive learning environments, enhancing learners' self-esteem and improving learners' academic performance.

Adult Development and Student Development Theories

Adult development theory, like student development theory, is based in research from psychology, sociology, and education. It encompasses student development theory and includes populations beyond traditional-aged college students. There are four primary theoretical approaches to adult development: life span perspective, developmental perspective, transition perspective, and contextual perspective (Schlossberg, Waters, and Good- man, 1995). Although they have distinct approaches to development, there is overlap among them.

Life Span Perspective. The life span perspective views adult development as a uniquely individual and variable process (Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman, 1995). As such, lifespan theorists oppose stages of develop-ment that are more hierarchical, irreversible and cumulative. Instead, they believe that individuals are shaped by life events or milestones and that the significance of life events is influenced by individual experiences, culture, and gender (Brim and Kagan, 1980; Whitbourne, 1985). This perspective is useful in reminding faculty members and student affairs professionals that although theories can be helpful in identifying potential difficulties or challenges, individual traits must also be considered. More frequently applied in the field of student affairs is the developmental perspective, to which we now turn.

Developmental Perspective. These theories examine development from a variety of perspectives (for example, age, psychological, or cognitive), but they all assume that individuals progress in a sequential manner. Because graduate education constitutes an academic pursuit designed to stretch the mind, this section focuses on theories of cognitive development applicable to graduate and professional students.

Cognitive development—the processes and structures individuals use to make meaning of their worlds (Love and Guthrie, 1999)—plays a critical role in graduate students' successful degree completion. Graduate and professional students need to be able to analyze issues and problems while recognizing and appreciating multiple viewpoints and then select the best solution with supporting evidence. These abilities are representative of higher orders of processing information and constructing knowledge.

Statement of the Problem:

This study aims to gain insights from the perspectives and experiences of college students on their participation on various student affairs and development initiatives by the university. This participatory inquiry research explores the questions: What are learners' perspectives on participating in student affairs and development initiatives of the university? What experiences do students have with university initiatives? and What recommendations do students have for improving participation?

Method:

This is an institutional participatory research employing qualitative descriptive design to describe learners' perspectives and experiences on their participation to the different development programs and services (and/or extra and co-curricular) provided by the various Student Affairs and Services (SAS) units of the university. This is considered participatory in the sense that the researchers and the participants are active components of the various units under the Student Affairs and Services (SAS) of the university. The researchers are the heads and coordinators of the offices and the participants are the active students and student leaders identified to have a major and significant role in the implementation of the different programs- as a leader, member, or athlete or performer. The researchers who are representing various units, have common understanding on the goal of the study. They are all engaged in the entire research process from conceptualization of the direction of the study, formulation of the research problem, discussions of the methods and actual data gathering and analysis. Collaborative approach was evident in all phases of development of this study. Reflexivity and transparency is also managed by being careful and mindful of such elements of power dynamics and biases especially that the researchers themselves are the administrators and the participants are the students under their care. In the process, empowerment among the participants are being established before the actual data gathering phase. It was highlighted and agreed upon by the team that students should not just be regarded as participants of the study but they should be considered co-creator of knowledge. The approach is dialogue and more of conversation rather than straight interviews. As observed, the end output of the study are recommendations from the participants. These are crucial information being considered for the continual development of the student affairs and development initiatives of the university.

Since the focus of this study is to look into the perspectives and experiences of college students on their participation, the participants are selected according to the following criteria: college students (currently enrolled / this recently graduated not included); preferably incoming third year and fourth year when this study was conducted. For the students affairs and development, there were three (3) identified who have been active student leaders- officer of the SSG, council and club for at least two school years. For Guidance, three (3) identified students who have been active in the activities/programs of the Guidance office. They have experienced/or who have approached any guidance counselor for counselling of consultations and have availed the service of the Guidance Center. For GAHD, three (3) who have been active with the activities and program of GAHD- can members and officers and have availed GAHD services. For sports and socio-cultural, three (3) students who have been active in sports and socio-cultural- either varsity or a member, 2 from sports / 1 one socio-cultural.

A focused group discussion was conducted for each group of participants using a semi-structured interview guide. The questions are deliberately discussed and agreed by the researchers themselves and validated by experts. There were 4 FGDs conducted facilitated by the researchers. Probing questions to ask in order to capture some significant responses which needed further elaboration from the participants.

In terms of analysis, Each FGD is recorded, transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis following a simplified template patterned from Braun and Clarke. From the transcript, significant texts were extracted (Coding). Coding can *Process coding* which captures an action; *Open Coding*, provides initial round of loose and tentative coding; *Descriptive coding* which summarizes the content of the text into a description; *Structural coding* that categorizes sections of the text according to a specific structure, *Values coding* where code excerpts pertain to the participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs, and *Simultaneous*

coding where a single excerpt of qualitative data is coded with multiple codes. From coding, these concepts are clustered into categories or themes describing learners' perspectives, capturing experiences and their recommendations from their participation on these developmental programs.

Discussions

There are four themes clustered to describe students' perspectives on the different programs and services provided by the university. Students' perceived these development programs and services as '*Responsive to their needs, Support Students Growth, Support Wellness and Well-beingness', 'Encourage collaboration','Meaning and Value of Participation'*

Responsive to Students' Needs

The first theme that emerged from the responses of the students when asked about their perspectives about the various development programs and services provided by the university is that, Students' development and services and programs are centered on students' needs and are relevant and responsive for the students in today's generation. They affirmed that the school provides a variety of learning experiences that are necessary for their holistic growth. They have mentioned their engagements in the leadership programs, social activities, personality development sessions, religious and spiritual activities and even in cultural and sports. When asked about how they perceived these programs, they mostly shared that they support the students' needs as emphasized by the participants.

The activities in school are relevant to our needs as students. We are given formation program, leadership program to enhance our leadership and facilitation. I believe that we are honed to become leaders for the future. (S1)

We are trained to become future leaders of society. And we are being developed to become tatak Marista leader (S2)

I always look forward to university week and other social-related activities. Aside from the fact that these activities are student-initiated programs, these helps us to grow as persons, develop our leadership and fortify our sense of person. We learned about decision-making, conflict management and even to communicate to authorities. (S3)

The GaHD initiative equipped me with knowledge in patriarchy and laws. Knowledge used in my daily life as a student. Patriarchy has affected the mindset of classmates – way view of certain actions example male dominance towards other women use to justify if acceptable but knowing what patriarchy through session – challenge understanding of patriarchy…((S10)

Other participants' responses are the following: *Centered on students' needs; Considering learners' diversity; Engaging activities; Relatable activities to students; Developed leadership skills among students; Developed students' interest; and Promotes holistic development.*

The programs are viewed to be responsive to the current realities of the students. The Guidance program especially- the counselling is helpful for students' mental wellness. Today's generation of students are vocal or expressive about their mental state. Thus, initiatives like counseling are regarded by participants to be helpful for them. The Program is viewed to be relevant: Counseling for example is viewed to be necessary for mental wellness. Advice given by the counselors are helpful especially in dealing with mental-

related concerns. In essence, the guidance center of the university is perceived to be a *safe space* for students to communicate their concerns.

They are relevant in terms of their impact towards the students. For example, the counseling can help students like me whenever we need guidance, whether it is advice or counseling for serious matters such as mental health (S4)

Yes, I think that the initiatives/programs/services were helpful for me as a student (S5)

In my experience, I was able to get help when I availed for counseling from the student guidance (S6)

I took counseling because I was going through some personal troubles and needed help in terms of mental health and motivation…I'd say it was after receiving help and reassurance from the counseling that I gained something from the counseling…(S4)

Other responses of participants are as follow:
Find counseling necessary for mental health…(S4)

Find counseling helpful to feel at ease when having personal troubles..(S5)

I would say having to switch from counseling to seeking professional help in terms of mental health was challenging… (S6)

When it comes to sports, it was shared by the participants that their *needs are provided* making them feel less burdened when joining the competition. Sufficient equipment for training are also available, not to mention the incentives for winning athletes. The school helped the participants ease the burden during the competition especially in terms of food, transportation and accommodation.

Other significant concepts emerged from the data are the following: Applicability in the real life; Engaging activities allowing collaboration; Relatable activities to students interest and passion; Relevant activities; Relevant initiatives; Programs are appropriately delivered for students contexts.

Support Students' Growth

The participants shared about their experiences of growth while actively getting involved in the students affairs and services. These experiences of growth as mentioned by the participants are categorized according to values/behavioral growth and skills or potentials. For instance, Makes them visionary because of their leadership experiences. For them, this is an example of behavioral growth. Other concepts related to values/behaviors are: sense of openness, resilience to criticisms, confidence in communication, becoming more responsible, self-learning attitude as an athlete and a performer and sensitivity to diverse cultures. The skills developed are communication, leadership and facilitation, people skill (similar to leadership), listening to others, Learned to setting boundaries with others (positively) it's for self-protection and wellness (Learning); Learned not to please everyone; Leadership in the community; Resilience to face criticism; Learned to address issues constructively; through the incentives, they learned to strive harder to focus not on gadgets, but on improving the skills in sports; the participant self-improved from joining the varsity program; The participant emphasizes that learnings from training would be taught to new teammates so they can win competitions; New lessons are gained if the participant can compete with other highly competitive schools. As officers they have learned to be determined, deliver from facilitators & student movement. They become active in this participation- have a good outcome.

More about growth, it is shared by the participants that the students' development programs of the school ***contribute to their holistic development (Growth)*** and these programs for them are carefully designed to contribute to their growth and development. The students are aware that the programs and activities are planned carefully by the different offices in order to obtain positive results for their own benefit. They describe these programs to be informative, engaging and keep them vigilant and aware of the social issues. Thus, develop their critical thinking and ability to express their thoughts and opinions on the issues. The participants have also expressed through the extra-curricular activities provided by the university, they are able to identify and recognize their own potentials and interests ***(Needs)***. Among the different skills commonly mentioned by the participants that are being developed in them are leadership, facilitation and communication. The participants also recognized the contribution of the school guidance counselors to his/her own growth and development.

In the field of sports, the varsity program ***helps the participant grow*** as an individual and ***improves skills*** as a player. Students are given a chance to join the varsity. In any sports events offered by the school. Anyone can join the varsity if they are determined to improve. Open tryouts are given to give equal opportunities for students to become varsity members as long as they are determined and willing to learn.

Moreover, it was mentioned by most participants that the students affairs and services are viewed to be essential to student development; in support to students welfare; play significantly on students' wellness; molds students to become visionary and supports personal and career goals. It is essential for these units to remain supportive, as they play a crucial role in achieving better outcomes in every aspect of their being. Learners believe that they have been molded into individuals who thrive in our future endeavors. These supports benefit them for future careers and personal growth.

Support Wellness and Well-beingness

The participants affirm how their participation has been beneficial to their well-being as captured in the following concepts. These concepts are generated from their shared experiences and encounters on their participation. They said that it is helpful for their mental-health related concerns and is a necessity for mental wellness. This is particularly related to their active participation in the counselling services. Connected to this cluster are responses as: support to their wellness and emotional relief. Relieved are specified according to relieved from bothering suicidal thoughts and negative thoughts concerning family and academic concerns. They mentioned that Guidance counseling services are helping them to overcome these issues. The conversation with the counselors helps to ease students' who are emotionally and psychologically struggling; Helpful for students who are in a dilemma between personal and academics; No feeling of threats and fear; Felt being listened to; No judgment felt; relieved from pressure and stress as a student; value oneself amidst the problems;

Those who are in student leadership, they were sharing too about the benefits they get from leading their fellow students. They experienced positivity despite the challenging student/university life. They affirm how student life becomes more interesting when engaged in campus leadership. They mentioned the following: Become more positive towards life; felt at ease when experiencing problems especially when in a group working together for the tasks; changed the negative perspective (mindset) when they engaged in student government or in the council; the conversations with the administrators and other school authorities are encouraging and confidence boosting. They felt the privilege to be able to communicate their thoughts by engaging into conversation with some school administrators and faculty whom they look up to. Being

part of the varsity became a pastime hobby that could help the members relax from academic tasks and hone their skills at the same time.

Encourage Collaboration

As a member, the participant experiences meeting familiar faces in the hallways because they belong to the athlete team. It helps build connections and social relationships. The participant builds connections with club members by sharing ideas in school events. They willingly participate in sports as an athlete. As an advocate, socially able to relate with other foreign students can be part of GaHD – part of NDMU – revenue to teach students they belong to the sheep – family spirit. They consider Fellowship as memorable experiences.

In student leadership, you get to encounter a lot of peers with similar passion of yours. I have been exposed to many conventions and conferences with other fellow student leaders from other schools. Both Marist Schools and non-Marist Schools.

We connect with them. In fact, we lead most of the time. That is the strength of our campus leadership program here in the school (S1)

Within the university, the clubs and organizations are encourage to establish network with each other. If we have program in our club that we wanted to collaborate with other organizations, we do it. so, we don't feel that our organizations should be competing with each other. Instead, we see network and collaboration as an opportunity to strengthen our program delivery. (S2)

Meaning and Value of their Participation

The participants recognized that the programs and activities are aligned with the Marist values. Participants have identified family spirit, simplicity, quality and sense of presence as the school's core values that are manifested mostly in many of the school's programs. They foster family spirit through collective and collaborative works among students despite their differences.

Some of the concepts drawn from their sharing are the following: They appreciate being members of the organizations. They find it to be the most memorable experience. They learned to value teamwork and camaraderie. One participant said that these experiences are gifts to her. Aside from learning and growth, she has developed *Fellowship-* that is a memorable experience not only for her but for others as well.

Accordingly, most programs and activities strengthen the Marist community as they allow openness, encourage support and guidance from each other, and promote active engagement among them. They have shared that their activities and programs are properly supervised by the administrators and moderators *(Presence)* to ensure quality and that these programs and activities are aligned with the values, vision and mission of the university.

I have changed, I have grown since I joined until today – attributed to GaHD how to relate with people – different cultures, language, how I communicate, I understand. Socially able to relates with other foreign students can be part of GaHD – part of NDMU – revenue to teach students they belong to the sheep – family spirit. (S11)

As an officer, I organize an event to strengthen (for the women) awareness about sofia… To inform others as well in the clubs about Sofia Arise. I am proud that I am a GaHD advocate. To socialize made me developed, empowered, become confident, articulate, role model, and learn to

value myself, I looked up and took care of myself. Most of all to show decency. What do we get? – self acceptance and self-value. The advocacy we do… I feel it! I will share it! (S12)

We always remember the lesson we get from organizing programs in school, that We should keep it simple all the time. Simple but meaningful. Although sometimes, other students may have misunderstood or misinterpreted the meaning if simplicity, for they always associated it with funds and budget for the conduct of activity. While that is true that fundings and budgets concretizes simplicity but there's more actually more. What I have learned from my experience as a leader is that simplicity is also about the meaning of the program. How does it impact the students life and how they make sense of what they do even the activities are just simple… (S1)

When asked about what they get from participation, common among the responses are the following: Not for monetary or any material reward; for experiences; fulfillment; to develop leadership skill; enhance capacity and to experience new responsibilities in school and to find meaning and value in participation while maximizing one's potential.

Student participants recognize that their involvement in students affairs and other development programs could be application of their learning from the classroom. ***Classroom Learning and extra-curricular involvement complementing and/or supporting each other*** emerged as another significant sub-theme describing the value of participation to student affairs and services as perceived by the learners. The concepts drawn from participants sharing are: Extension of learning from the classroom; It helps the participant divide and divert their attention on extra-curricular activities other than simply focusing on academics;

As a student officer for several years already, I have gained much confidence from out exposures in the student organization. That is why, in the class, I can feel that somehow I stood out when it comes to recitation and I can easily relate to my classmates especially when there are group activities. (S1)

To deal with other people not matter how difficult their personalities are become easy for me to some extent. That is because of my experiences as a leader. Even in the classroom with my classmates, I serve as leader. Sometimes, I pacify them. I took the lead. (S2)

The varsity program helps the participant build personal growth and connections outside academic track; The Sports and Athletics Office is accommodating to the needs of the varsity. Moreover, the coaches and teachers show their support inside or outside the classroom when there are competitions. Moreover, it was also pointed out by some participants that through their involvement in the extra-curricular programs, they have learned to manage time so as not to compromise academics. Although, they also mentioned that sometimes, they find it difficult to strike a balance especially when some teachers are quite particular with academic time. For the students, while extra-curricular is significant for them, they are aware that they must give much priority to their studies.

Challenges and Recommendations of Students

Challenges experienced on their participation. Participants recognize that challenges are just of their experiences on their participation in the various development programs and services. For each engagement they recognize issues and challenges. For example, for the guidance and counselling, they admit that ***sometimes they experience difficulty in expressing themselves and they also observed it with other***

students. Some students are even hesitant to approach the center for any conversation and dialogue. Despite the constant awareness and invitation of the center, they still find being called by the guidance centered off. For students participation in activities, participants mentioned that they really find students passivity as a common problem. For them, no matter how they meaningfully design student programs and activities for their fellow students, there are times they find it frustrating not being able to get full support from the student body. What is even more discouraging for them is when they receive negative feedback from students publicly expressed in social media. Despite the variety of programs available, student participation has been inconsistent across all sorts of activities. Many students are aware of the programs but decline to join for a variety of reasons. Issues such as lack of interest, busy schedules, or insufficient information about available options frequently influence student development program participation.

For sports, the participant could not help but skip training or classes due to conflict in schedule. There is usually activity time during TTh but the participant needs to prioritize training. Vise versa is applied on other days. All members cannot achieve perfect attendance during training. Moreover, there is very limited time to train. When the competition day arrives, team play is highly affected.

One notable challenge expressed by the students joining in the extra-curricular programs for leadership, social activities and sports is the support of some faculty members. This is exhibited specifically on their attendance. While some teachers allow them to be excused from their classes, others are not allowing them to be excused. This in a way confuses students' participation. For them, academics are their top priority so they can't miss the class or they might get a failing grade if the teacher could not be more considerate. However, they also give value to their passion so they join in the extra-curricular of the school.

When asked about their *recommendations* on how the delivery services of the students Affairs and Services can be improved, the following are among the common responses of the participants. The Guidance Center may consider to provide more awareness initiatives to properly orient the students on the significant role of the guidance center and should not be feared by the students whenever they are called for conversation.

The Office of the Students Affairs and Services should continue to provide more nurturing activities for all students and should not only be limited for the student leaders. This way, many students can be more engaged and will be given the opportunity to experience being trained and formed through the Marist Leadership and formation program.

In the field of sports, the school may consider venturing other sports competitions aside from the usual sports events that the school has been actively joining like the PRISAA and NDEA. The participant suggests outside involvement such as during T'nalak and other Philippine festivals when there are invitations and other National or even international level of competitions. This for them will expand their exposures, will challenge them more and will inspire them to develop their skills. To further motivate students, the participants also suggest that the school may consider enhancing its incentive program for student-athletes in ways that truly support and recognize their efforts. This could include offering academic assistance, scholarships, performance-based rewards, and meaningful forms of recognition that show the school values their hard work and commitment. These kinds of support can go a long way in encouraging more students to get involved, helping them grow both on and off the field. It is also important to acknowledge the challenges student-athletes face in juggling schoolwork and training. By allowing more

flexible training schedules, the school may help them manage their time better, reduce stress, and give them a real chance to excel both in their studies and in their sport.

There is also a need to maximize information in social media for promotion and information about the activities of the students. This is not only for the major student organizations or for the institutional programs but for all other clubs and organizations. The smaller clubs of the university should be given much attention when it comes to their implementation of their own programs. If possible, financial or other necessary support from the administration should also be afforded to them.

Implications

Based on the narratives and shared experiences of the participants of this study, it can be noted that while the different programs and services of the university on student affairs are already in-place and functional, there are still areas which need to be given attention for continued improvement. Improvements can be on students' engagement, relevance and effectiveness of the programs considering the changing landscape of the environment affecting the learners, and essentially for an informed decision-making. From the results, it is quite evident from the experiences of the selected participants that they have positive regards on the various developmental programs provided for them by the office of the student affairs and development, guidance center, sports office and the gender and human development office. They consider the programs to focus on their needs, there is value and meaning in their progress, but, there are also identified challenges. Out from these perspectives, experiences and challenges, it implied the need for a more streamlined decisions on the implementations of various student development programs involving the different units under SAS; the need to expand students' exposures for a more meaningful results and intensify faculty support on the participation of the students on the various programs.

To elaborate more the above points: The Guidance center is perceived by the participants to be a safe space for them to express themselves on their realities. These participants are speaking not according to how others have experienced but their sharing are all from their emic encounters with the guidance counseling program in particular. With these representations of students, it is affirmed how the program actually works on helping the students. However, the increasing and the nature of concerns that are being brought out by these students with the counselors are also quite alarming. These are their realities. And these realities are needed to be properly dealt with together with the other units in the students affairs and services committee. This is where the implication comes in- the need for the Guidance Center, Student Affairs and other units under SAS to proactively streamline the programs and initiatives in order to properly respond to the needs of the students. In sports, as it was mentioned in the discussions that students athletes themselves are prepared to participate in other competitions aside from the conventional and usual sports events joined by the university, perhaps it is high time to be more open on this possibility to explore, expand students' sports engagements with utmost consideration to cost and benefit. The Student Affairs Office may need to expand its formation programs and not only limit for student leaders but consider to design a leadership and formation program that would involve all more students, regardless whether student leaders or not into student leadership yet. Marist leadership is something every student of the university should appreciate, understand and live.

References

1. Bojuwove, O., Moletsane, M., Stofile, S. Moolla, N., & Sylvester, F. (2024). Learners' experiences of learning support in selected Western Cape schools. *South African Journal of Education Vol. 34, No. 1.* https://journals.co.za/doi/epdf/10.10520/EJC148675

2. Ciobanu, A. (2013). The Role of Student Services in the Improving of Student Experience in Higher Education. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, Volume 92, 2013, Pages 169-173, ISSN 1877-0428,* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.08.654.

3. Darling, B., &Price, T. (2004). Students' Perspectives on Alternative, Community, and Correctional Education Schools and Services (ACCESS). Journal of Correctional Education (1974-). Vol. 55, No. 1 (March 2004), pp. 69-76 (8 pages) https://www.jstor.org/stable/23292126

4. Dhaese, S.M.A., Van de Caveye, I., Bussche, Piet, V. Bogaert, S. De Maeseneer, J. (2015). Student Participation To the Benefit of Both the Student and the Faculty https://journals.lww.com/EDHE/fulltext/2015/28010/Student_Participation__To_the_Benefit_of_Both_the.15.aspx

5. Guo, K. (2016). Empirical Study on Factors of Student Satisfaction in Higher Education. *Revista Ibérica de Sistemas e Tecnologias de Informação Lousada Iss. E11, (Nov 2016): 344-355.* https://www.proquest.com/openview/2a19e444c47dadade04ec61971451d2a/1?pqorigsite=gscholar&cbl=1006393

6. Hodge, E.M, Tucker, S.Y., & Williams, S. (20024). Teaching and Learning: Student Perceptions of Course Delivery Methods. *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human ResourceDevelopment. Volume 18, Issue 1* https://doi.org/10.1002/nha3.10175

7. Jungblut, J., Vukasovic, M., & Stensaker, B. (2015). Student perspectives on quality in higher education. *European Journal of Higher Education*, 5(2), 157–180. https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2014.998693

8. Lizzio, A., & Wilson, K. (2009). Student participation in university governance: the role conceptions and sense of efficacy of student representatives on departmental committees. *Studies in Higher Education*, 34(1), 69–84. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070802602000

9. McCuddy, M.K., Pinar, M., & Gingerich E.F.R. (2008). Using student feedback in designing student-focused curricula. *International Journal of Educational Management* DOI:10.1108/09513540810908548

10. Patchan, M. M., Schunn, C. D., & Correnti, R. J. (2016). The nature of feedback: How peer feedback features affect students' implementation rate and quality of revisions. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 108*(8), 1098–1120. https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000103

11. Razinkina, E., Ludmila P.,Trostinskaya,I.,Pozdeeva, E, Evseeva, L. & Tanova, A. (2018). Student Satisfaction as an Element of Education Quality Monitoring in Innovative Higher EducationInstitution. DOI https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/20183303043

12. Setterington, N. A., Mclean, S., & Woods, A., (2023). Design, implementation, and evaluation of Students as Partners interactive feedback model https://doi.org/10.1152/advan.00182.2022

13. Tripon, C. (2024). Bridging Horizons: Exploring STEM Students' Perspectives on Service- Learning and Storytelling Activities for Community Engagement and Gender Equality. *Trends in Higher Education*, 3(2), 324-341. https://doi.org/10.3390/higheredu3020020