



DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
INYUVESI YASETHEKWINI YEZOBUCHWEPHESHE

ENVISION  **2030**

transparency • honesty • integrity • respect • accountability
fairness • professionalism • commitment • compassion • excellence



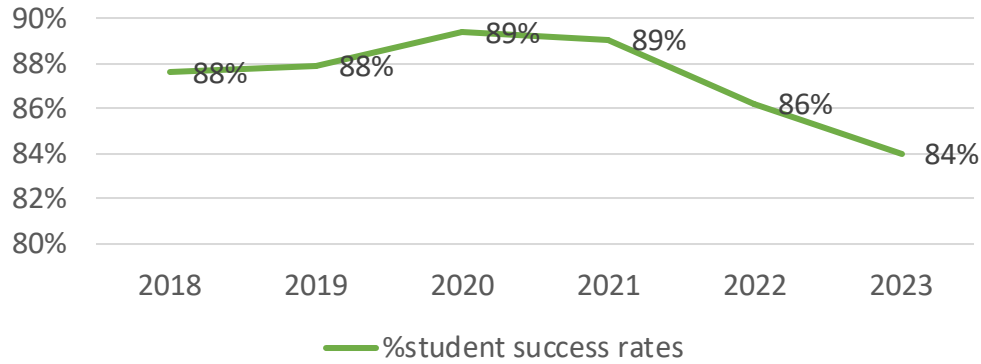
Academic Performance and Success: Leveraging Student Activism: Inculcating Student Agency for Enhanced Outcomes

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Introduction

The pervasive dissatisfaction with performance indicators within higher education institutions underscores a pressing need for transformative action. Despite concerted efforts to address issues such as retention rates, student success, and low throughput rates, the status quo often remains unchanged. The Durban University of Technology, like other institutions, faces these challenges, identifying factors such as student academic withdrawal, protests, and diminished morale as contributing to a bulging phenomenon characterized by high access and low throughput.

Figure 1: %student success rates, 2018-2023



Decrease in academic performance indicators post COVID-19. Assumptions are; delayed effects of the pandemic, socialization since COVID-19, linked with what is perceived as student withdrawal

Figure 2: %success rates by population group, 2021-2023

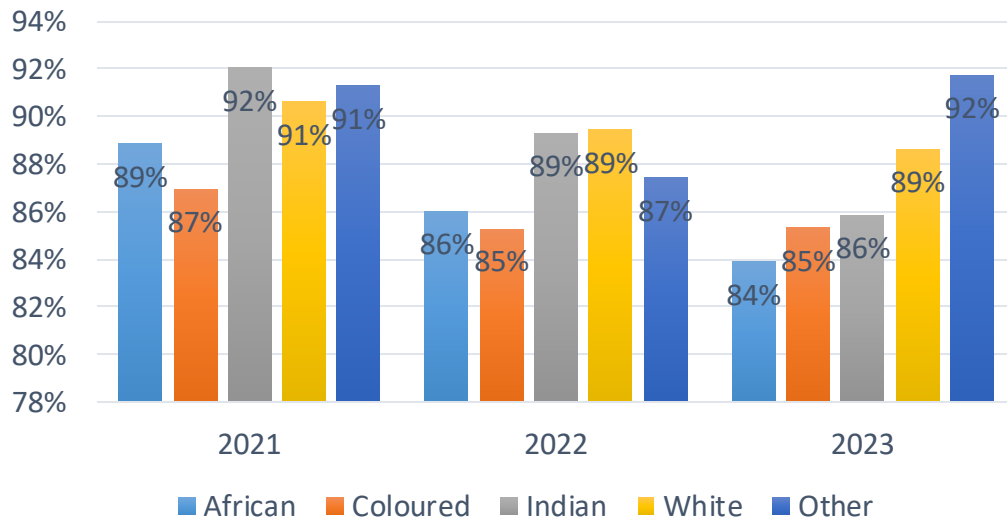
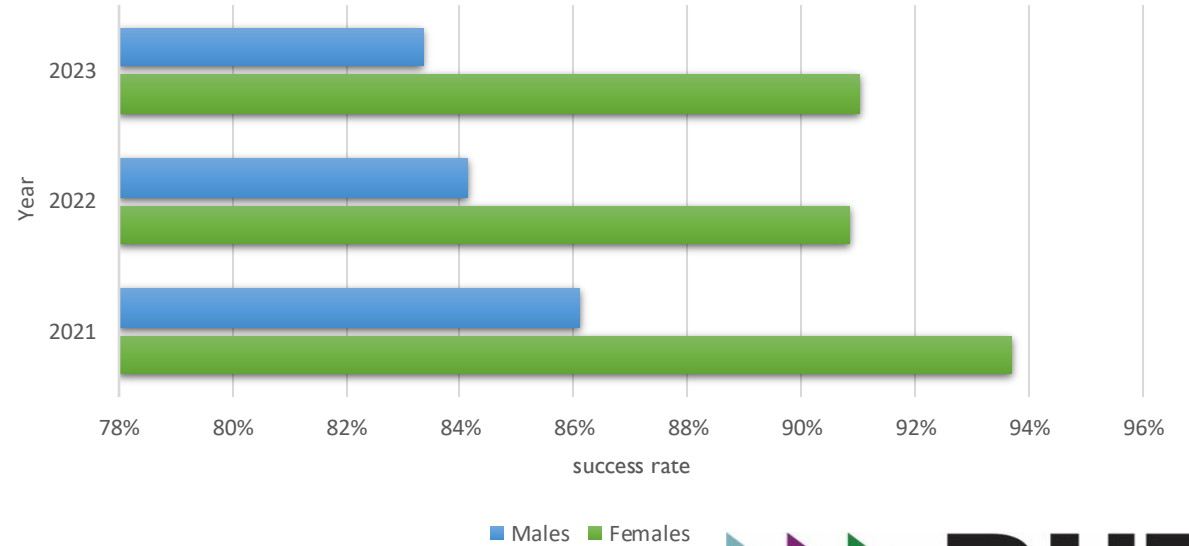


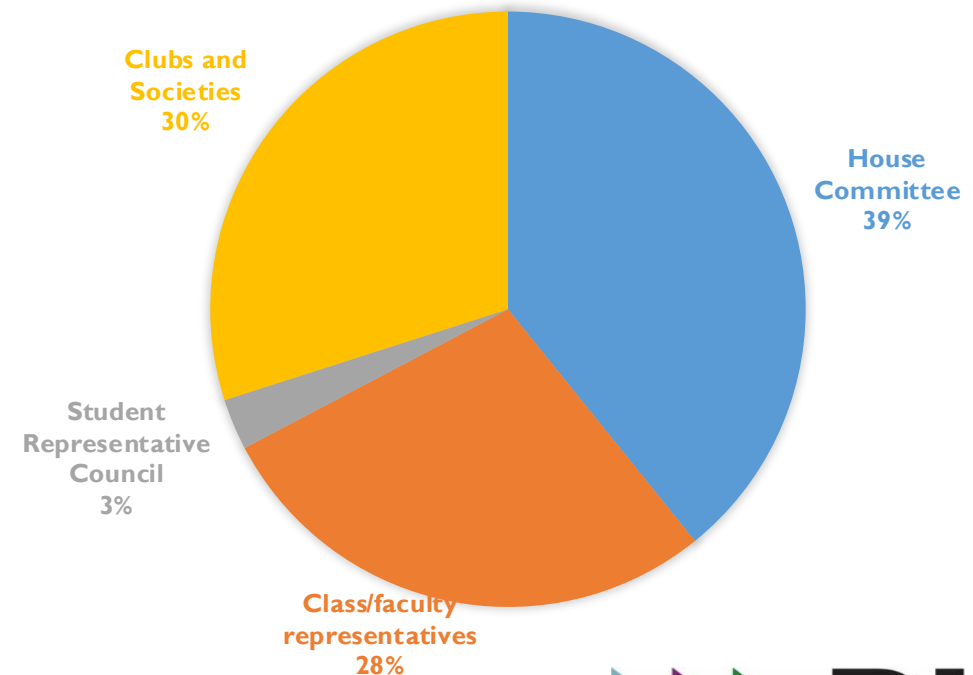
Figure 3: %success rates by gender, 2021-2023



Academic Activism

There arises a necessity for student activism to emerge as a potent force capable of advocating for change, amplifying voices, and challenging entrenched norms. As primary stakeholders, students possess a unique role in demonstrating their steadfast commitment to fostering a more equitable campus environment and in collaboratively devising sustainable solutions to prevalent challenges. Aligned with the ethos of ENVISION2030, which espouses a people-centred approach to university governance, this presentation seeks to examine the significance of student activism, delineating its impact, challenges, and transformative potential in shaping the trajectory of higher education.

STUDENT LEADERS DISTRIBUTION





Historical Context

Student activism has been integral in shaping South Africa's broader revolution, striving to establish equilibrium in the triad of inequality, poverty, and unemployment. Post-apartheid movements have continued to drive social change and educational reform, addressing persistent disparities and advocating for a more just society.

Soweto Uprising (1976): In response to the introduction of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in schools, as was driven by the apartheid regime.

Rhodes must Fall (2015): Called for the decolonization of education, the removal of colonial symbols, and greater representation of black academics

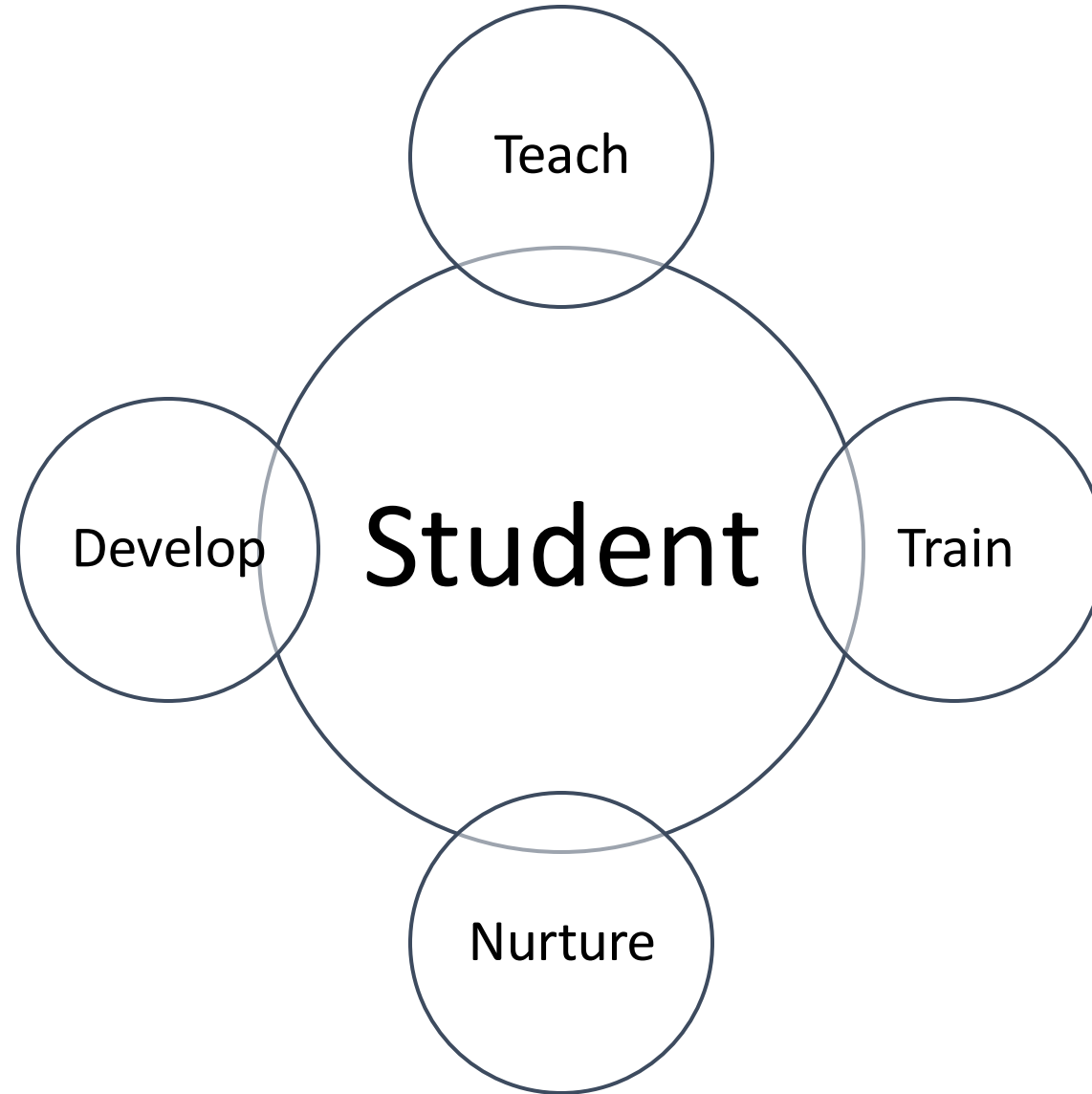
Fees must fall(2015-2016): Free, quality education for all; an end to financial exclusion of poor students; and systemic transformation of higher education institutions



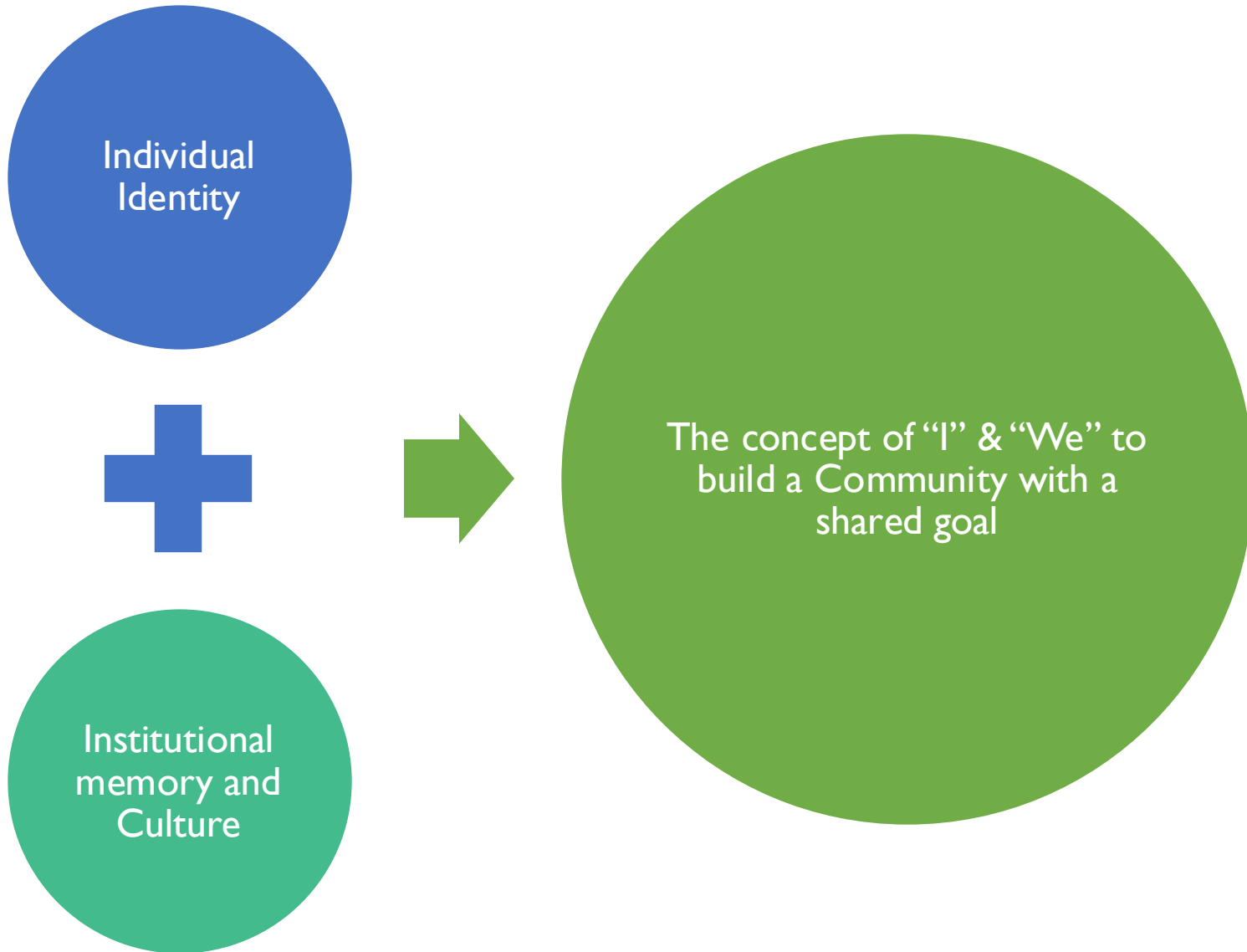
Common thread in the Student Activism Movement

- Responsive, with a deficit framing: Often from a point of discomfort
- Often backward looking: draws inspiration from the apartheid era, with similar underlying narrative
- Lean more towards a particular race
- Perceptions: Thin line between Activism and hooliganism
- Holding Institution accountable, but what of the students

Language: Passive viewing of Students



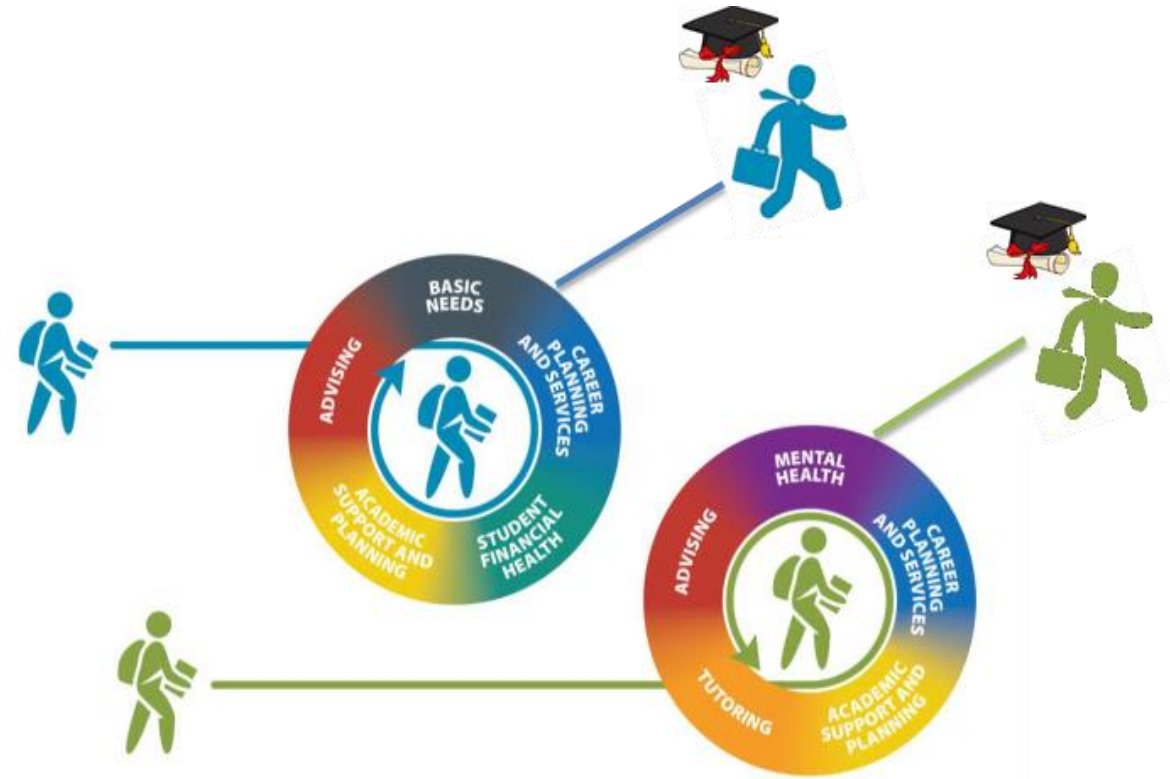
The University Community



Emphasis on understanding students and proactively cultivating a culture of partnerships and synergies to achieve student success. How does the institutional infrastructure (perceptions, policies, language etc) can shape the student we want, against the students we have

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

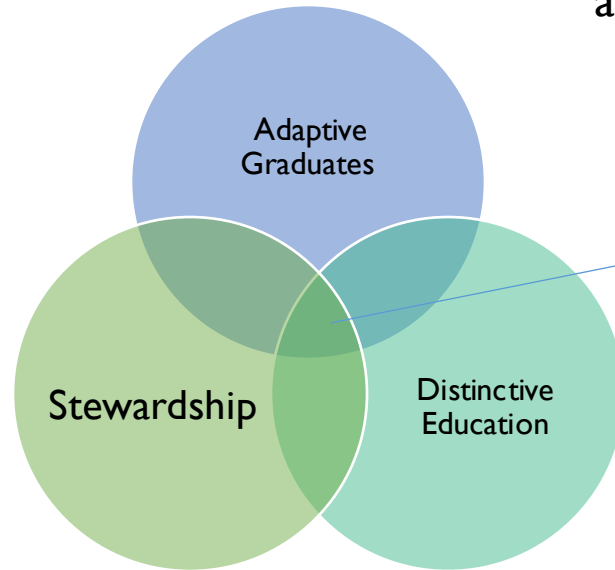
1. Understanding your students (who, what, why, where and when)
2. Un-silencing the student voices (#nothing for us without us)
3. Co-creation and collaboration of all university stakeholders (people vs student centered)
4. Enhanced student cycle (can either enable or inhibit student motivation, active participation, success and institutional culture)
5. Measuring tools for impact (improved success, active participation, demonstration of graduate attributes)





STATEMENT OF INTENT

- Our people will be creative, innovative, entrepreneurial and adaptive to changes in the world;
- Our people will participate productively in the development of our region, country and the world;
- Our state-of-the-art infrastructure and systems will enhance an ecosystem created to achieve this vision.



”A holistically developed student, with the agency to influence decisions, engage in critical dialogues and innovative and glocal relevance “



Context- Nothing for us without us

Whose knowledge and voices are we legitimizing ??

Widening participation in higher education

Greater access- but what of greater student success

Skewed throughput and retention rates



Black students in South Africa not succeeding at the same rate or same level as white students(CHE,2013)

IDENTITY, CULTURE AND BEHAVIOUR

The Idea Of The **Thing** (University)

Is Embedded On The **People**(staff and Students)

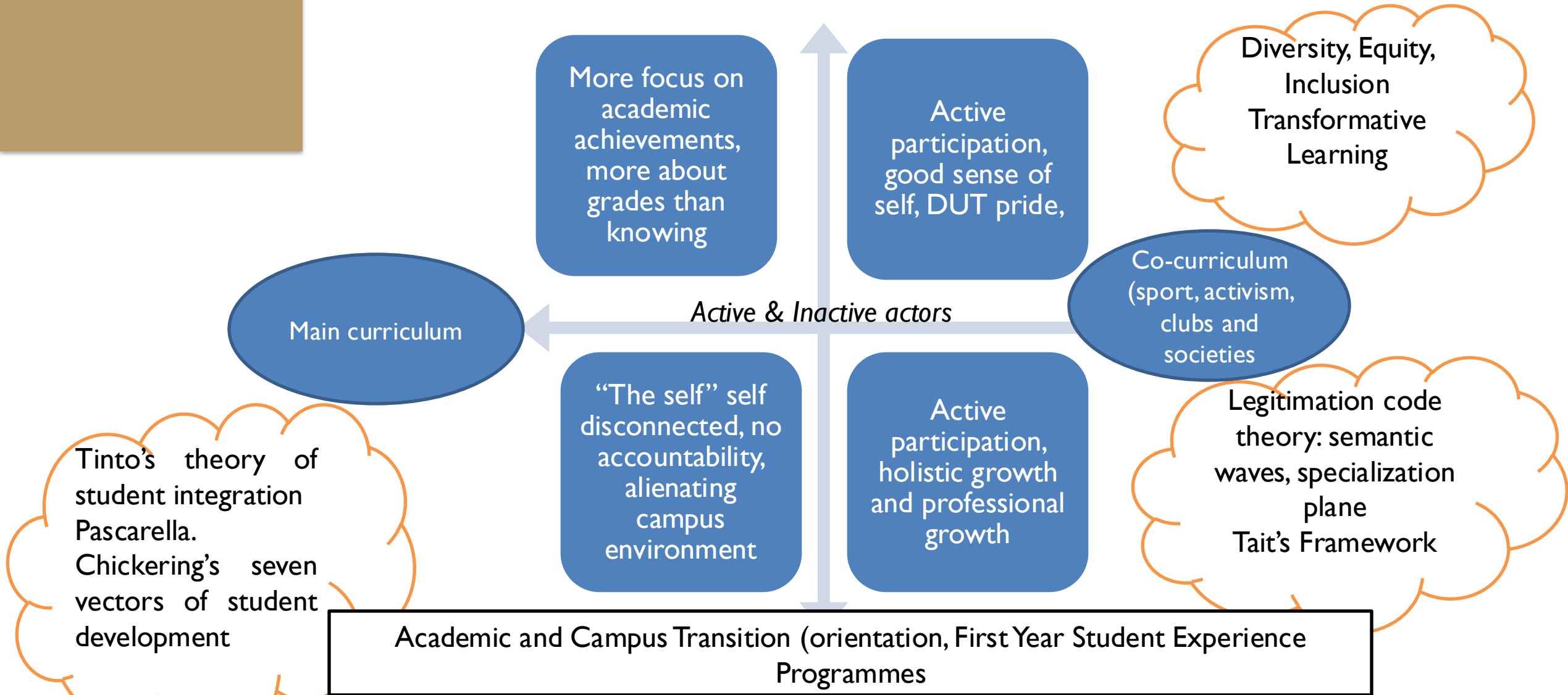
Whose Lived Values; -Principles; Ideas and Customs Based on the **University Culture**

Whose Focus Is on

The **Advancement Of The University** and Its Tenet of Pursuit of **Knowledge** and **Truth**
and who **Acts** And Exhibit **Behavior** that Fosters

Meeting the Needs of The Present **Without Compromising the Ability of The Future Generations** to Meet
their Own Needs

IDENTITY-CULTURE GRID



Tinto's theory of student integration
Pascarella.
Chickering's seven vectors of student development

Where are we picking our students from? Does basic education prepare students for higher education?
Exposure to previous knowledges that either enables/ inhibit their transition to higher education...
student profiles (1st generation etc)



Using design thinking to co-create with the students

How Might we:

- Use our agency to contribute to student success
 - Improve the current academic performance Indicators
- Position student support initiatives in a way that enables and is supportive of the lived and academic experiences



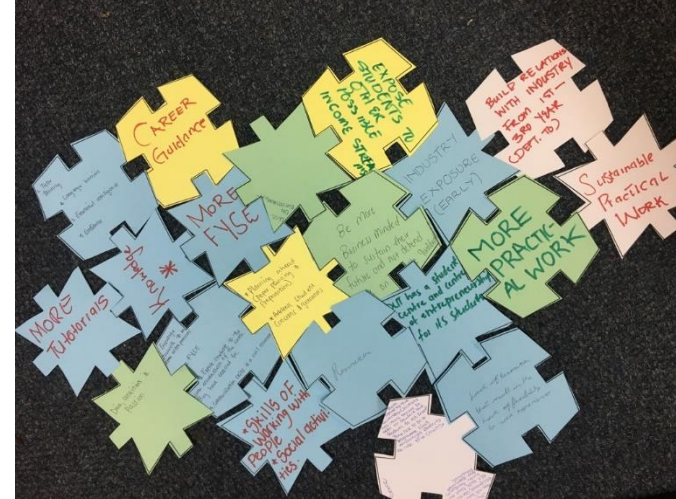


Students' definition of Success in DUT

"A Successful student would be a student who is financial wise, care about their grades, willing to improve and learn new things, take opportunities when offered, join and start clubs to enhance their knowledge" (group2)

"A successful student must have great communication skills, be innovative (new ideas and think outside the box), they must be willing to follow rules and regulation and be teachable. They must have engaged in extra-mural activities, be financially literate, must be confident and demonstrate graduate attributes with good association" (group 10)

"DUT attributes, we want students to embody the graduate attributes from their attitudes, language/tone and behaviour, they must not be graduate by certificates but by knowledge they hold. A student with an acumen to initiate and adapt to changes"



Factors affecting Student Success

Student Engagement and accountability

student academic withdrawal, and participation student accountability, procrastination, lack of motivation

Language proficiency

Language barrier

Social and personal factors

mental health- pressures

Alcohol & drug abuse

Infrastructure

Poor wifi

Cold water and power outages

Not so conducive residences

- (A) * Pressure from family & social media
 * Exposure to information (accurate information)
 * language barrier
 * Adapting to the change of environment (learning methods)
 * Lack of resources: Online
 - Technologically illiterate
 * Student activism
 * Relationships
 * Time management
 * Peer pressure
 * Alcohol/drug usage
 other responsibilities
- Family related intimate relationships friendships*
** Students turn to neglect their studies*
** They assume the responsibility of generating their image as a professional*
They believe that a lot of money and extra-curricular activities are their primary goal of studying
** Others are not aware of the danger that using alcohol & drugs*

LACK OF SUPPORT SYSTEM TO STUDENTS

FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

- Failure of communication from the institution
- Clearance of ^{Preparatory} ~~courses~~ takes a long period of time ^{only happens in the premises not online}
- Not having clarity about the institution's registration process due to failure of communication from the institution, leading to a change in the course of choice.

HIGH RATE IN FAILURE

- No LOVE
- LACK OF KNOWLEDGE
- PLEASE PARENTS
- LAZY LECTURES
- ONLINE CLASSES & FAILURE OF NETWORK
- NO RELOCATION OF DATA

Students are always busy with their own things and they spend more time playing and less time studying

Solutions about MENTAL HEALTH Issues & Sense of Belonging.

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Clubs

- Events teaching students about the negative outcomes from drinking alcohol & smoking on campus.
- Outings: Raise awareness on the dangers of late night clubs.

ALOE:

- Residences with good infrastructure: Electricity, Water, Backups.

House Com.

- Have good House Committee leaders with respect and who are humble & tolerant.

Back-ups

Have back-up for utilities, such as water and electricity.

PRIVACY

Have separated rooms from main.

Support groups

Peer-led support groups can connect students with others who share similar experiences.

Mental health apps

Access apps like calm, Headspace, or Better, help can provide students with virtual support.

Counseling Services

University can offer free counseling sessions with licensed therapists.

Infrastructure

Provide more infrastructure for better studying.

More programs or events for sports for mind refreshing and entertainment.

Talent Shows & Comedy Shows.

Campus events

Organizing events like mental awareness weeks, stress management, or self care workshops.

More help should be granted by the institute regarding seeing psychology & motivation class to uplift students & restore hope.

More fun activities

Sports

More transport should be added or available for sport events.

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Creative, Distinctive, Impactful

More fun activities to avoid loneliness & build friendships with.

Motivation about studying hard for better future.

Language barrier

Hire more people with different languages for overcoming language barrier.

Mindful programs

Workshop or classes on mindfulness, meditation, or yoga can promote relaxation techniques.

Finance

Promote financial support to students so they don't over-spend.

Peer Pressure

- Choose wise friends.
- Know your limits.
- Be mindful.

Job opportunities

Provide with part-time jobs.

Peer Background

- Abusive Parents leading to:
- Depression
- Introverted person.
- Relics

Mental health as a contributing factor

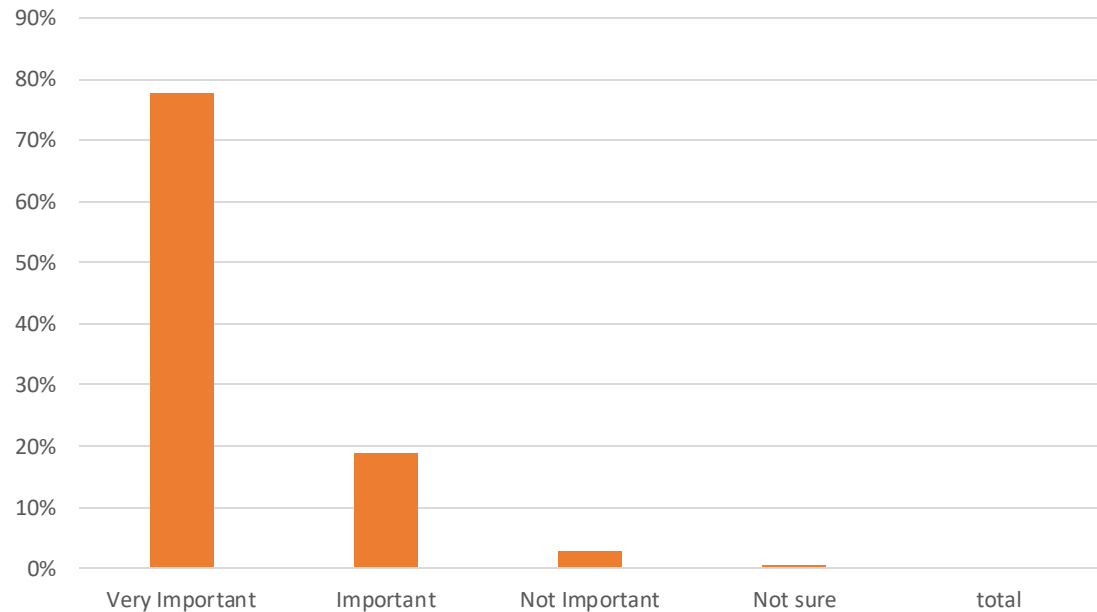
Students realize the interconnectedness of the services, but also student involvement in co-curricular and extra-curricular programmes

Perceptions of student leaders

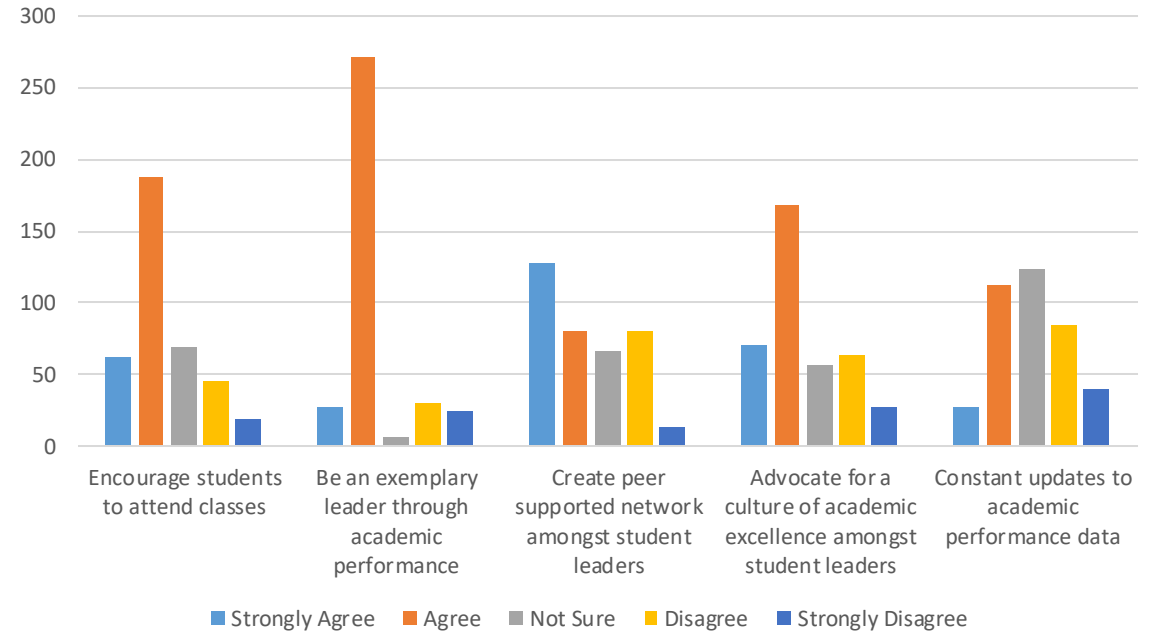
“Academic excellence is one of our key values, we isolate members who do not demonstrate this”

“Lectures needs to do their job, which is to teach and not read slides”

Advocate for student success



Contribution to academic excellence



DUT Navigator Application

THE APP **DUT NAVIGATOR**

1 Go to play store, search 'DUT Navigator', Download

2 Fill in your student's (User name and Password)

3 Watch a tutorial on how to use the App after you login/sign in

4 Use the search panel to be directed to the applicable section

FIND **YOUR** **WAY** **TO** **SUCCESS**

5 Click on 'navigate campus' to see the campus and be directed to that specific venue that one is searching for

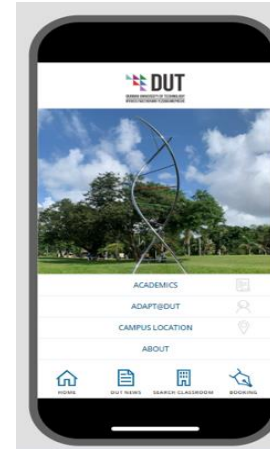
6 When you search either Opportunities or Resources, the panel will take you to it. For resources, information like the date or library, etc. shall appear.

7 When you search for faculties their will be a directive that takes you to facilities available and the information available around them.

Wow Factors

8 Voice COMMANDER FOR PEOPLE WHO DON'T WANT TO TYPE.

- ALARM BUZZER TO REMIND YOU OF CERTAIN EVENTS COMING UP. E.G. COFFEE BREAK (LEAVE STRAIGHT)
- APP TALKS BACK TO YOU.



#Depression has no colour: Awareness Campaign



In response to an increase in suicide cases in residence



Recommendations



Create spaces for student engagements and collaborations



Strategies and methodologies for students to collaborate meaningfully



Offer training and development for student leaders

THANK
YOU

