Student-Centeredness Is...
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Think, Pair, Share

◎ REFLECT on an experience you had as a student, which you would define as student-centered

◎ FIND a neighbor you do not know

◎ SHARE your experience, how it made you feel, and qualities made you define it as student-centered
Our Students

*Incoming Undergraduates*
Student-Centeredness, also known as...

- Student-centered learning
- Learner-centered learning
- Active learning
- Personalized learning
- Engaged learning
- Self-directed learning
- Experiential Learning
- Flexible Learning
Student-Centeredness Defined by the Research

"...ways of thinking and learning that emphasize student responsibility and activity in learning rather than what the teachers are doing. Essentially SCL has student responsibility and activity at its heart, in contrast to a strong emphasis on teacher control and coverage of academic content in much conventional, didactic teaching" (Cannon & Newble, 2000, as cited in Lea, Stephenson & Troy, 2003, p. 321).

"...that knowledge is constructed by students and that the lecturer is a facilitator of learning rather than a presenter of information" (Kember, 1997, as cited in O'Neill & McMahon, 2005, p. 28)
Student-Centered Innovative Models: Organizational Structure

- SC Ethic of Care
- Student Agency Model
- Student-Driven Model
Student Affairs Theories

- Challenge and Support (Sanford)
- Intellectual and Ethical Development (Perry)
- Self-Authorship w/ Learning Partnerships Model as a framework (Baxter-Magolda)
Please share your own definition of student-centeredness and the degree to which the culture and practice of student-centeredness contributes to the university's mission.
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UNC Student Responses

19% identified as male and 81% identified as female.

65% of students had not heard of the term student-centeredness.

From various racial/ethnic backgrounds: 12.5% Black, 43.75% White, 31.25% Asian, 12.5% Bi/multiracial.

25% sophomores, 25% juniors & 50% seniors.
**Student-Centeredness Defined by Our Students**

"I think it means that the learning and school experience is focused on what students' need to get out of school both academically and personally rather than on pushing them to perform a certain way, and that things are catered more to individual needs instead of a one-size-fits-all way of doing things."

"We have talked about this approach at the [academic discipline] school at UNC where students are incorporated into the decision making process especially in areas where an administrative decision would impact students. It is the idea that students often know what decisions will be best for them because they are living the student experience. While administrative personnel have the power to make the decisions their experience at the current moment is slightly outside of the real student life so they may not know to a full extent what is best."

"I hope student-centeredness means that a school or institution's goal is to put the students first before their education in terms of mental and physical wellness."

"I feel like working for [department] has given me a great example of a student-centered organization. I have always been reminded that I am a person and a student before I am an employee. Learning self-care and having such supportive people has helped me to have a great experience. College is a very high stress time of life and attending or working for a student-centered organization is key to students staying healthy and happy instead of overwhelmed and depressed."

"Through understanding student-centeredness, Carolina students and the university writ large would make for a more cohesive and fulfilling student-experience both inside and outside of the classroom. Students would understand that the university and it's faculty and staff have their best interest in mind; and on the other hand, students would recognize the responsibility and accountability they have in their success and happiness at Carolina. If the university was student-centered then I believe that it would look different. The campus would operate in a way that is more inclusive to students/particular students with marginalized identities."
"I don't think the **system** is geared up for all that because I feel **factory** farmed. I am an educational bulimic. They make me **binge and purge all of this knowledge** without any time to absorb or digest it, and I think to be truly student-centered you have to make **space for the individual** in that and the way the system currently works there isn't space for us as individual people" (Lea, Stephenson & Troy, 2003, 328).
Themes in Student & Faculty/Staff Responses

**STUDENTS**

- Most had not even heard of student-centeredness; what communities that those who have heard the term are a part of, and if there is a trend.

- Assumed understanding that the focus is on students and their best interest.

- Slight divide between students who believe student-centeredness is focused on students’ NEEDS and students who believe student-centeredness is focused students’ WANTS.

- Majority of the students agreed that Carolina implements student-centered approaches; however, majority of the students also seem to have never heard of the term at all -> students have searched for ways that their definition of student-centeredness aligns with their experiences, rather than actually identifying the reality of how student-centeredness is implemented.

**FACULTY/STAFF**

- Keeping students at the forefront of university operation/decisions on all levels.

- Recognizing that the student body is not a monolith, but rather there are different needs, learning styles, etc… that have to be taken into consideration to keep students first.

- Including student perspectives in decision-making and responding to student needs.

- Thoughtfulness, consideration, intentionality, and respect toward student backgrounds, perspectives, and needs.

- Balancing needs and wants.

- Providing students with tools, opportunities, and resources for their individual success.
Tenets of Student-Centeredness
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Student Centeredness IS NOT:
- Banking knowledge
- Transmitting content
- Decontextualized
- Objective/fixed
- Risk-averse
- Testing
- Standardized

Student Centeredness IS:
- Bi-Directional/Interdependent
- "Equal" (power-sharing)
- Active/Experiential/Interactive/Experimental
- Embodied/Confluent & Engaged
- Reflexive
- Process & Competence-oriented (deep learning)
- Constructivist (Subjective & Contextualized)
- Challenging
- Responsibility & accountability
- Personalized
Implementing a Student-Centered Approach

Paradigm shift: Aligning theory & practice
Cautious, Intentional Practice
Pitfalls & Challenges

◎ Excess attention on learner neglecting other concerns
◎ Too teacher-driven or overly student-centered
◎ Excuse for teachers to be passive facilitators
◎ Not a catch all for diverse learners
◎ Overly prescriptive or ambiguous
◎ Can compromise educational goals if it is too focused on satisfaction (short-term) rather than learning (long-term)
◎ Demands time & resources
Student Success at Carolina

UNC-Chapel Hill believes all admitted students can thrive in college, graduate, and grow into lifelong learners.

Components of Student Success

We believe student success includes:

1. Exploring & growing intellectually
2. Appreciating diverse perspectives as well as developing one’s own identity
3. Developing social & emotional skills
4. Engaging in meaningful activities, roles, & relationships
5. Cultivating a sense of purpose or vocation

Encouraging Student Success

Success is likely in an environment that:

1. Fosters self-advocacy & resiliency
2. Promotes a growth mindset understanding of intelligence
3. Affirms cultural identities & advances inclusive excellence
4. Encourages academic excellence, integrity, & leadership
5. Demonstrates concern for the well-being of the whole student

CAROLINA EXCELLENCE

GROWTH • LEARNING • ENGAGEMENT
CONNECT • DISCOVER • TRANSFORM
"If [educators] can understand the value of being ‘USEFULLY IGNORANT’ about learning options and possibilities, at the same time as they are EXPERT in their disciplinary field and their pedagogical practice, who are ACTIVE and INVENTIVE in [or out of] the classroom, who CHALLENGE and SUPPORT, who do not make things too easy, and who are NOT THE ONLY SOURCE OF AUTHORITY, who use processes of DISCOVERY, critique, argument and counter-argument effectively, who enjoy learning themselves and who do not rush to rescue their students from complexity- such [educators] will contribute immeasurably to the creative capacity of their students now and in the future” (McWilliam, 2009, p.291).
Moving Forward

Thoughts for the rest of today...

• How will you embody the tenets of student-centeredness in your work?

• Which of the 3 dimensions of SC—students' choice, active nature, power relations—provides the greatest opportunity for your unit?
Thank You

Questions?

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References & Credits


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