

CRITERION 7- INSTITUTIONAL VALUES AND BEST PRACTICES

7.2 Best Practices

A] Title of the Practice: Extending the ambit of student support to promote holistic development

Goal: To provide all kinds of support to students to ensure their physical and mental well being as well as skill development.

The Context: In the current scenario, mental well being has become as important as physical well being because mental health issues are becoming very frequent among students. Given the pandemic situation, it has become all the more important to provide counselling to the students to cope with virtual learning and the new normal. Along with this, skill development is another area that needs to be focused on to ensure that students graduating from college are equipped to deal with challenges that await them in the future.

The Practice: To address the issue of mental well being, our faculty members have one-to-one interactions with the students of their department so that they can share the problems that they face in their academic as well as personal life. Rather than having just one counsellor, faculty members take the initiative of counselling and mentoring the students. During the lockdown, several course-specific and general webinars were organised by the individual departments, NSS, Women's Cell, and IQAC to keep the students engaged and connected. The Women's Cell conducted a special webinar on 'How students can take care of their mental health during the pandemic' where the students could directly interact with the speaker about any issues that they were facing.

After the sudden closure of the college followed by enforcement of the lockdown the classroom lectures were immediately shifted to online mode of teaching so that the teaching-learning does not get hampered. The college administration prepared the student database by contacting the students which was helpful for smooth functioning of digital learning.

Before the lockdown, the college also provided conveyance support to the students in the form of free bus service to and from the nearest auto stand, bus stand, and metro station. This bus service was also available for educational tours, field trips, industrial visits, and excursions organised by various departments of the college for their students.

Coming to skill development, the college ensures that students develop leadership qualities, the ability to work in teams, communicate with students of other colleges and organise large-scale events like annual fests and other cultural and interactive programmes. They are encouraged to participate in intra-college as well as inter-college events of academic and non-academic nature to facilitate their holistic development. Students of other colleges are invited to participate in events organised by the institution to increase interpersonal interaction and exposure. However, such cultural activities have been shifted to the virtual platform to ensure student safety during the pandemic. The college offers certificate courses like Personality Development and foreign language courses so that students can learn new skills and get a better chance of gaining employment in the future.

Evidence of Success: So far the efforts of our faculty members to connect with the students on a personal level have proved successful. All the students are connected to the different subject teachers through dedicated Google classrooms (under G-suite Education). The Whatsapp groups were created as well for easier communication. The students interact with the teachers, receive notifications, and submit their assignments through these platforms.

The bus service was availed by hundreds of students before the lockdown. Given the popularity of this service, several trips were conducted in the morning and the evening so that maximum students of both the shifts got the benefit of this service. All the departments of the college regularly availed the bus service for taking their students for field trips, educational excursions, and industrial visits. Due to this facility, an increased number of initiatives were taken by the department to plan more such visits. When the classes were suspended due to the Covid-19 outbreak, many such industry visits had to be cancelled.

In terms of skill development, the college has a student committee that organises the annual fest 'Ripples' with the support of the administration. They look after all the aspects like arranging sponsors, inviting other colleges to participate, finalising events, carrying out preliminary selections, and inviting judges and guest artists. Students have successfully organised this annual extravaganza along with other events of the college this year. Several events of academic and non-academic nature were included in the annual fest. Students have also secured good positions in inter-college fests and programmes this year.

Problems encountered and resources required: To encourage students to develop a diverse skill set, more certificate courses need to be introduced for the students in the upcoming academic session. These certificate courses have to be conducted virtually for which the required set-up needs to be provided.

Notes (optional)

Contact details:

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B] Title of the Practice: Inclusive Student Admission Process and Financial Support Schemes

Goal: To ensure that meritorious students from different social, economic, and religious backgrounds are provided admission to the college, especially first-generation learners.

The Context: Although the college is a Jain minority institution functioning under the aegis of Shree S.S. Jain Sabha, the admission process is an inclusive one. The institution believes in providing all meritorious students access to high-quality education and a conducive environment for gaining knowledge irrespective of their caste, class, or economic background. Shree S.S. Jain Sabha has taken this initiative to make it easier for students especially from Howrah, Hooghly, and North 24 Parganas to get access to higher education in an affiliated degree college so that they have a better chance of gaining employment in the future.

The Practice: Students from all economic, social, and religious backgrounds are allowed to apply for admission and the final selection is done on the basis of academic merit. A distinctive feature of the college is that it has attracted several first-generation learners over the years who have become rank holders in College.

Another aspect that the college focuses on to make the admission process inclusive is by providing financial support in the form of concessions to students who are not so privileged and scholarships to those students who have secured a high percentage in their class 12 board examinations and University examinations. Students are also given access to government-sponsored scholarships like Kanyashree and Aikyashree based on their eligibility. This type of support is meant for giving an incentive to students to excel in their studies at the undergraduate level and become equipped to pursue post-graduation or join the professional world after graduation.

Evidence of Success: It is very evident from the student database that the college attracts students from the General as well as reserved category, privileged as well as underprivileged milieu, and Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians etc. As mentioned earlier, first-generation learners are also a part of the student strength. One such student from the Department of Commerce is a first-generation learner and has been a college topper in the University Examination scoring 75% marks. He is now preparing for civil service examinations. This shows that the college has managed to make its mark in achieving its goal of providing high-quality education to all categories of students.

Problems encountered and resources required: As the institution is a self-financed one and does not receive any grant from either the central or state government, concessions in admission fees are provided to students selectively based on their economic background or merit. However, the college is in the process of applying for 12 (b) and 2 (f) status under the UGC Act, 1956 so that more financial aid can be given to the students by utilising the grant from the government to make higher education more affordable for all.

Notes (optional)

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