7-8-2016

Change Management Plan of College Admissions Policies and Support for Ex-Offender Students

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Assignment 2
Change Management Plan of College Admissions Policies and Support for Ex-Offender Students

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July 8, 2016

Introduction

In assignment one, the writer reviewed the literature regarding the issue of colleges, universities, or any institution of higher education utilizing criminal background checks to assist in making admissions decisions. Currently, 66% of 273 colleges and universities conduct background checks into prospective students and 25% of those institutions would automatically disqualify the student from an admission if an offense is discovered (Ramaswamy, 2015). The writer's current place of employment which is an institution of higher education (a community college) does make an inquiry at the time of initial application as well as an application for re-entry of one's criminal justice history on the student's admissions application. The disclosure of a criminal justice history will not disqualify the prospective student from matriculation at this college. Upon disclosure of a past criminal offense, the writer's higher education institution will have the prospective student meet with the campus dean of student affairs or their designee to review and acknowledge receipt of the student code of conduct (Broward College, 2016). The writer's higher education institution does not conduct background checks on their own, leaving the responsibility of self-disclosure with the student. However, if the student fails to disclose any offenses and they are found to have misrepresented that information on their application, the student could be subject to disciplinary measures up to and including expulsion from the institution (Broward College, 2016). The writer's institution has an opportunity to institute a change management approach regarding this procedure. While the writer's institution does not disqualify ex-offender prospective students, there is an opportunity to provide a stronger support mechanism to this student population.

Change Management Approach

The writer proposed as an organizational leadership solution in assignment 1, the creation of The Community College Bridge Program (CCBP). The objective of The CCBP is to bridge the educational gap between prison release and the attainment of a postsecondary educational credential. The writer's higher education institution allows access into the college; however, access is not enough, one must be persistent to ensure the optimal opportunity for program completion for this target population which is beneficial to them as well as the greater public. The CCBP would contribute to the reduction of recidivism. Recidivism is defined as one who re-offends after their release from incarceration within a three year period (Schirmer, 2008). Currently, 50% to 70% of ex-offenders re-offend within three years of their release from prison (Esperian, 2010). The targeted population that received their associate's degree had a recidivism rate of just under 40%, those who received bachelor's degree had a recidivism rate of just under 6%, and for master's degree recipients, the recidivism rate was 0% (Esperian, 2010).

In addition to lowering recidivism rates, the writer's higher education institution would be adhering to its strategic plan which concentrates on completion, retention, and enrollment. The writer's college wants to model the CCBP to exceed the national community college rates of 30% and emulate programs such as the Bard Prison Initiative, which has associate of arts degree program completion rates of 97% (Lagemann, 2011). Fuller & Zamani-Gallaher (2016) indicated that community colleges (such as the higher education institution which will pilot the CCBP) are a viable option for prison-based college education as well as ex-offenders seeking on-campus

college education due to their open door policies, affordable pricing, and location. The CCBP desires to model the success of partnerships with prisons and community colleges in California, the partnership between Richland Community College and the Illinois Department of Corrections, and the Education Justice Project hosted by Danville Community College (Fuller & Zamani-Gallaher, 2016).

The CCBP would be an ongoing support mechanism for community college students who are ex-offenders to encourage successful matriculation and successful program completion in the form of graduation. The CCBP would provide services for ex-offender students on campus as well as offenders preparing for release. In modeling the Inviting Convicts to College Program in Wisconsin, the CCBP would provide low or no cost college preparatory courses within the local prison(s) in partnership with the correctional institution(s) (Richards, Reschenberg, & Rose, 2010). The partnership with the correctional institutions would equal to successful academic engagement with those students before release and would encourage them to continue that relationship with the higher education institution upon their release (Borden, Meyer, & Richardson, 2012). Upon notification of the self-disclosure of the prospective student's criminal justice history, the campus student dean or their designee in addition to reviewing the student code of conduct, would make an appointment for the new student to meet with an academic advisor to provide an orientation to the CCBP. The academic advisor would meet with the student to introduce them to the CCBP. The first objective would be to assure the student that due to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), that their status and student records are kept confidential. Ex-offender students who arrive on campus experience a real or perceived social stigma upon release which keeps them from developing the social, professional, and educational ties which will enable lifelong success (Byers, Copenhaver, & Edwards-Willey,

2007). The academic advisor would proceed with introducing the student to the benefits of involvement with the CCBP. The students would have a college-wide support meeting that would meet weekly and hosted by any one of the academic advisors who are trained and assigned to work in the CCBP. The students also would have referrals to no-cost mental health counseling off-campus if it is determined to be needed or if it is requested by the student. Colleges and universities are not readily aware as to how to handle the pressures for these students to adapt to new environments and the ongoing support communication and the addressing of any mental health issues is an essential foundation to their assimilation back into mainstream society as well as to campus life (Byers, Copenhaver, & Edwards-Willey, 2007). The students also would have group social activities, twice per semester.

The CCBP, to be a sustainable academic success tool for those students would model the moderation practices of the Bard Prison Initiative. The moderation practices at Bard would be a meeting typically held at the end of two years with faculty members to review the academic progress to date with plans for successful completion (Lagemann, 2011). The CCBP would expand on the moderation practice by first, assessing the student's career objectives along with assistance from the career counseling department upon the start of their program. The disclosure at the point of application, as well as involvement in the CCBP will enable career counseling to take place to insure that students are not majoring in academic areas which could likely disqualify them from licensing or employment. Licensing boards and special academic programs which could lead into careers such as law, nursing, counseling, and social work could possibly (although not always) disqualify the student from employment, which would necessitate the need for extensive career counseling to insure there is proper direction in one's academic pursuits (Custer B. , 2012). The heart of the moderation practice for the CCBP would have the student

have specific meetings at the program completion points of 25%, 50%, 75%, and the graduating term to ensure academic success, completion, and proper planning for future studies and career preparation.

The CCBP would be the manifestation of the change management initiative at the writer's higher education institution. This initiative and others like it will be an ongoing necessity for higher education institutions moving forward. The United States of America only makes up 5% of the world's population, however, incarcerates 25% of the world's population, which is an alarming ratio (Shermer & Day, 2011). This ratio has translated into 1 in every 31 adults as of 2004, being under criminal justice supervision (Cnaan, Draine, Frazier, & Sinha, 2008). Also, as recently as 2014, 1 in every 4 U.S. citizens have a criminal record of some sort (D'Alessio, Flexon, & Stolzenberg, 2014). These statistics indicate that a significant percentage of U.S. citizens are ex-offenders and will need the assistance of programs such as the CCBP. The CCBP will be the change management initiative which will create higher education institutions into the transformational force in which ultimately ex-offenders go from being tax burdens to becoming taxpayers.

Precontemplation

The change management approach which will introduce the CCBP to the writer's campus community will go through the stages of change as any new initiative in any setting would have to go through.

The first stage of change is the precontemplation stage. Precontemplation is the stage in which there is no intention to change one's behavior in the foreseeable future (Krebs, Norcross, & Prochaska, 2011). During this stage, the challenge would be that the campus community would not be aware of a problem with the writer's higher education institution only making

criminal justice inquiries of prospective students. The rationale behind one not being aware of a

problem as one could indicate that since the writer's higher education institution did not

disqualify the prospective student from admission; this is an issue that does not exist. However,

as an organizational leader, one is reminded that criminal background checks of student

applicants are not a requirement (Dickerson, 2008). The argument then can be made that the

issue of being made aware of a student's criminal justice history is a problem self-created by the

writer's higher education institution. At this stage, of precontemplation, the challenge is that

there is no change in the current behavior and the campus community is unaware of any issues

with the current policy if the campus community is even aware of the institution's policy.

Contemplation

The stage of contemplation is defined as the awareness of an existing problem and there

is serious thought to overcoming the problem. However, a commitment has not been made to

take any action (Krebs, Norcross, & Prochaska, 2011). The writer's higher education institution

does allow ex-offender students to enter its campus community. However there could be a

retention problem, and if this population does not stay in school, the chances of the recidivism

rate go from being a minimum of only 40% to as high as 70% (Esperian, 2010). The retention of

this student population is in danger when the targeted population feels the stigma of being an ex-

offender upon entering the campus community. This stigma is not necessarily created by

members of the campus community. The student could feel that stigma due to having

experiences not universally shared by other students on campus (Borden, Meyer, & Richardson,

2012). At the stage of contemplation, the problem is recognized that this student population is in

need of assistance. The action steps have not been taken for reasons including a lack of awareness as to what the next steps should be (Krebs, Norcross, & Prochaska, 2011).

Preparation

The stage of preparation is defined as the stage in which one is intending to take action in the next month and are reporting small behavioral changes as it relates to the change management initiative (Krebs, Norcross, & Prochaska, 2011). At the writer's higher education institution, the Office of Student Success is designed to assist students with academic challenges and those placed in developmental education courses. The primary mission of the Office of Student Success is to encourage retention through supportive mechanisms such as tutoring, supplemental instruction, an early alert which gives a warning for the need for academic assistance, and student recreational programming.

The Office of Student Success could be the umbrella division which could house the CCBP. The student success specialists (academic advisors) already have experience in working with students from targeted populations that require more attention to insure retention in school. The CCBP would be a natural fit for the office of student success due to the hosting of support meetings, recreational programming, mental health counseling access, and academic monitoring. These actions align with the mission of the Office of Student Success that is seeking success and encouraging retention for students within the writer's higher education institution (Broward College, 2016).

Action

Action is the stage in which individuals modify their behavior, experiences, and environment to overcome their problems or institute the change management initiative (Krebs, Norcross, & Prochaska, 2011). The action plan that takes place at this stage of change is the integration of the CCBP within the Office of Student Success.

The Office of Student Success will now hire more student success specialists to not only service their current objectives within the campus community but also the needs of the ex-offender student population. Upon notification from the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs, the student success specialist will receive the student referral and offer the student the services of the CCBP. The services of the regular support meetings, recreational programming, mental health counseling option, career counseling, the course of study examination, and academic monitoring are offered to the student.

The success of the CCBP is tied to complete institutional buy-in by all employees. When the CCBP is viewed by everyone in the organization as an essential recruitment, retention, and success tool by all employees; then the culture will shift to the program being a part of the organizational fabric. The CCBP becomes part of the organizational fabric when the institutional message is conveyed that the core values of this initiative are consistent with organizational values and its message carried by all institutional employees (Lammers, 2011).

Maintenance

Maintenance is the stage in which people work to prevent from going back to old habits and consolidate the gains attained during the action stage (Krebs, Norcross, & Prochaska, 2011). The CCBP, similar to most programs will be evaluated on its immediate success by the percentage of students that remain matriculated at the writer's higher education institution. On a long term basis, the CCBP will be judged by the percentage of students who graduate with their college credentials, obtain viable employment, and do not re-offend. As the CCBP was created to ensure success for ex-offender students, there could be the possibility that the needs of this targeted population could change and the Office of Student Success, and the CCBP must be flexible to meet those evolving needs without compromising its core mission, values, and function.

Conclusion

As a society, the success of the individual is celebrated not only for that person but also for the good of the community at large. If an individual is incarcerated, upon their completing their prison sentences, they often return to society with no skills, no education, and many opportunities closed out to them. The opportunities in which are available to individuals begin with the attainment of a quality education. The education which is often accessible to ex-offenders would be at a community college due to its location and affordability. As indicated in this change management plan, the writer's higher education institution does not disqualify ex-offenders from attending college, however entry into school is not enough. The literature has indicated that support mechanisms and programming at higher education institutions must be present in for ex-offender students to be retained in school, successful during school, and then

graduate from school. The Community College Bridge Program (CCBP) is the change

management plan that will equal for success for the targeted population and the entire institution.

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