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The Effectiveness and Satisfaction of Division of Student Affairs Program and Prospects of Mindanao State University Main Campus: An Assessment

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the effectiveness of the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) programs at Mindanao State University–Marawi City and the level of satisfaction of students and university employees with basic student affairs and services. A mixed-method research approach was used, combining survey questionnaires with follow-up interviews and a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). A total of 676 respondents participated, consisting of 375 students and 301 MSU employees. The findings indicate that the DSA is generally effective in meeting the minimum standards associated with AACCUP Level I accreditation, particularly in Student Services, Student Welfare, Student Development, and Institutional Student Programs and Services. However, continuous and systematic evaluation was identified as an area that requires stronger institutionalization. Satisfaction with several Basic Student Affairs and Services components, including orientation, job placement, student organizations, handbook development, and selected institutional services, was generally neutral, while concerns were noted in career placement, information dissemination, confidentiality, inclusivity mechanisms, and services for students with special needs. FGD participants identified understaffing, limited or delayed funding, weak inter-office coordination, and insufficient administrative authority as major barriers. Despite these constraints, the DSA was recognized for committed personnel, leadership development, religious inclusivity, crisis intervention, and protection of student rights. The study recommends structural, staffing, budgetary, communication, inclusivity, coordination, and research monitoring reforms to strengthen student-centered service delivery.

Keywords: *Division of Student Affairs, Student Affairs Services, Effectiveness, Satisfaction, Mindanao State University*

INTRODUCTION

Student affairs units are central to the educational experience because they connect academic life with welfare, development, engagement, inclusion, guidance, and institutional support. At Mindanao State University (MSU) Main Campus in Marawi City, the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) carries responsibilities that extend beyond routine administrative transactions. Its programs and services influence how students access support, participate in university life, develop leadership, respond to personal and academic concerns, and experience the institution as an inclusive learning environment. The present study assessed how effectively these functions are delivered and how satisfied students and university employees are with basic student affairs and services.

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The assessment is anchored in the institutional responsibilities identified in Commission on Higher Education (CHED) policies on Student Affairs and Services, particularly CHED Memorandum Order No. 09, series of 2013. The study also considered the domains reflected in the university's accreditation and student-services framework: Student Services Program, Student Welfare, Student Development, Institutional Student Programs and Services, and Research, Monitoring and Evaluation. Rather than asking only whether a service exists, the study examined how visible, consistent, accessible, coordinated, and responsive the services are to the university community.

This concern is especially important in a large and culturally diverse public university. Student affairs delivery in such a context is shaped not only by the quality of individual programs but also by staffing, resources, coordination, communication, organizational authority, and the ability to address the needs of students from different social and cultural backgrounds. The study therefore combined survey data with follow-up interviews and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) data to examine both measurable assessments and the institutional conditions that help explain them.

Specifically, the study described the profiles of student and employee respondents, examined the perceived effectiveness of DSA services, assessed satisfaction with Basic Student Affairs and Services (BSAS), identified challenges and prospects affecting implementation, and developed recommendations for improvement. The results provide a basis for strengthening student-centered service delivery at MSUMain Campus while also contributing to the wider discussion on how student affairs units can support engagement, inclusion, welfare, and institutional quality in Philippine higher education.

Literature Review

Student Affairs, Student Involvement, and Student Development

Student affairs is commonly understood as an educational function that supports the whole student experience rather than a collection of isolated nonacademic services. Astin's (1984, 1999) theory of student involvement emphasizes that development is strengthened when students invest time and energy in meaningful academic and co-curricular experiences. Tinto (1993) similarly highlights the importance of students' academic and social integration in persistence and institutional attachment. These perspectives position student affairs as a bridge between formal instruction and the broader conditions that help students participate, belong, and succeed.

Within the Philippine context, the role of student affairs in promoting engagement and development is also reflected in studies and policy-oriented literature on student services. Santos (2020) focuses on the role of student affairs in fostering student engagement, while Amante et al. (2020) and Mercado et al. (2013) address the evaluation and policy dimensions of Student Affairs and Services (SAS) programs. CHED (2013) formalizes this institutional responsibility by identifying welfare, development, institutional programs, and related support mechanisms as essential components of student affairs work. Taken together, these sources reinforce the idea that effectiveness should be judged not only by program existence but also by implementation, visibility, accessibility, and contribution to student development.

The present study is consistent with this developmental orientation because it evaluates both service effectiveness and stakeholder satisfaction. Leadership activities, rights-based programs, frontline assistance, religious accommodation, crisis support, and student organizations are not peripheral functions; they shape students' day-to-day experience and their capacity to participate in university life. Examining these areas therefore provides an institutional picture of how well the DSA supports the broader educational mission of MSU.

Student Satisfaction and Quality of Student Affairs Services

Student satisfaction provides another important lens for evaluating service quality. Baguio et al. (2019) explicitly link student satisfaction with the role of student affairs in higher education, while Reyes and Gomez (2019) examine challenges and opportunities in managing student affairs in Philippine

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universities. Satisfaction is particularly useful because a service may formally exist yet remain weakly experienced when information is limited, implementation is inconsistent, or access differs across colleges and student groups.

This distinction between availability and experienced quality is central to the present assessment. Orientation, career and job placement, student organizations, handbook development, counseling, information dissemination, and institutional services all depend on communication and coordination. A neutral evaluation may therefore signal more than simple indifference; it can indicate limited visibility, uneven implementation, unclear responsibility, or weak integration among offices. For this reason, the study treated satisfaction results together with interview and FGD explanations rather than interpreting ratings in isolation.

Inclusivity, Access, and Cultural Responsiveness

Higher education institutions are expected to provide services that are responsive to diverse learners. The literature supplied for this study addresses several dimensions of inclusion, including disability support (Cabrera & Delos Santos, 2021; Gutierrez, 2022; Villanueva, 2020), LGBTQ inclusion (Dizon, 2021; Garcia, 2022; Valenzuela & Torres, 2020), indigenous student access and empowerment (Bautista & Morales, 2022; Manlangit & Cruz, 2021; Navarro, 2020), and religious diversity (Delgado, 2020; Martinez & Flores, 2022; Rios & Santos, 2021). These concerns are especially relevant to MSU because student support must operate within a culturally and religiously diverse university community.

Inclusivity is therefore not limited to a single program. It involves policy, communication, staff sensitivity, physical and academic access, confidentiality, representation, and the capacity of university offices to respond to different student circumstances. The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 (Republic Act No. 8371) further reflects the national commitment to recognizing and protecting the rights of indigenous communities. In this study, concerns related to special-needs services, vulnerable groups, confidentiality, and cultural factors affecting trust were treated as indicators of how inclusive and responsive the DSA system is in practice.

Governance, Resources, and Institutional Capacity

The effectiveness of student affairs programs depends on organizational capacity as well as staff commitment. Mendoza (2016) focuses on resource constraints in Philippine state universities and their impact on student affairs programs, while Gajus (2017) addresses staff overwork and service quality. Ramos (2018) examines governance structures in higher education student affairs departments. These concerns are directly relevant to offices that must implement multiple mandated functions with limited personnel, delayed funding, and overlapping responsibilities.

The MSU setting adds another institutional dimension. De Leon (2020) specifically addresses challenges faced by universities in conflict-affected areas using MSU-Marawi as a case, while the current study highlights internal concerns involving authority, inter-office coordination, research visibility, confidentiality, and program standardization. These issues suggest that service quality cannot be attributed solely to the effort of frontline personnel. The structure within which the DSA operates can either enable or constrain its ability to coordinate programs, enforce policy, conduct monitoring, and respond consistently to student needs.

Research Gap and Relevance to the Present Study

The literature establishes the importance of student involvement, satisfaction, inclusive support, governance, and institutional resources, but the available studies do not provide a comprehensive assessment of how these dimensions operate together within the DSA of MSU Main Campus. The present study addresses this gap by combining student and employee assessments with qualitative explanations from interviews and an FGD. It also examines both effectiveness and satisfaction, thereby distinguishing

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between compliance with institutional expectations and the actual experience of services among stakeholders.

By situating the findings within CHED policy and the operational realities of MSU-Marawi, the study provides a context-specific basis for structural and programmatic reform. The mixed-method approach is particularly important because numerical ratings alone cannot fully explain why some programs receive favorable assessments while others remain neutral or unfavorable. The qualitative component helps identify the institutional conditions behind those patterns and supports more targeted recommendations.

METHODS

Research Design

The study used a mixed-method research approach that combined quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative component used survey questionnaires to obtain structured assessments of the effectiveness of DSA services and stakeholder satisfaction with basic student affairs and services. The qualitative component consisted of follow-up interviews and a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) that explored the reasons behind the ratings and documented the challenges, strengths, prospects, and proposed improvements identified by stakeholders. Integrating the two components allowed the study to connect broad rating patterns with the institutional experiences that shaped those patterns.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at Mindanao State University Main Campus in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur. The investigation focused on the Division of Student Affairs and the university programs and services associated with Student Services, Student Welfare, Student Development, Institutional Student Programs and Services, and Research, Monitoring and Evaluation. The locale is significant because MSU serves a large and diverse student population and operates within a social and institutional environment where cultural responsiveness, access, coordination, and continuity of support are especially important.

Participants and Respondent Distribution

A total of 676 respondents participated in the study. Of this number, 375 were students and 301 were MSU employees. Student respondents were profiled according to sex, age, ethnicity, year level, and college, while employee respondents were profiled according to sex, age, ethnicity, length of service, and office or unit affiliation. These two respondent groups provided complementary perspectives: students described the services as users and beneficiaries, while employees provided an institutional perspective on implementation and service delivery.

Table 1. *Respondent Distribution*

Respondent Group	Frequency	Percentage
Students	375	55.47%
MSU Employees	301	44.53%
Total	**676**	**100.00%**

Research Instrument

The quantitative instrument was a survey questionnaire organized around the areas examined in the dissertation. For DSA effectiveness, the assessment covered Student Services Program, Student Welfare, Student Development, Institutional Student Programs and Services, and Research, Monitoring and Evaluation. The satisfaction component focused on Basic Student Affairs and Services, including welfare, development, institutional services, orientation, career and job placement, student organizations, information dissemination, and other student-support functions. The questionnaire produced categorical

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interpretations reported in the study, including favorable or agreement-based assessments, neutral assessments, and areas of disagreement or concern.

The qualitative component used follow-up interview and FGD questions designed to clarify the survey results. These questions explored implementation challenges, staffing and resource limitations, coordination issues, confidentiality, communication, inclusivity, research visibility, organizational authority, and possible reforms. The combined instruments allowed the study to examine both the perceived quality of services and the institutional conditions affecting delivery.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection proceeded through the survey phase followed by qualitative clarification. Student and employee respondents completed the survey questionnaire covering the domains of effectiveness and satisfaction. The responses were organized according to the demographic variables and service areas identified in the study. Follow-up interviews and the FGD were then used to examine recurring concerns and to obtain explanations for areas that received neutral or unfavorable assessments.

The qualitative discussions were also used to identify existing strengths and future prospects. Particular attention was given to staffing, budget availability and release, inter-office relationships, DSA authority, counseling confidentiality, information dissemination, inclusivity, and research and monitoring functions. These qualitative accounts were considered together with the survey results in formulating the conclusions and proposed improvements.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were summarized descriptively. Frequencies and percentages were used for respondent profiles, while the survey results were interpreted according to the response categories reported in the dissertation, such as Agree, Neutral, and Disagree. Domain-level patterns were examined to identify areas of relative strength and areas needing improvement. Because the study was primarily an institutional assessment, the analysis emphasized the practical meaning of the ratings rather than inferential comparison between groups.

Qualitative interview and FGD responses were grouped according to recurring themes. Statements concerning understaffing, delayed or insufficient funding, weak coordination authority, confidentiality, cultural trust, communication, research visibility, and unclear responsibility boundaries were synthesized as implementation challenges. Statements concerning dedicated personnel, leadership development, religious inclusivity, crisis intervention, student rights, and willingness to collaborate were synthesized as institutional strengths and prospects. The qualitative findings were then used to explain and deepen interpretation of the survey results.

Ethical Considerations

The study incorporated informed consent as part of respondent participation. Survey and qualitative information was reported in aggregate or thematic form so that the discussion centered on institutional conditions rather than personally identifying individual respondents. Participation in interviews and the FGD was treated as voluntary, and the study focused on improving services rather than evaluating individual employees. These safeguards were important because some of the issues discussed involved counseling confidentiality, institutional authority, and potentially sensitive experiences of students and staff.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overall Effectiveness of DSA Services

The study found that the Division of Student Affairs was generally perceived as effective in meeting the minimum standards associated with AACCUP Level I accreditation. Favorable assessments were particularly evident in Student Services Program, Student Welfare, Student Development, and Institutional Student Programs and Services. Students recognized fundamental functions such as courteous frontline assistance, leadership activities, rights-based programs, respect for religious practices, crisis intervention, and other support that directly affects everyday university life.

These findings are consistent with the developmental role assigned to student affairs in the literature. Astin (1984, 1999) emphasizes student involvement as a condition for development, while Santos (2020) centers student affairs in the promotion of engagement. The positive assessment of leadership and rights-based activities suggests that the DSA is contributing to dimensions of university experience that extend beyond administrative processing. In the context of CHED (2013), this also indicates that several core student welfare and development functions are visible to the students they are intended to serve.

Research, Monitoring and Evaluation emerged as a comparatively weaker area. The study noted that continuous and systematic evaluation was not as strongly experienced as other DSA functions. This suggests that internal quality-assurance processes may be insufficiently visible, inconsistently implemented, or not yet fully institutionalized. For a student affairs system, this weakness is significant because regular monitoring is the mechanism through which service gaps are documented, feedback is translated into decisions, and successful programs are sustained.

Table 2. *Summary of Reported DSA Effectiveness Findings*

Service Area	Reported Pattern	Interpretive Summary
Student Services Program	Generally favorable / Agree	Core frontline and student-support functions were visible and appreciated.
Student Welfare	Generally favorable / Agree	Welfare-related services were viewed as functioning, although selected areas still require strengthening.
Student Development	Generally favorable / Agree	Leadership and developmental activities were among the recognized strengths.
Institutional Student Programs and Services	Generally favorable / Agree	Institutional support programs contributed positively to the student experience.
Research, Monitoring and Evaluation	Comparatively weaker	Continuous and systematic evaluation requires stronger institutionalization and visibility.

Satisfaction with Basic Student Affairs and Services

The satisfaction findings presented a more mixed picture than the overall effectiveness results. Students and employees evaluated several Basic Student Affairs and Services components as neutral, particularly orientation, job placement, student organizations, handbook development, and selected institutional services. Neutral ratings suggest that the services may exist but are not consistently visible, accessible, or experienced across stakeholder groups. In practical terms, a program can meet a formal requirement while still receiving only moderate stakeholder recognition when communication and implementation vary across colleges or offices.

More unfavorable assessments were reported in areas such as career placement, information dissemination, confidentiality, inclusivity mechanisms, and services for students with special needs. These concerns are closely related to issues addressed in the literature on student satisfaction and service management (Baguio et al., 2019; Reyes & Gomez, 2019). They also intersect with Philippine studies focused on disability support, LGBTQ inclusion, indigenous students, and other marginalized groups

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(Bautista & Morales, 2022; Cabrera & Delos Santos, 2021; Dizon, 2021; Manlangit & Cruz, 2021; Villanueva, 2020). The pattern therefore suggests that the central challenge is not the total absence of student affairs services, but uneven delivery and unequal visibility across specific service areas.

Table 3. *Reported Satisfaction Patterns in Basic Student Affairs and Services*

Area	Reported Tendency	Implication
Orientation	Neutral	Visibility and consistency of orientation activities need improvement.
Job/Career Placement	Neutral to unfavorable	Career guidance, placement linkages, and communication require strengthening.
Student Organizations	Neutral	Support exists but needs clearer coordination and stronger stakeholder awareness.
Handbook Development / Information	Neutral	Information mechanisms should be more consistent and accessible.
Confidentiality	Area of concern / Disagree ratings	Trust and clear confidentiality procedures need reinforcement.
Inclusivity and Special-Needs Services	Area of concern / Disagree ratings	Dedicated support mechanisms and accessible services require institutionalization.

Institutional Challenges Identified in the FGD

The qualitative findings show that many weaknesses in service delivery arise from institutional constraints rather than lack of commitment among DSA personnel. FGD participants repeatedly emphasized chronic understaffing. Around eleven personnel were reported to be handling five mandated sections, including research, which places substantial pressure on the office and limits its ability to expand, monitor, and document programs. This concern is directly relevant to the resource and workload issues identified in the Philippine higher education literature (Gajus, 2017; Mendoza, 2016).

Financial limitations were another recurring concern. Participants described delayed or insufficient funding that prevented some programs from being implemented as planned. At the same time, the DSA was described as having limited administrative leverage over college- and unit-based functions that fall within the broader student affairs mandate. This organizational "dissonance" weakens coordination, program standardization, policy enforcement, and accountability. The issue corresponds to the governance concerns examined by Ramos (2018), suggesting that organizational position and authority can materially affect the capacity of student affairs offices to carry out mandated responsibilities.

Other concerns involved counseling confidentiality, weak research visibility, cultural factors influencing trust, unclear boundaries of responsibility, and uneven information dissemination. These findings are particularly significant in the MSU-Marawi context because the effectiveness of student support depends on whether students feel that services are trustworthy, culturally responsive, and easy to access. De Leon (2020) situates MSU-Marawi within a wider discussion of institutional challenges in conflict-affected settings, reinforcing the importance of stable, coordinated, and responsive support systems.

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Table 4. *Major FGD Themes on Challenges and Prospects*

Theme	Evidence from the Study	Institutional Implication
Understaffing	Around 11 personnel handling five mandated sections	Limits program delivery, specialization, monitoring, and documentation.
Funding constraints	Programs affected by delayed or insufficient funds	Reduces continuity and scope of welfare and development initiatives.
Limited coordination authority	Weak leverage over related college/unit services	Produces inconsistent policy implementation and fragmented service delivery.
Confidentiality and trust	Concerns regarding counseling and sensitive services	Can discourage students from using services that require privacy and confidence.
Communication and research visibility	Weak awareness of programs and limited dissemination of research/evaluation	Reduces stakeholder participation and evidence-based improvement.
Existing strengths	Committed personnel, leadership development, religious inclusivity, crisis intervention, student rights	Provides a foundation that can be expanded if structural support improves.

Prospects and Proposed Improvements

Despite the constraints, the study identified strong prospects for improvement. FGD participants consistently recognized the dedication, professionalism, and perseverance of DSA personnel. Leadership development, religious inclusivity, crisis intervention, and protection of student rights were repeatedly identified as functional strengths. These results indicate that the DSA already has a foundation of programs and personnel that can support institutional reform; the challenge is to provide the organizational conditions needed for those strengths to operate consistently and at greater scale.

The most prominent structural recommendation was consideration of elevating the DSA into a Vice Chancellorship. Participants viewed this as a way to strengthen coordination authority, policy implementation, and financial autonomy. Additional recommendations included increasing plantilla positions, hiring specialized personnel, designating college-level student affairs coordinators, improving budget support and fund release, strengthening orientation and information campaigns, expanding career services, institutionalizing support for vulnerable groups, and formalizing Research, Monitoring and Evaluation.

The proposed reforms also emphasize communication and evidence. Regular orientation, collegebased information drives, stronger digital channels, routine evaluation, and dissemination of research findings can make existing programs more visible while helping the university identify service gaps earlier. The findings therefore point toward a dual strategy: preserve and expand high-performing programs while simultaneously correcting structural weaknesses in staffing, authority, coordination, inclusivity, and monitoring.

Table 5. *Priority Improvements Proposed from the Findings*

Priority Area	Proposed Improvement	Expected Contribution
Organizational structure	Consider elevation of DSA to a Vice Chancellorship or equivalent stronger administrative status	Improved authority, coordination, accountability, and policy enforcement.
Human resources	Increase plantilla positions, hire specialized staff, and designate collegelevel coordinators	Reduced workload and more responsive, specialized services.

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Budget and operations	Provide stable funding and timely release of program resources	Greater continuity and implementation of mandated programs.
Communication	Regular orientations, college-based information drives, and stronger digital platforms	Higher awareness, participation, and service accessibility.
Inclusivity and welfare	Dedicated mechanisms for PWDs, indigenous students, LGBTQ students, solo parents, and other vulnerable groups	More equitable and student-centered support.
Research, Monitoring and Evaluation	Create or strengthen a dedicated RME function and regularly disseminate findings	Evidence-based planning, quality assurance, and continuous improvement.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

When the quantitative and qualitative findings are considered together, a consistent pattern emerges. The DSA is not an ineffective office; rather, it is an office with visible strengths operating within institutional constraints that reduce the consistency and reach of its services. Favorable ratings in student services, welfare, development, leadership, rights, religious inclusivity, and crisis support demonstrate a functioning foundation. Neutral and unfavorable satisfaction ratings identify the points at which that foundation becomes less visible or less reliable to stakeholders.

The FGD explains why these differences occur. Understaffing makes it difficult to sustain multiple mandated functions; funding limitations restrict implementation; weak administrative authority complicates coordination; and communication gaps reduce awareness even when programs exist. Concerns about inclusivity and confidentiality further show that access is not only a matter of having a program but also of creating trust, appropriate procedures, and support structures for diverse students. In this sense, the mixedmethod findings strengthen one another and provide a more actionable institutional diagnosis than either component could provide alone.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the Division of Student Affairs of Mindanao State University-Main Campus is fulfilling many of its foundational responsibilities and has substantial strengths that can support further institutional development. Students generally recognize the effectiveness of key DSA functions, particularly those related to student services, welfare, development, leadership, student rights, religious inclusivity, and crisis support. These positive findings demonstrate that the DSA contributes meaningfully to the day-to-day university experience and to the broader developmental role of student affairs.

At the same time, stakeholder satisfaction is uneven. Neutral assessments in orientation, job placement, student organizations, handbook development, and selected institutional services, together with concerns involving career placement, information dissemination, confidentiality, inclusivity, and services for students with special needs, show that access and quality are not experienced consistently across service areas. The comparatively weak Research, Monitoring and Evaluation function further indicates a need for stronger institutional mechanisms for continuous assessment and quality improvement.

The qualitative findings demonstrate that these gaps are closely connected to broader institutional conditions. Limited staffing, inadequate or delayed funding, fragmented coordination, insufficient administrative authority, unclear responsibility boundaries, and communication weaknesses constrain the DSA's capacity to deliver its mandate uniformly. Nevertheless, the commitment of personnel and the presence of high-performing programs provide a strong foundation for reform. Strengthening organizational authority, human resources, budget support, inclusive services, inter-office coordination, communication, and research-monitoring functions can transform current limitations into opportunities for a more responsive and student-centered system of support.

Recommendation

MSU administration may prioritize structural and operational reforms that directly address the constraints identified in the study. The organizational status of the DSA should be reviewed to determine how greater coordination authority and clearer responsibility can be established. Staffing should be increased through additional plantilla and specialized positions, and college-level coordination mechanisms should be considered so that student affairs policies and services are implemented more consistently across units. Stable budget allocations and timely release of funds are also necessary for sustained program delivery.

The DSA should strengthen communication, career and welfare services, inclusivity programs, confidentiality procedures, and Research, Monitoring and Evaluation. Regular orientations, college-based information drives, accessible digital platforms, and systematic dissemination of evaluation results can improve awareness and participation. Dedicated support mechanisms for students with disabilities, indigenous students, LGBTQ students, solo parents, and other vulnerable groups should be institutionalized in line with the university's commitment to equitable service. Future research may use comparative, longitudinal, or unit-level designs to examine how reforms affect satisfaction, engagement, retention, mental health support, and the long-term quality of student affairs services.

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