

The Supporting Role of College and University Libraries in Student Success

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The Supporting Role of College and University Libraries in Student Success

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Abstract. The number of students who have difficulties attending school is increasing in Japan. Libraries have not focused on these students, and their supports for such have been inadequate. However, these students are also members of colleges and universities, and therefore they are potential library users. In this study, we focus on new services for students who have difficulties attending their classes. We will explain the framework of this study and discuss the role that college and university libraries play in providing academic support for student success.

Keywords: college and university library, librarian, academic support, student support, higher education, student success

1 Introduction

University libraries have been providing various supports for students who visit or learn in them. For example, the library is responsible for research support guidance including first year orientation, the use of the database, and regular curriculum subjects. In addition, some libraries have started to provide supports for active student learning and interactive spaces, like learning commons. They provide opportunities and places for active learning to occur. The services mentioned above are provided for the highly scholastically conscious students.

On the other hand, there are students with school refusal behavior who avoid their classes due to emotional distress. Libraries have not focused on these students and their supports for such have been inadequate. However, these students are members of the colleges and universities, and they are potential library users.

In this study, we focus on new services for students with school refusal behavior, who avoid their classes. In this paper, we will explain the framework of this study.

2 Related Statistics

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology in Japan has reported that the "admission status of the higher education institutions" in fiscal year 2014 was 51.5% [1]. The higher education institutions referred to herein include universities and colleges. The Ministry released a report entitled 'About the Situation of Leaving School Halfway or Temporary Absence from School of the Student' on September 25, 2014 that compared the totaled results of fiscal years 2007 and 2012 [2]. We focus on the rates of "poor academic performance" and "other" from among this data because these two items are considered to include students who require academic support. Of the reasons for dropping out of school, the rate of "poor academic performance" was 14.5% in 2012 and 12.7% in 2007, and the rate of "other" was 25.3% in 2012 and 31.5% in 2007. In addition, of the reasons for taking a leave of absence, the rate of "poor academic performance" was 4.4% in both 2012 and 2007, but the rate of "other" increased from 43.2% in 2007 to 47.6% in 2012.

We infer that "other" includes many students who could not attend their classes for some reason, students who could not concentrate on schoolwork, and students who could not attend college for some reason. We think that the library can provide academic support for those students whose actions were attributed to "poor academic performance" in the statistics.

It should be noted that, in this statistic, as a condition of a student who took a leave of absence, school life maladjustment, study abroad, illness or injury, and economic reasons are also included. In this paper, we will be paying attention to "poor school performance" and "other." Furthermore, we consider that, in some cases, students could avoid absence or withdrawal from school via academic support from the library.

3 Framework of the Supporting Role in Student Success

Services for those students who required academic support have not been performed individually. The library or a librarian thought about how to support them, and it has been decided that it would be very useful to work with the faculty and other departments.

When the library proposes academic support, it is regarded as one of the departments of the university. The library can provide university-wide support if it collaborates or works with other departments. In addition, academic opportunities must be equal for all of the students at the school. The university is responsible for providing academic support and student life support for the admitted enrollment. Therefore, it is necessary that the library also provide support for all of the students.

As we discussed above, the number of students who have difficulties attending their classes is increasing in Japan. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the role college and university libraries play in providing academic supports. In this section, we describe the target students and identify the possible roles of the library.

Students at the university are categorized into four groups, shown in Figure 1, according to their attitudes about attending classes and their academic performance. If

students had an attitude of wanting to attend their classes, they would spend campus life without any difficulties and graduate from the university (the upper right quadrant). In this study, we focus on students who avoid their classes and are without academic success (the lower left quadrant). We refer to these students as "students with school refusal behavior."

		Attitude about attending class.	
		No/Less	Yes/Mostly
Academic performance	Yes/Success	Dose not always attend class, but is nonetheless successful academically.	Always attends class and is naturally successful.
	No/Fail	Avoids class and fails.	Attends most classes, but still fails.

Figure 1. Students' attitudes about attending class and academic performance.

There were students who avoided their classes, and then they would take a leave of absence or withdraw. According to their stories, although they wanted to attend class, they tended to be frequently absent. This makes it difficult to obtain credits. In the process of providing support, the reasons for scholastic difficulty, such as cognitive factors or a lack of literacy skills, may be recognized. In these cases, collaboration with specialized departments and experts is required.

We summarize the framework of the academic supports for students who exhibit school refusal behavior in Figure 2. Students with school refusal behavior may receive personal supports and organizational supports. The personal supports are provided by family, friends, counselors, and psychiatrists. In addition, the faculty provides supports occasionally on an individual basis. These students generally intend to receive personal supports. However, there is a limitation to the supports provided by non-experts; therefore, organizational supports are also needed. Organizational supports are provided by departments, like schools, school affairs, health centers, and libraries. Various supports for these students have been provided independently because of privacy issues. However, it would be easier to understand student status and identify their problems if the departments shared this information. Their collaboration contributes to providing better supports. The library is not able to provide supports that solve all student problems, but they could provide comfortable places, lectures, chances to make friends, and human support.

In this study, we plan to investigate the role that libraries play in supporting students who exhibit school refusal behavior. In terms of academic support, there is an interesting report [3] that states that the library provides independent academic support.

However, reports about academic support from entire universities have not yet been seen.

It is worthy to note that a tweet from a librarian of the Kamakura City Public Library stated, “Children who are really afraid of going to school. Come to library.” As an example of library could help the users [4].

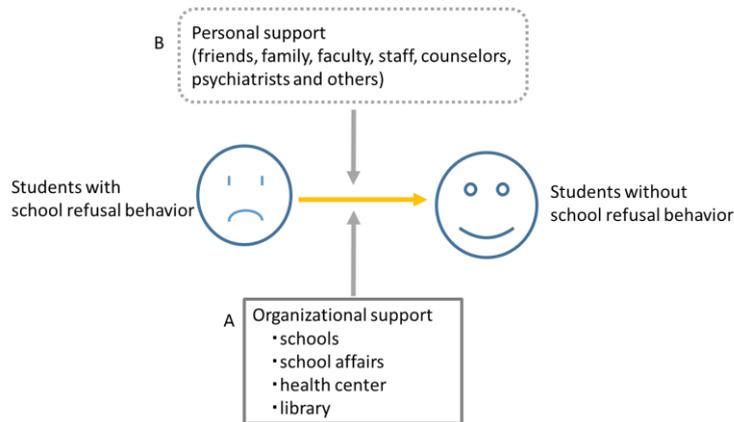


Figure 2. Framework of academic supports for students with school refusal behavior.

4 Methodology

Based on the framework, we plan to conduct a questionnaire survey to learn the current status of academic supports for students with school refusal behavior in universities. In this survey, we focus on collaboration between the faculty and the office staff among different departments. We also plan to interview the office staffs and health center specialists. If there are libraries that provide unique supports, we plan to visit them and investigate said supports.

After analyzing the questionnaire survey, conducting exploratory investigations, and holding interviews, we will propose effective academic supports for students exhibiting school refusal behavior.

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