

## Research Article

# EXPLORING THE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES IN THE ADVANCED EDUCATION PROGRAM

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### ABSTRACT

This paper covers the SorSU GS's extensive delivery of student services and their impact on the students' academic careers. This study reveals key graduate school factors identified through detailed respondent profiles with demographic and academic backgrounds. Understanding these profiles is essential for academic knowledge integration. This research also shows students' evolving preferences for teaching and learning modalities, which affects their comprehension and interaction. A complete review of university staff service quality begins with a focus on friendliness and accessibility, which are vital to students' performance and engagement. This study also examines participants' satisfaction with the academic institution's many services and initiatives for students. Finally, incorporating student recommendations aimed to greatly improve student affairs and services. The goal is to enhance service delivery to revive Sorsogon State University Graduate School (SorSU-GS) students' academic aspirations. This encourages the university's service development to consistently enhance the quality of learning by addressing the students' needs and requirements with high-quality services.

**Keywords:** Academic Support Services, Advanced Education, Preferences for teaching and learning modalities, Students' Perspectives, Philippines.

### INTRODUCTION

Students are the most vital constituents of every educational institution. Together with students' growth and placements, student satisfaction is one of the primary markers of a university's progress. Taking a more intentional approach to education beyond the classroom is an effective way for an institution to address some issues and demonstrate that universities are not just for students' cognitive, but also a holistic development. Research and teaching in the classroom, as well as lifelong learning and fostering the personal growth of students, must be among the academy's objectives. The type of satisfaction with the services provided by the institution may affect their performance and in attaining the deliverables of the academe.

Students' critical role in educational institutions is emphasized, as is the significance of student satisfaction as a fundamental metric for measuring the progress of a university. This underscores the necessity for higher education institutions to embrace an all-encompassing education philosophy that transcends conventional classroom instruction. Institutions can exhibit their dedication to fostering well-rounded individuals and effectively tackle a range of challenges by prioritizing students' holistic development, which encompasses personal growth and continuous learning.

The overarching aim of a university should extend beyond symphony and instruction in the classroom to incorporate the development of students personally. The students' performance and their capacity to accomplish the objectives established by the academic institution can be substantially influenced by their level of satisfaction with the services rendered by the institution. This observation emphasizes the intrinsic relationship that exists among academic achievement, student contentment, and the overall prosperity of academic establishments.

Considerably, the epidemic had a significant impact and precipitated a "dramatic" transformation in the sphere of education, as most countries moved to online schooling in March–April 2020, profoundly transforming traditional educational activities. In the past, this form of education (online or remote learning) was either not utilized at all or was used infrequently, making its introduction a significant challenge for students, teachers, institutions, and parents. Many common and comparable actions were implemented by nations to combat the COVID-19 outbreak. The pandemic's consequences and the precautions implemented have repercussions in numerous sectors, including tourism, the economy, social activities, health, education, and cultural organizations. The higher education sector, including the Sorsogon State University Graduate School, responded positively and swiftly to the transition to online education. A platform for online education that was already in existence was implemented.

According to Kamran, Afzal, and Rafiq, (2022) over the years, measuring student satisfaction with services and facilities has been challenging. Several scholars have endeavored to establish a method for measuring the satisfaction of students attending various educational institutions. They found that there is variation in respondents' levels of satisfaction among programs and semesters, but there is no difference between respondents' levels of satisfaction across shifts and genders. Based on research findings, they recommend that comprehensive strategies and policies be developed to increase student satisfaction with the university's services and facilities.

Moreover, it was stressed by Kanwar and Sanjeeva (2022) that higher education institutions worldwide are increasingly competing for students on a national and international scale. They work to boost student satisfaction which can only be possible if all services that contribute to "academic life" are of an adequate standard. They contend that student satisfaction can be defined as an attitude that results from an evaluation of the student's educational experience and the institution's services and facilities. They serve as important evaluators of an institution's performance; hence, student satisfaction surveys are essential.

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This study examines how students in advanced education expressed their opinions on various issues on student services, anchored on the CMO no. 9 series of 2013. The institutions need to consider important input on the experiences of the students, their level of satisfaction with the strengths of the activity, and the parts that require improvement. This study also aims to improve the quality of services offered, for a more sustainable type of education.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this paper is to gain a comprehensive understanding and assessment of the delivery of student services in relation to educational experiences of the SorSU GS students. Primarily, study (1) described the profile of the respondents to understand their demographic characteristics, academic backgrounds, and other relevant details that influence their experiences at the university. Also, this paper (2) determined the preferred learning modalities, considering the various ways in which they interact with and comprehend educational material. Furthermore, this paper also (3) evaluates the quality of delivered services of the personnel in the university in terms of accessibility and courtesy. It also (4) determined the level of satisfaction of the respondents on the student affairs services and programs provided by the university. Moreover, the paper (5) identified the respondent's suggestions through themes, that aimed to improve the delivery of student affairs and services.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The study used a descriptive type of research. It describes the profile of the respondents, identifies the learning modality preference of the GS students, the accessibility and courtesy of the university personnel, the student services they are familiar with and believed to be provided by the Graduate School, the level of satisfaction of the respondents on student welfare, student development, institutional student programs and services, and the challenges and proposed solutions along these areas of Student Development Services (SDS). A questionnaire was used to gather the data. The data was organized and treated using appropriate data analysis procedures.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This paper discussed the delivery of the student services at SorSU GS and show how these services are connected to the students' educational journey. The profile of the respondents is presented by looking into their demographics and academic backgrounds. They could be significant in their acquisition of learning in the graduate school. The preferred teaching-learning modality of the students in interacting and gaining understanding is also provided and discussed. The study also carefully looks at the quality of services provided by university staff, paying special attention to accessibility and politeness that are important for students' general satisfaction and participation. This paper measures how satisfied respondents are with the wide range of services and programs the university offers for students. Finally, this paper put together the useful ideas that the students recommend, with the goal of improving how student affairs and services are provided, which will make the academic journey of SorSU GS students better.

### 1. The profile of the respondents.

Table 1 presents the profile of the graduate school student-respondents according to age, gender, degree program enrolled in, number of semesters in SorSU GS, Solo parent, indigenous group,

and disability. Table 1-A shows the respondents came from the different age groups.

**Table 1-A** Profile of the Graduate School Students according to Age

Age Range	Freq	%
Below 25	22	9
25– 34	148	58
35–44	64	25
45–54	17	7
55–and above	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>100</b>

The majority or 58% of the respondents are in their early adulthood. Early adulthood is the age group who are typically vibrant, active, healthy, and focused on friendships, romance, childbearing, careers, and professional development. Following this range is the 25% coming from the early middle age. Nine percent (9%) are below 25 years old and are 1-3 years graduates from college education. Only 8% of the enrollees belonged to the late middle age group but none from late adulthood or those from ages 60 and up.

This would imply that most of the students enrolled in the graduate school are in their early adulthood. They frequently find themselves engaged in academic pursuits, and career initiations. The least percentage of the enrollees are in the late middle group who may not be nearing retirement but in the late adulthood, could be preoccupied with future-oriented endeavors or career changes. The study of Meier (2020) showed that students ages 28 years old and above dominated the enrollment in the statistics course in the University of Zurich. His findings indicate that the requirement for adult education increases with age, and that students under the age of 28 may not be prepared for adult education. Moreover, the study of Lorenzetti, Shipton, Nowell, Jacobsen, Lorenzetti, Clancy, and Paolucci, (2019) probed on the benefits of peer mentoring in the graduate school. Accordingly, those in the early adulthood have experiences that benefit most students who participate in formal peer mentoring programs. Peer mentoring has been found to have a positive impact on developmental outcomes in the academic, social, psychological, and career domains of graduate education.

Table 1-B revealed that there are more male respondents in graduate school than female. Seventy-one percent (71%) are male and only 28% are female.

**Table 1-B** Profile of the Graduate School Students according to Gender

Gender	Freq	%
Male	181	71.5
Female	72	28.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>100</b>

This implies that more males responded to the online instrument cascaded by the office of the Graduate School Student Development Services (GS-SDS) than females. Technology skills, internet connectivity, and quality of gadgets may have influenced the turnout of the survey. These findings may suggest that, on average, males in the surveyed population may have greater technological confidence or proficiency than females. This may be an indication of more widespread societal patterns in which males are more inclined or actively participate in technology-related endeavors, which impacts their level of familiarity with online tools such as surveys. These findings find ally in the study of Shahzad, Hassan, Aremu, Hussain and Lodhi (2021) who concluded that in Malaysian universities, males

and females have varying degrees of proficiency about e-learning, according to the findings.

Table 1-C reflects the degree programs of the respondents. For master’s degree programs, the Master of Arts in Education has the greatest number of student responses.

**Table 1-C** Profile of the Graduate School Students according to Degree Programs Enrolled In

Degree Programs Enrolled In	Freq	%
MAEd English	13	5.1
MAEd Math	17	6.7
MAEd Filipino	57	22.5
MAEd Science Education	18	7.1
MAM AS	47	18.6
MAM PA	29	11.5
MEd Educ Management	16	6.3
MAT-TE Auto	2	0.8
MAT-TE Elec	2	0.8
MAT-TE FSM	5	2.0
MAT-TE Home Economics	29	11.5
DPA	2	0.8
EdDLM	7	2.8
Ph.D. Filipino	4	1.6
Ph.D. Mathematics	5	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>100</b>

It is composed of 22.5%, 7.1%, 6.7%, and 5.1% from majors in Filipino, Science Education, Math, and English respectively. Masterin Management Program follows with 18.6% from the major in Administration and Supervision and 11.5% from the major in Public Administration. Master of Arts in Teaching Technology Education came next with 11.5%, 2%, 0.8%, and 0.8% responses from majors in Home Economics, Food Service Management, Automotive, and Electrical respectively. Finally, the master’s in education in Education Management provides 6.3% responses.

On the other hand, the doctoral programs have a cumulative result of 7.2 % responses. These are from Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Management, Doctor of Philosophy in Mathematics Education, Doctor of Philosophy in Filipino, and Doctor of Public Administration. There was no response obtained from the Doctor of Philosophy in Language Education.

**Table 1-D** Profile of the Graduate School Students according to No. of Semesters in SorSU GS

No. of Semesters in SorSU GS	Freq	%
1	55	21.7
2	82	32.4
3	38	15.0
4	50	19.8
5	11	4.3
6	14	5.5
7	3	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1-D shows that most responses from the survey came from 21% and 32.7% of graduate students who are one and two semesters old respectively in the university. They are considered newbie’s or newcomers and are expected to be highly enthusiastic to participate in any satisfaction survey and activities in the school. Students who stayed for four, five, and six semesters are 19.8%, 4.3%, and 5.5% respectively. Results imply that students who stayed longer were not

able to answer the survey. They may be those students who have completed academic requirements (CAR) and are enrolled in thesis/dissertation writing. They are usually the less informed individuals on graduate school activities because they are too focused on doing their data collection and thesis or dissertation writing. They rarely report to the campus or communicate with their previous professors unless they need to have a face-to-face meeting with their advisers or a scheduled oral defense. Moreover, those students who are about to complete their coursework may have ignored the survey with the belief that the newbies may already have provided adequate responses. The findings can be supported by the study of Wu, MJ, Zhao, K. Aime, F. (2022) claiming that a greater response rate may also be obtained by pre-contacting possible respondents, combining online surveys with other forms of surveys, and calling respondents to remind them about the online survey.

**Table 1-E** Profile of the Graduate School Students according to Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Freq	%
Indigenous	3	1.2
Non-Indigenous	250	98.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1-E shows that from among the respondents, only 3, or 1.2% belong to the indigenous groups while the majority, or 98.8% of the respondents are not ethnic. The findings imply that there is a very small number of ethnic groups that pursue advanced education. This is a universally accepted truth since ethnic groups are considered minorities in society. This idea was in agreement in the paper of Assari, and Bazargan (2019) which mentioned that the education is of lower quality for racial and ethnic minority groups.

**Table 1-F** Profile of the Graduate School Students according to Disability

Disability	Freq	%
With Physical disability	1	0.4
No disability	230	90.9
Does not know	3	1.2
Prefer not to answer	19	7.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1-F reflects the profile of the graduate school students according to disability. Interestingly, while most respondents are physically and mentally able, 19 respondents preferred not to answer for whatever reason. This finding implies that mental health issues due to stress and anxiety may be some of their considerations in selecting their type of disability. Unfortunately, their belief that they may be suffering from any mental disability may need confirmation from the appropriate medical experts and practitioners which they have not yet consulted. There are 3 who do not know whether they have or do not have any disability while there is 1 who confirmed that he is physically disabled. An awareness campaign on the types of disabilities may be conducted to the students for proper information and guidance.

Along with the implication on the graduate school student with disabilities, Pionke (2020) considered that practical application education is imperative in the realm of accessibility and disability, if not more so, than the theoretical education that students are presently acquiring. The survey respondents identified empathy as a necessity—the capacity to connect with and comprehend the emotional state of others. Finally, the importance of valuing inclusion in spaces, services, research, and decision-making was also cited as a requirement.

## 2. Preferred Learning Modalities of the Graduate School Students

Like most advanced education learning institutions, the instructional modality employed in graduate school during the pre-COVID pandemic time is face-to-face classroom teaching and learning. However, this mode has been shifted to remote instructional approaches using modular, online, and offline platforms and strategies. In this survey, under the post-Covid period, table 2 discloses the students preferred learning modalities. Blended learning emerged to be the popular student choice with 50.6% of the responses. This requires the teacher and the students to conduct online and face-to-face classroom learning. Online covers synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning processes. It is the current modality adopted in graduate school. On the other hand, there are 28.9% who opted for online learning utilizing synchronous and asynchronous strategies. They are those students residing or working outside the province and are from significantly far locations but with strong internet connectivity. Moreover, 10.3% of the respondents go for the idea of reverting to the pre-Covid modality. Actual face-to-face and formal classroom modes are their picks. They may be those students who believe in a traditional classroom setup, non-techy individuals, or those with no internet accessibility in their areas.

**Table 2.** Preferred learning modalities of the GS students.

Learning Modality	Freq	%
Learning Packets/ Printed Modules	1	0.4
Online Learning (both synchronous and asynchronous)	73	28.9
Combination of printed Modules and Online synchronous learning	14	5.5
Online synchronous learning	11	4.3
Face-to-face learning (On-site learning)	26	10.3
Blended learning (Online and face-to-face onsite learning)	128	50.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>100</b>

A combination of the printed modules and online with synchronous and asynchronous learning was preferred by 5.5% of the respondents. They are those students who are residents of far-flung areas and do not have a stable internet to download large files. Furthermore, they may be those students who just want to attend virtual sessions but are not advocates of online Instructional Materials and output repositories like Google Classroom and SorSU Learning Management System (LMS). 4.3% of the respondents wish to have online synchronous learning only. They are those students who are comfortable having just virtual sessions throughout the semester including online examinations. This small percentage of students might be compliant with all the requirements necessary for online transactions.

**Table 3.** Assessment data in terms of university personnel accessibility and courtesy.

	Accessible(A)	Rank	Courteous (C)	Rank	Both A and C	Rank	Not Applicable	Rank
Faculty	122	1	13	8	112	1	2	15
Thesis/dissertation advisers	50	10	8	15	34	9	118	7
Guidance Counselor	51	9	12	11	36	8	119	6
Student services director/ coordinator	69	4	12	11	58	5	86	11
Career and Job placement officer	42	12.5	12	11	26	12	129	3
Student services staff	65	6	20	3	65	4	74	12
Student council officers	56	7	15	5.5	49	6	94	10
Scholarship coordinator and staff	41	14	12	11	25	13.5	130	2
Admission head and staff	98	2	24	1	97	2.5	13	14
Health and medical staff	55	8	10	14	41	7	110	8
Canteen and food personnel	68	5	12	11	33	10	104	9
Safety and security personnel	93	3	23	2	97	2.5	21	13
Foreign or international officers and staff	32	15	14	7	17	15	145	1
Sports director/coordinator and staff	42	12.5	16	4	25	13.5	127	4
Cultural & Arts Director/Coordinator and staff	43	11	15	5.5	30	11	124	5

distance learning. However, the graduate school is not yet a CHED-recognized Online Distance Learning (ODL) provider for advanced education. Finally, less than one percent opted for printed modules and learning packets.

Several studies on the learning styles and preferences of students were conducted. Among them is the paper of Paudel, (2021) which examined the viewpoints of educators and students regarding online education in Nepalese higher education. It focused on its advantages, difficulties, and approaches throughout and after the COVID-19 pandemic. In similar vein, the findings revealed that the participants primarily perceived online education as advantageous in terms of facilitating online research, connecting practitioners with the global community, and gaining access to a vast and authentic repository of knowledge. However, they identified time management skills, increased flexibility for both instructors and students, and dependable internet connectivity in the workplace as significant obstacles. Additionally, time management abilities, technological readiness, and computer literacy were identified in the research.

Furthermore, the paper of Rapanta, Botturi, Goodyear, Guàrdia, and Koole (2021) mentioned the results concerning the readiness and acceptance of university instructors towards the transition to online instruction transcending the borders of Europe. Marek, Chiou and Wu (2021) surveyed 413 faculty members using a mixed-methods approach; the majority (90.2%) of the participants were faculty members from Asia. In contrast to the findings of the prior investigation conducted by Daumiller, Rinas, Hein, Janke, Dickhäuser, and Dresel, (2021), which revealed that a significant proportion of respondents lacked prior experience with online instruction, nearly half of the participants (46.9%) in the study reported utilizing online technologies in their classes prior to the onset of the pandemic, excluding powerpoint and discipline-specific software. Moreover, this prior experience predicted the participants' ease and familiarity with the transition to online instruction during the pandemic.

## 3. Assessment of the services of the personnel in the university in terms of accessibility and courtesy.

The service delivery of the SDS unit is dependent on the behaviors of its front liners. The courtesy and accessibility of the persons with whom the students have close encounters influence the satisfaction rating received by the unit from their clients. The turnaround time for the delivery of services may also affect the satisfaction rating however, the clients can sometimes set aside this shortcoming because of courteous personnel. In this section, the number of responses on non-applicability as reflected in table 3 is cautiously considered in the discussion. At least 55% of the respondents affirmed that they experienced the services of the following personnel as students in graduate school.

Table 3 discloses the most courteous and accessible personnel in the university. Rank 1 are the faculty members, followed by the admission head and its staff as well as the safety and security can also be gleaned from the table that the three most accessible groups of employees are the faculty, admissions head and staff, and the safety and security personnel. On the other hand, the three most courteous groups are the admissions head and staff, safety and security, and the student services staff respectively. Student services staff refers to the personnel in the dean's office.

This would imply that the faculty members demonstrated excellence in courtesy and accessibility as a testament to their steadfast dedication to cultivating an approachable and respectful rapport with students. This underscores not only their obligation to disseminate knowledge, but also their responsibility to foster a positive and supportive environment. Furthermore, the rankings bestowed upon the admissions head and personnel in terms of courtesy and accessibility are praiseworthy. This acknowledgment demonstrates their effectiveness in extending warm welcomes to prospective students and cultivating favorable relationships with current ones. Their accessibility signifies that they are readily available to address inquiries and support to students.

The assessment outcome pertaining to the safety and security personnel indicates that the university places considerable importance on cultivating a safe and amicable environment. This has the potential to enhance the general perception of safety and welfare among both faculty and students. Similarly, the ratings for student services staff and director/coordinator receives the fourth rank for courtesy, they are positioned fifth in terms of accessibility. This implies that while they are generally regarded as courteous, they could benefit from increasing their accessibility and visibility to students. In terms of courtesy, the SDS director/coordinator is ranked fifth, suggesting that there is room for enhancement in cultivating a more hospitable environment.

Running sixth, seventh, and eighth are the student council officers, the health and medical staff, and the guidance counselor respectively. Their services are rarely availed by the graduate students. From the table, less than the majority or 47%, 42% and 39% of the respondents availed of their services. These results were confirmed through their responses in the survey based on their current and immediate needs as graduate students in the university.

On the other hand, the thesis and dissertation advisers fall in ninth place since only 36% of the respondents have advisers due to enrolment in thesis or dissertation writing courses. The majority have not reached thesis and dissertation writing; hence they have not encountered an adviser to judge them in terms of accessibility and courtesy. Moreover, the accessibility of advisers may also be affected by their official teaching schedules in the graduate school. Since most of these students are working professionals, they prefer to consult their advisers during their available time on weekends so as not to incur absences in their workplaces. However, most of these faculty are not available for consultation on Saturdays due to their straight teaching schedules from 8 AM to 5 PM.

Meanwhile, the canteen and food personnel ranked 10th. This result may be explained by the capacity of the canteen to accommodate the volume of graduate students during break periods. Since the canteen concessionaires are not all open to serve on a Saturday, the available food packages were not enough to accommodate all the graduate students during lunch break. This would further mean that limitations on capacity and operations influence perception of the respondents in the graduate school. The lack of food services may have damaged

their view of the canteen and food staff's civility and accessibility. The canteen and food staff's inability to meet demand during peak periods, especially on Saturdays, contributed to their low rating. This shows how operational constraints affect these staff's civility and accessibility. Other personnel on the list that ranked below 10 are the cultural and art director/coordinator, career and job placement officer, scholarship coordinator and staff, sports and culture director/coordinator and staff, and foreign and international relations officer and staff. Most of the respondents claimed that they had not interacted with these personnel. Results show that these units under GS-SDS are considered by the students not applicable in the graduate school. For instance, some of the roles of the sports, cultural, and arts director/coordinator were always taken care of by the GS Supreme Student Government during the conduct of GS-sports and cultural fest. Most of the graduate students are gainfully employed hence, they are always left out in the programs and activities of the career and job placement officer.

Moreover, there is no information dissemination or invitation to apply for available scholarships for graduate students in the graduate school which implies that the scholarship coordinator and staff do not involve them in its program and activities. Thus, these units must conduct strategies to reach out and become visible to the graduate students. Inviting the graduate students to avail of their programs may provide opportunities for interaction and connections to these personnel. Furthermore, the international relation officer and staff was last in the rank since their services are not yet needed in the graduate school. Currently, there are no foreign or exchange students enrolled in the advanced education of the university.

The discussed findings are related to the study of Tamtik and Guenter (2019) which ventures on the policy documents which define the accessibility of student support services, including but not limited to curriculum modifications, scholarships, and new course offerings, in conjunction with student recruitment activities. To promote diversity, inclusion, and equity on campus, the paper examines the emerging organizational strategies and approaches utilized by research-intensive universities in Canada.

#### **4. The GS students' satisfaction level with the academic support provided by the university alongwith student welfare, student development, and institutional programs and services.**

Table 4 reflects the satisfaction level of the graduate school students on student welfare, student development, and institutional programs and services. The Satisfaction Levels are indicated using a 5-point scale where 5 indicates Very Satisfied (VS), 4 is More than Satisfied (MS), 3 is Satisfied (S), 2 is Less Satisfied (LS), 1 is Not Satisfied (NS) and (NA) for Not Applicable. The table considers the satisfaction level responses on items that were either perceived or experienced by the respondents. It also reflects number of the not applicable (NA) responses of the respondents. Not applicable responses may imply that an indicator is not applicable in the graduate school, the respondent did not experience it or the respondent have no knowledge about it.

Student Welfare. The student welfare services is one of the components of the Student Affairs and Services of Sorsogon State University. It refers to the basic services and programs needed to ensure and promote the well-being of students. It has 5 elements namely, Information and Orientation; Guidance and Counselling; Career and Job Placement; Economic Enterprise Development; and Student Handbook Development.

Table 4.a. reflects the satisfaction of the respondents on student welfare. They are “very satisfied” with the Student Handbook Development and information and orientation. This level of satisfaction maybe attributed to the institutionalized conduct of graduate school orientation program at the beginning of the semester and the distribution of student handbook. The use of GS-FB page aside from the bulletin of information in the GS corner may also add up to this result. Other elements of student welfare fall under “more than satisfied” level. This findings holds true in the paper of Maslang, Baguilat, Mania, Damayon, and Dacles, (2021) which identified the students' reactions to each of the services offered, ranging from zero knowledge to a high degree of awareness. The gender, school, and year level did not influence students' responses regarding their level of awareness and satisfaction, except for the Student Handbook Development and Student Discipline. Accordingly, the foundation of students' gratification and awareness is the school's ability to provide services in the most expedient, convenient, and stress-free manner feasible within the students' context.

**4.a. Student Welfare**

Student Affairs Services	FNA	FA	AWM	Description
Student Welfare			4.48	MS
1. Information and Orientation	32	221	4.55	VS
2. Guidance and Counselling	89	164	4.46	MS
3. Career and Job Placement	107	146	4.44	MS
4. Economic Enterprise Development	114	139	4.42	MS
5. Student Handbook Development	60	193	4.51	VS

Moreover, the table shows that economic enterprise development has the greatest number of NA responses followed by career and job placement. These results may indicate the non-applicability of these services to the advanced education as viewed by the graduate students. Economic enterprise development refers to services that would cater to the economic needs of the students. This includes but not limited to student cooperatives, entrepreneurial and income generating projects. The IGP projects of students are usually spearheaded by the Supreme Student Government and oftentimes these are not sustained due to the changes in the set of officers and their leadership priorities. The paper of Del Monte (2021) dealt more on the management practices on the sustainability of income generating projects, rather than the concern on set of officers. Accordingly, the management is accountable to promote the engagement of state universities and institutions in income-generating projects (IGPs). The purpose is to supplement their internal and external revenue streams. This act is endorsed by the Higher Education Modernization Act of 1998 (R.A. 8292), which encourages state universities and colleges to ensure that all revenue-generating projects are covered by the implementing guidelines prescribed herein.

There are respondents who viewed Career and job placement to be not applicable since most students in the advanced education programs are professionals and gainfully employed. However, some still sees its applicability for the sake of those students who are still jobless and for the sake of those employed but still looking for a greener pasteur or additional part-time work. The idea on job satisfaction in relation to income could be a factor to this idea. The paper of Zhang, Bian, Bai,Kong, Liu, Chen, and Li (2020) found that, the identified factors are just and equitable salary, an efficient system for career advancement, fair social security for old age, a manageable burden, and robust psychological coping mechanisms to manage work-related stress. Accordingly, those should be given due consideration in order to enhance job satisfaction.

**Student Development Services.** The Student Development Services refers to the services and programs designed for the exploration, enhancement and development of the students' full potential for personal development, leadership and social responsibility through various institutional and or student-initiates activities. It covers Student organization and activities; Leadership Training; Student council/government; and Student Publication/Yearbook.

As reflected in Table 4.b. the student council/government acquired the “very satisfied” level. The incumbent GS-SSG officers' visibility to the student body as they implemented their operational plans for their term may have influenced the rating. They consistently called for student assembly and consultative meetings and have actively involve the students in many activities and events they organized or partnered with the office of the graduate school. Other elements of student development were rated “more than satisfied”. This result finds ally in the paper of Lee, Liu, Warnock, Kim, and Skett (2023) which ventured on a qualitative study that explored a student-led approach for involvement with the sustainable development goals, with a focus on students leading other students.

However, the table also shows that Leadership Training has the greatest number of NA responses followed by Student Publication/Yearbook. The results indicate that these graduate students do not need leadership trainings. They may have been exposed to myriad of leadership trainings as leaders in their respective careers and have established networks with other institutions or agencies. They maybe those who are frequently invited resource speakers on areas of leadership and management and preferred practical experiential learning rather than theoretical trainings. A study Duran, and Allen (2020) explored the idea on how associations helped graduate students and new professionals to socialize. The article elaborated on their methods of engagement, relationship building within the profession, and commitment to lifelong learning.

**4.b. Student Development**

Student Affairs Services	NA	A	AWM	Description
STUDENT DEVELOPMENT			4.46	MS
1. Student organization and activities	61	192	4.47	MS
2. Leadership Training	78	175	4.47	MS
3. Student council/government	67	186	4.51	VS
4. Student Publication/Yearbook	71	182	4.38	MS

Moreover, student publication/yearbook is perceived to be not necessary for some students. They feel that establishing and implementing this publication in compliance with the campus journalism act of 1991 and other media forms may just add to their academic responsibilities as student. Extra-curricular activities in journalism and in the production of yearbook require more time from them. And since, most graduate students are striving to balance their time as professionals, as student and as a family person, loading them with extra activities was perceived to be unnecessary. Moreover, there are students who paid but have not received their yearbook until now. On the other hand, other opinions are seen from the advantage of their willingness to learn more and to learn how to balance their time for work, school and family. They are also valued receiving copies of student publication and yearbooks as part of their journey in the advance education.

#### 4.c. Institutional Programs and Services

Student Affairs Services	NA	A	AWM	Description
INSTITUTIONAL STUDENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES			4.48	MS
1. Admission Services	38	215	4.53	MS
2. Scholarship and Financial Assistance	95	158	4.46	MS
3. Food services	89	164	4.37	MS
4. Health services	90	163	4.40	MS
5. Safety and Security Services	56	197	4.62	VS
6. Student Housing and Residential Services	110	143	4.36	MS
7. Multi-faith Services	58	195	4.60	VS
8. Foreign/International Student Services	129	124	4.43	MS
9. Services for Students with Special Needs and Persons with Disabilities	118	135	4.42	MS
10. Cultural and Arts Programs	86	167	4.54	VS
11. Sports development program	96	157	4.50	VS
12. School and Community Involvement Programs	94	159	4.47	MS

The institutional student programs and services component has twelve (12) elements. It refers to the services and programs designed to pro-actively respond to the basic health, food, shelter, and safety concerns of the students including students with special needs and disabilities and the school.

Safety and Security Services; Multi-faith Services; Sports development program; and Cultural and Arts Programs, as shown in table 4.c. were rated "very satisfactory". While the rest of the elements were rated "moderately satisfactory". The visibility of the security guards and their being courteous to the students may justified the rating. The student may have felt safe and secured inside the campus. They are confident that their safety concerns are well taken care of by the security personnel. In similar vein, the idea on safety and security was highlighted in the paper of Golovacheva and Pinaev (2021), where they opined that universities must possess first aid, environmental impact reduction, and security measures expertise. Consequently, organizations must also provide the trainings to guarantee the well-being of their personnel while they carry out their responsibilities.

Multi-faith services are often observed in the classroom and in the venues where activities are conducted. The student's religious affiliation is respected thus, are not compelled to adhere to only one and common religious practice. These maybe the reason for the very satisfied rating from the respondents. The responses finds support in the paper of Sulaiman, Imran, Hidayat, Mashuri, Reslawati, and Fakhrurrazi (2022), where they discussed the case of Indonesian government. Accordingly, one of the government's top priorities is integrating the strengthening of religious moderation (MB) into the fabric of society. Accordingly, religious moderation encompasses a way of life, a mindset, and a conduct that reflects the fundamental tenets of faith, which uphold the dignity of every individual and advance the collective welfare. It is founded upon the tenets of impartiality, equilibrium, and adherence to the constitution as a national accord.

The conduct of the graduate school sports activities dubbed as Paligsahan for two consecutive school years may have influence the "very satisfied" rating from the respondents. This implies that sports is an essential activity in advance education. It can neutralize the cognitive exercises of the students from their enrolled courses that are usually stressful and anxiety driven. Moreover, the presence of

the office of the arts and culture in the campus as well as the frequent participation of the university in cultural and arts events in the local, regional and national levels might be the bases for their giving the rating. One of the student sources of information is the SorSU FB page which provides updates of the accomplishments and achievements of the university including its participation to different occasions and affairs. The use of social media as a convenient platform to disseminate information is evident in various papers. The study of Prier (2020) identified the strategy of "commanding the trend" as an emerging and progressively perilous method of influencing individuals on social media. A trending subject surpasses social networks and functions as a conduit for the dissemination of information among social clusters. A trend can disseminate information to a broad audience beyond the confines of an individual's customary social circle.

The table also displays that the respondents regarded Foreign/International Student Services; Services for Students with Special Needs and Persons with Disabilities; and Student Housing and Residential Services as not applicable. The non-existence of foreign students and the negligible number of PWD enrolled in the graduate school maybe the reason for their perception of non-applicability. Likewise, students' dorm and residential services are not necessary for most students since their residences are near and still within the province. It is practical for them to go home and be with their families after classes since it is conducted only every Saturday. In consolidation of the data in table 4, the students in the graduate school are just "more than satisfied" to the three (3) components of the student affairs and services as provided in CMO No. 9 series of 2013. These ratings need to be improved to "very satisfied" level. Strategies to improve the service delivery of the SDS unit of the university must be crafted and implemented to address the issues that can pull down the ratings from the students.

#### 5. Issues and suggestions for improvement of the identified academic support.

The issues and suggestions are categorized into three types of services indicated in the CMO No. 09 s. 2013 which are the student welfare, student development, and the institutional development programs and services. The first category covers seven items which include information and orientation, guidance and counselling, career and job placement, economic enterprise development and student handbook development. The second category is composed of four items such as student organization and activities, leadership training programs, student council or government and student publication or yearbook. The last category has 12 types of services. They are admission services, scholarship and financial assistance, food services, health services, safety and security services, student housing and residential services, and multi faith services. The last category also includes foreign or international services, services for students with special needs and persons with disabilities, cultural arts program, sports development program and school and community involvement program.

##### 5.1 Student Welfare

The common themes on the issues and concerns under the first category, student welfare is on the accessibility of information, orientation, guidance and counselling, career and job placement, and student handbook development. Concerns arise among students over the accessibility and efficacy of support services including counseling, healthcare, academic advising, and career assistance. In terms of accessibility, one of the graduate students commented:



*Staff and faculty are accommodating. Online learning is much more convenient specially that most of us, students, are working.*

The said statement pertains to the easy and flexible access to learning through hybrid modality, waiting periods, and general assistance provided by the faculty as well as non-teaching personnel. It would imply that the students value the idea that they could have access to information considering that they have work, aside from being students during weekends. Oliveira, Grenha Teixeira, Torres, and Morais, (2021) conducted an exploratory investigation into the emergency remote education experiences of faculty and students in higher education amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, the primary concern of the students is the access to information since they are deprived of the transportation to attend physical classroom attendance.

Moreover, students seek a more holistic approach to their personal growth that goes beyond academics. They are in search of efficient extracurricular activities, leadership programs, opportunities in maintaining sound mind, and initiatives promoting cultural diversity. Some graduate students suggested that there must be an available guidance counselor every Saturday to provide them assistance. Also, they suggested that a separate graduate school canteen must be available inside the university. These are their exact statements and suggestions:

*If the Guidance Counseling Office also provides services to the Graduate School, then it is good. If not, then maybe we can request for GC availability on Saturdays?*

*Psychological assessment can help diagnose conditions such as depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder.*

The availability of the Guidance Counseling Office for Graduate School would mean positive Implication in the services provided by the Guidance Counseling (GC) Office. It would indicate a comprehensive commitment to supporting mental health at all levels of education. In addition, the suggestion for a graduate school canteen would also mean students' welfare. Also, it may serve as potential for enhancement if the GC does not cater to graduate students, there exists a prospect to broaden the range of services provided by requesting Saturday availability, it demonstrates a proactive effort to improve accessibility, accommodate students' schedules, and recognize potential time limitations on weekdays. This kind of need as identified in the present study is supported in the paper of Rushahu, (2022) which discussed that a considerable proportion of female postgraduate students encounter various types of challenges in their attempt to attain academic objectives. Thus, greater awareness should be generated regarding how campus-based counseling services and availability of facilities can be accessed.

Furthermore, psychological assessments can assist in the identification and diagnosis of mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder. This comprehension allows for customized assistance and interventions for some concerned individuals. Enhanced treatment and care enable timely intervention, suitable therapeutic strategies, and improved management of mental health disorders.

In terms of communication and transparency, concerns arise over the clarity and channels of communication between the institution and students. The users desire more clarity in the communication of policies, program modifications, and prospects, along with a greater level of transparency in the decision-making procedures. The following statements are the direct suggestions of the students in the graduate school:

*Provide designated areas where graduate students can access relevant information.*

*Enough frontline personnel during enrolment.*

*Standardized procedures and policies on the request of credentials.*

Conducting an orientation on the relevant laws and policies affecting persons with disabilities.

*Ang mga subjects naiooffer ay nakalatagnadapat within academic year, para may kaalaman ang mga mag aaral, lalong Graduate Schools.[the offered subjects for the entire academic year should be available for the students in the graduate school.]*

For the infrastructure and facilities, some students expressed their apprehensions over the adequacy of campus amenities such as libraries, recreational areas, and technology provisions. Common concerns include maintenance, and the necessity for technological advancements. Likewise, they also suggested the provision of support for marginalized groups, and the endeavors to cultivate a hospitable environment. These concerns of the respondents find ally in the discussion of Rapanta, Botturi, Goodyear, Guàrdia, and Koole (2021) in their study on balancing technology, pedagogy, and the new normal, focused on higher education post-pandemic challenges.

## 5.2 Student Development

The university has the capacity to fully comprehend and attend to the varied viewpoints and requirements of students across multiple domains, including publications, leadership development initiatives, student organizations, and elections. The themes under student development include engagement and participation in student activities, leadership training programs, representation of student council/government, quality, and accessibility to student handbook. By gaining a comprehensive understanding of the needs and perspectives of students, the institution can effectively implement specific improvements and enhancements in various aspects of student life and engagement.

### A. Participation and Engagement in Student Activities

The presence of suggestions that seek to improve communication and various activities, while concerns remain on diversity and accessibility, suggests that there is a requirement for a more extensive and widely publicized selection of activities. Community building, diversity, institutional culture, and student engagement are impacted areas. Enhanced levels of student engagement, increased participation from a broader spectrum of students, and a campus life that is more vibrant and inclusive are the results.

Some of the students' comments include appreciation of having the face-to-face discussion when they could freely inquire on issues and policies. The actual statement of one of the student-respondents is, "well appreciated the conduct of face-to-face orientation". Another student is concerned on the contents of the student handbook and a necessity that there must be a representation from the student's body. Also, the suggestions range to the importance of field trips, free trainings and seminars or webinars, to initiate creation of programs and other leadership development programs. These are the exact statement of their suggestions:

*A representative from the student body is included in the development and revision of student handbook.*

*Field trips, Free trainings and seminars or webinars are important.*

*Create programs that address the needs of all.*



### Efficacy of Leadership Development Programs:

The suggested statements centered on the efficacy of training and recommendations to broaden subject matter or enhance practical implementation. Accordingly, leadership development requires a more all-encompassing and experiential process of implementation. The student preparedness for future roles, skill development, and leadership cultivation are impacted areas.

Students are expected to possess improved leadership abilities, be more prepared to handle practical situations, and have the potential to be more successful leaders in both academic and professional domains. In the paper of Kjellström, Stååne, and Törnblom (2020), they considered experiences that play a pivotal role in inspiring and enhancing comprehension of leadership as well as feeling on unsatisfaction. They combined research on leadership and loneliness to comprehend why leaders and their adherents may report experiencing unsatisfaction in their positions. They contend that the prototypical leader exhibits the behaviors associated with three prevalent leadership theories: transformational leadership, authentic leadership, and transactional leadership. The same may hold true to the case of students who need programs on leadership and other activities, to fully maximize their academic journey.

### B. Representation and Function of the Student Council/Government

Some constraints regarding functionality and representation, in addition to recommendations for openness and inclusiveness, suggest that a greater degree of accountability and representation is desired in governance. Increased confidence in governing bodies, a greater diversity of representation, and policies that more accurately reflect the values and requirements of the student body. There are some students who expressed their ideas that the student council should provide them access to information and raised their concerns. Among the suggestions are these statements:

*We need leaders whom we can rely. They should express our request like the cashier should be opened during Saturdays.*

Through proficiently communicating and ensuring the execution of requests such as the cashier being open on Saturdays, leaders exemplify a dedication to fulfilling the requirements of the community and augment its overall satisfaction. In essence, the need for representatives and dependable leaders revolves around the necessity for individuals who not only comprehend community issues but also demonstrate the capability to effectively articulate them, champion reform, and guarantee the implementation of pledged measures to rectify said issues. This dependability and promptness are essential for nurturing a sense of community satisfaction and well-being and for establishing trust.

The implications were supported by Collins, Azmat, and Rentschler (2019) whose study dealt on acknowledging and confronting limitations and executing suggestions. Accordingly, the academic institution can strive towards establishing a governance framework that is more representative, accountable, and inclusive, thereby more precisely mirroring and catering to the varied requirements of its student body. They opined that despite significant advancements in inclusive education achieved through reasonable accommodations for all, research indicates that learning environments continue to be predominantly influenced by provisions for specific students, which presents organizational and personal difficulties.

### C. Accessibility and Quality of Student Publication

The presence of concerns pertaining to quality, inclusivity, and accessibility, in addition to recommendations for enhancing distribution and content diversity, indicate a necessity for publications that are more representative, universally, and readily accessible. The improved inclusivity of content, and the cultivation of a more robust sense of community via the exchange of experiences and representation in publications.

Regarding publication, the remarks encompassed both the graduate school's official publication and the student handbook. Considering that there are new policies being implemented during the transition from college to university that were not previously covered in the enriched handbook, it is recommended that students be provided with a copy of the updated handbook. One of the students commented, "Updated handbook must be provided", and another said, "The issuance of yearbook is delayed". Furthermore, some students regarded the yearbook as an additional concern on publication. They belong in the group who graduated ahead of some individuals who claimed that they have already obtained their yearbooks. In addition, a phrase, "should revive graduate school publication" refers to the Graduate Digest which is the official publication of the graduate School. There was not a single issue published during the pandemic that could have prompted the said remark regarding its revival.

In general, these would indicate a preference for representation, and inclusivity in all facets of student life and welfare, with the intention of establishing a campus atmosphere that is more dynamic, fair, and participatory. In the book of Oleson (2023), she explored on promoting classroom dynamics as a pathway for change. Consequently, a sense of inclusivity results from faculty members' comprehension of the students' requirements beyond the confines of the classroom. The recommendations regarding the revision, timely publication, and revival of graduate school publications reveal the students' requirements regarding a sense of inclusion.

### 5.3 Institutional student programs and services

The need to classify students' concerns and suggestions into thematic categories aimed to help the university to attain a holistic comprehension of the varied viewpoints and requirements of their student body. This approach enables institutions to achieve specific enhancements, customize solutions, augment services, and cultivate a student-centric atmosphere that flexibly responds to evolving demands. The themes under the institutional student programs and services include efficiency of admission services, availability of scholarship and financial assistance, quality and variety of food services, quality and availability of health services, inclusivity, and support for students with special needs and disabilities and safety and security measures.

The first theme, the efficiency of admission services may pertain to the degree of smoothness and promptness with which students are able to submit their applications and be accepted in the university. The effectiveness could be attributed to the online system and accommodation of walk-in applicants for Graduate School. The presence of approachable and supportive personnel may also be another factor. Under the security measures, some suggestions include the following:

*There is a need to use metal detector during inspection for the security and alertness of security personnel to help the students. Maybe, fire safety drill for the students can help.*

In general, discussions surrounding the implementation of metal detectors in academic establishments frequently necessitate striking a balance between safeguarding individuals' well-being and

conserving the principles of privacy, inclusivity, and constructive learning. The paper of Golovacheva and Pinaev (2021) considered that security measures and first aid, occupational safety, and environmental impact reduction skills are essential for universities. Accordingly, the said trainings are also crucial for organizations to ensure the safety of their employees while performing their duties. Furthermore, it is crucial to instill these concerns in students in all levels. The institution's dedication to diversity and inclusivity for students with special needs and disabilities ensures that every student receives the resources and support they need for their academic journey. Finally, the continuous commitment to safety and security produces a safe and welcoming learning environment where students can develop. These interconnected themes demonstrate an institution's commitment to holistic student development, creating an environment where every student feels appreciated, encouraged, and empowered to succeed.

## CONCLUSIONS

By scrutinizing the demographic profile of the respondents, one can gain significant insights into the various elements that impact their experiences at the Graduate School. It also enables understanding of the diverse student body, which in turn facilitates the creation of tailored approaches to address their specific needs and preferences. Also, in terms of the preferred learning modalities, this research shed light on the diverse methods, by which students could engage with, access with ease and scholarly comprehend. It consequently led to more effective pedagogical strategies that cater to a variety of learning patterns, thus enhancing the overall learning experience.

The identified level of accessibility and courtesy demonstrated by university staff provides critical feedback that the institution may use as an opportunity to bolster positive service attributes while also identifies potential areas that may benefit from improvement. Enhancing the quality of service significantly contributes to fostering a positive environment that is conducive to students' academic success. Moreover, the level of satisfaction with services provided by student affairs evaluates the effectiveness of existing services and identifies areas that require enhancement.

Through an examination of the preferable learning modalities reported by the participants, this study illuminates the varied approaches through which they interact with and grasp academic content. Comprehending these preferences is significant for formulating pedagogical approaches that accommodate diverse learning styles, thereby augmenting the learning experience. The feedback on the issues and suggestions provided by the students could be an invaluable asset in the pursuit of improving the delivery of services of the student affairs. This would assist the institution in implementing specific enhancements in line with the preferences and expectations of its students. In general, the thorough examination carried out in accordance with these goals not only furnishes a holistic perspective of the university experience for students but also presents strategic guidance for ongoing improvement and customization of services to effectively address the changing demands of the student population.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it can be recommended to incorporate periodic surveys on demographic profiles and consider the ever-changing varied student population. It is also imperative to evolve support programs and resources in accordance with identified demographic characteristics to provide

more effective assistance to student cohorts. Further, a strategic investment in interactive learning platforms and technological resources to facilitate diverse modalities may enhance flexibility and engagement of both faculty and students. Consistent training sessions and seminars to university staff with an emphasis on fostering a respectful atmosphere, to ensure accessibility, and to deliver exceptional service. It is also important to create mechanisms for student evaluation and feedback on a regular basis regarding the quality of services provided to promote a culture of continuous enhancement. Moreover, it is also recommended to acknowledge and duplicate efficacious practices or services that have garnered high satisfaction ratings to sustain and broaden favorable experiences throughout the university. By integrating these suggestions into the strategic planning and operational frameworks of the university, it is possible to foster an environment that is more attuned to the needs and interests of students, that are inclusive and responsive. As a result, the institution can provide superior educational services and experiences.

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