

# **RECOGNITION OF INTERDEPENDENCIES WITHIN STUDENT SERVICES ENABLE MORE EFFECTIVE RESPONSES TO STUDENT NEEDS**

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## **PURPOSE OF STUDENT SERVICES OR STUDENT AFFAIRS**

“To assist students in navigating their journey through the tertiary education landscape and to add to their repertoire of educational and lifetime learning experiences”, International Association of Student Affairs and Services (IASAS)



# BACKGROUND

- Student Services strive to provide a comprehensive array of effective programmes and services designed to support students from first year to degree completion and beyond, facilitating personal and academic development, and promoting lifelong learning which sustains a mutually beneficial relationship with the university.
- For a system to operate optimally, there needs to be synergies among student services sections, management, faculties and student representatives, hence a need for a systems approach;
- Smith (2012:8) goes on to cite Peter Senge, who asserts that, systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static 'snapshots'... Today, systems thinking is needed more than ever because we are becoming overwhelmed by complexity.



## A UNIVERSITY AS A SYSTEM

- ❖ A university on its own is a system. Luckett (2004:2) asserts that a system is not only a set of interconnected components, it is a set which is interconnected for a purpose. A university system, for example, is not only a set of people (students, lecturers, administrative staff and service staff) and facilities which are interconnected. It is interconnected for the purpose of education of students and research aimed at a better understanding of the world as well as its improvement.



## MENTAL MODELS

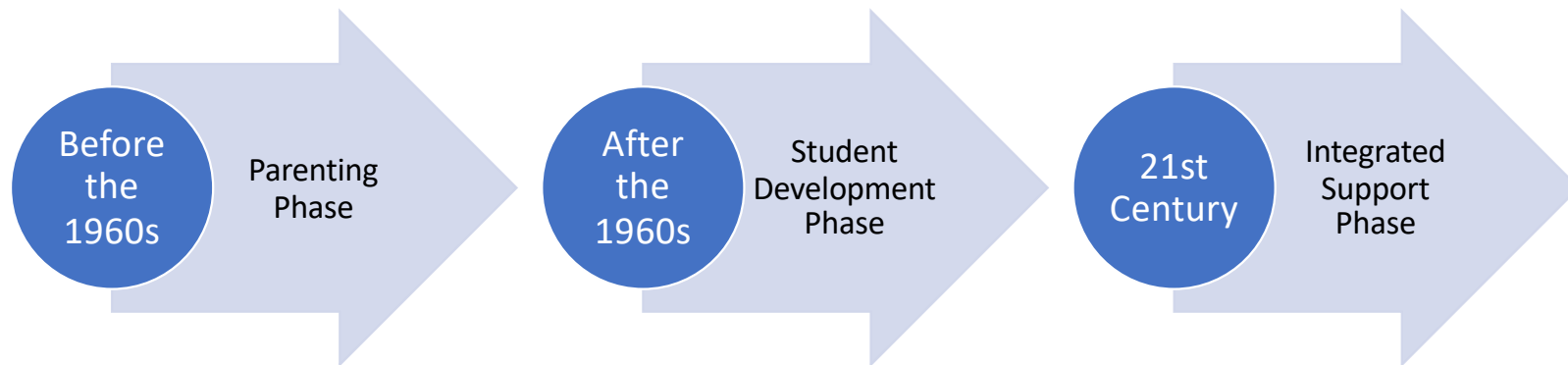
- “Our way of thinking obviously affects what we do. However, the extent to which our thought patterns influence our actions is not so obvious. Not only what we think, but how we think and the very categories and concepts we use to think, will all have a profound influence on our behavior.”, Clemson (1984)

- **Why is a human body described as a system?**

## INTERCONNECTEDNESS

- The aim is to focus on what binds individuals together and what binds systems together rather than functional silo performances. Reed (2006) uses the illustration of a human body and outlines that systems, like the human body, have parts, and the parts affect the performance of the whole. All of the parts are interdependent. The liver interacts with and affects other organs – the brain, heart, kidneys, etc.
- You can study the parts singly, but because of the interactions, it doesn't make much practical sense to stop there because in real life we tend to view things holistically. In view of the complexities in activities taking place in South African Higher Education Institutions, a systems approach plays an important role in enabling one to understand the dynamics in the student world.
- Falsafinejad and Hashmbeik (2013) posit that a systems approach provides a useful framework for stakeholders to understand the organisation and its components. This approach provides a systemic view of the organisation as a whole.

## SALIENT STUDENT AFFAIRS PHASES





## NEW WAVE OF STUDENT ACTIVISM

- Time for critical examination as institutions;
- Time for inter-generational conversations;
- A more pressing need for creative engagements with students;
- Massification of higher education;
- Alienation of students in higher education;
- The new breed of student leaders;
- Research indicates that poor communication is probably the most frequently cited source of interpersonal conflict (Thomas and Schmidt, 1986).

## STRATEGIES AIMED AT MANAGING NEW STUDENT MOVEMENTS

- Instilling a sense of ownership;
- Voice of students versus voice for students;
- More engagement with government representatives by leaders of Higher Education Institutions;
- Shared authority and Interdependent responsibility;
- Participative decision-making;
- Student involvement - a highly involved student, is one who, for example, devotes considerable energy to studying, spends much time on campus, participates actively in student organisations, and interacts frequently with faculty members and other students. Conversely, a typical uninvolved student neglects studies, spend little time on campus, abstain from extra-curricular activities, and has infrequent contact with faculty members or other students, (Astin, 1999)

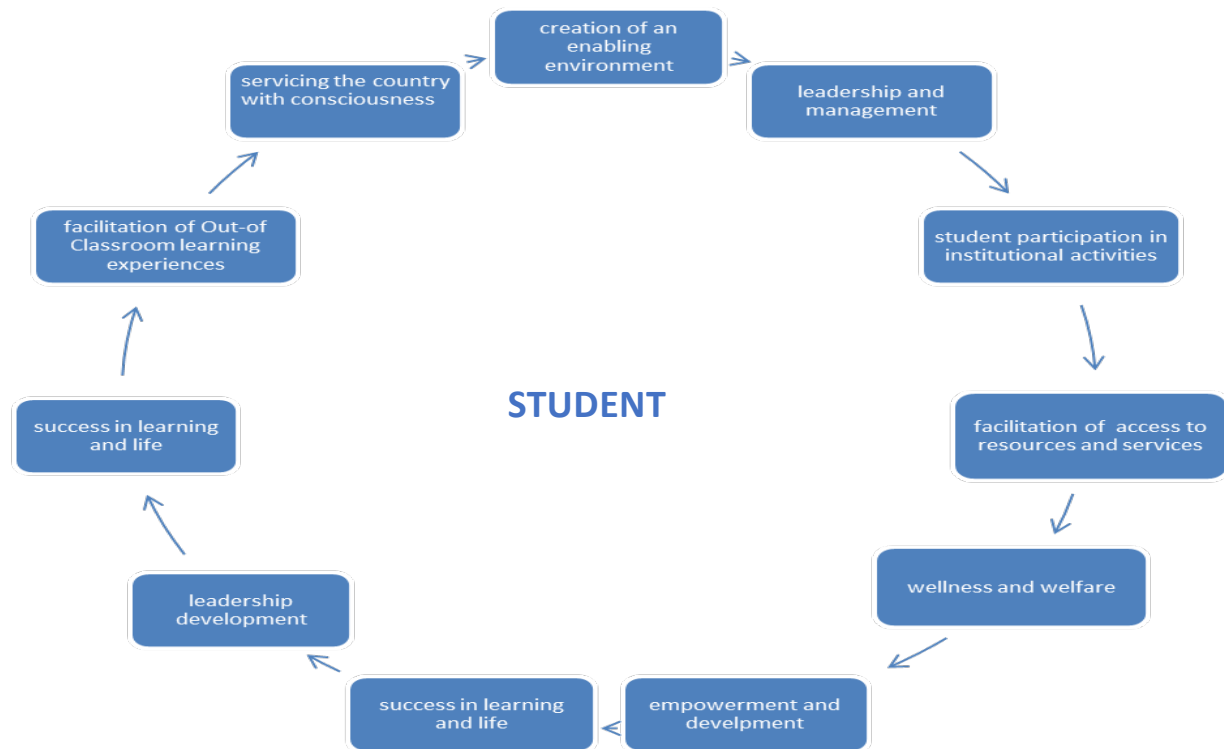


## STUDENT CENTREDNESS

- ❖ *The Association of American Universities (2018), refers to the concept as an education system that prioritises the needs and interests of students, rather than focusing first and foremost on the interests of higher education and the demands of the research enterprise.*



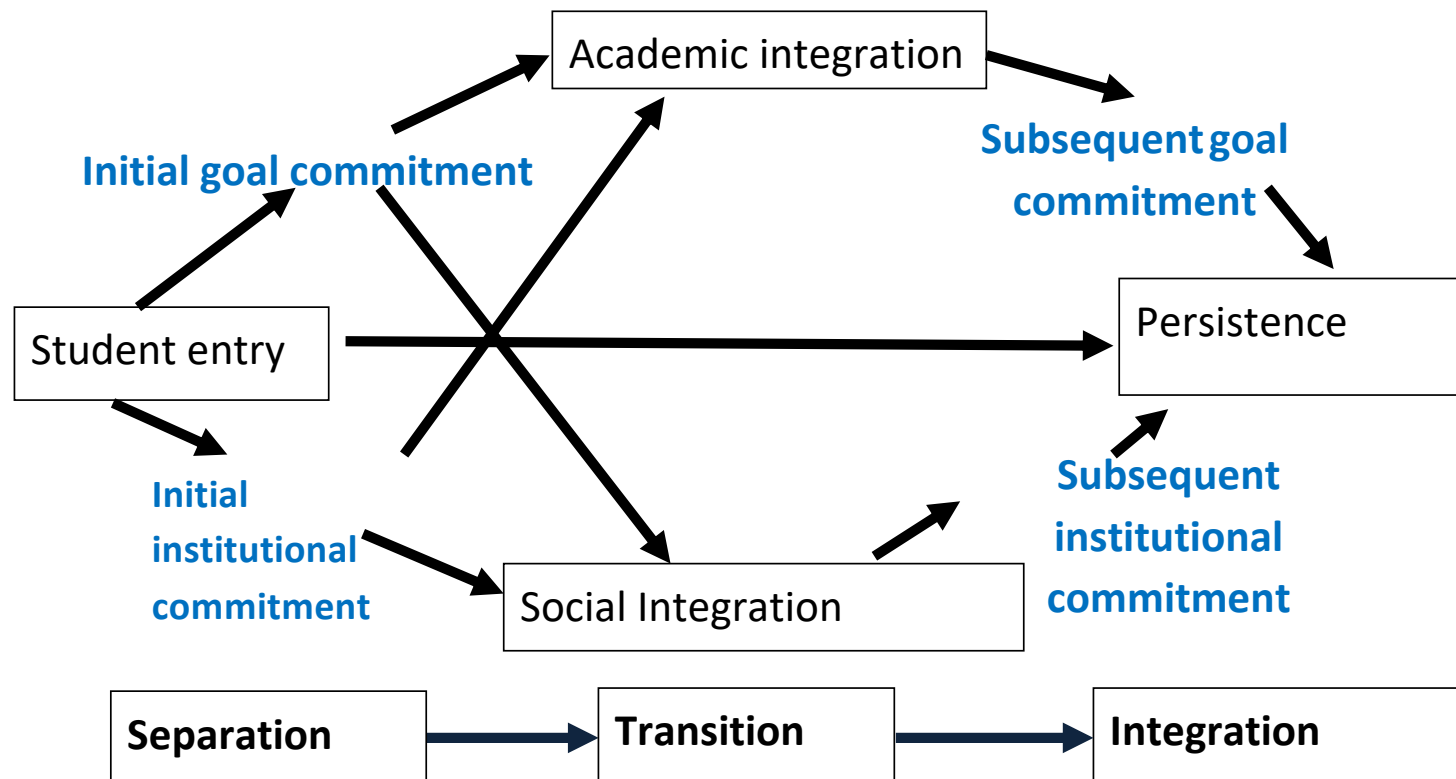
# STUDENT AFFAIRS OPERATING MODEL



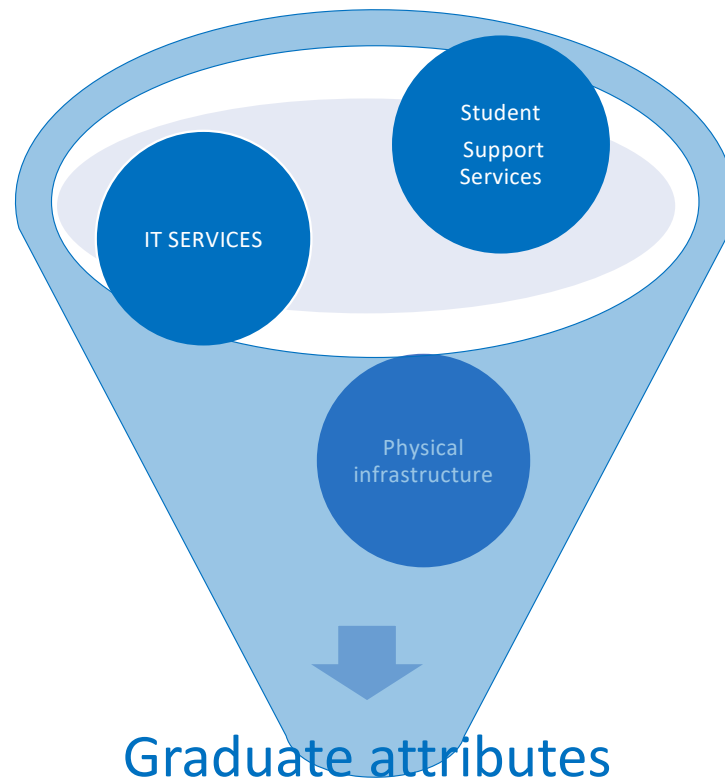
## STUDENT LIFE LEARNING OUTCOMES



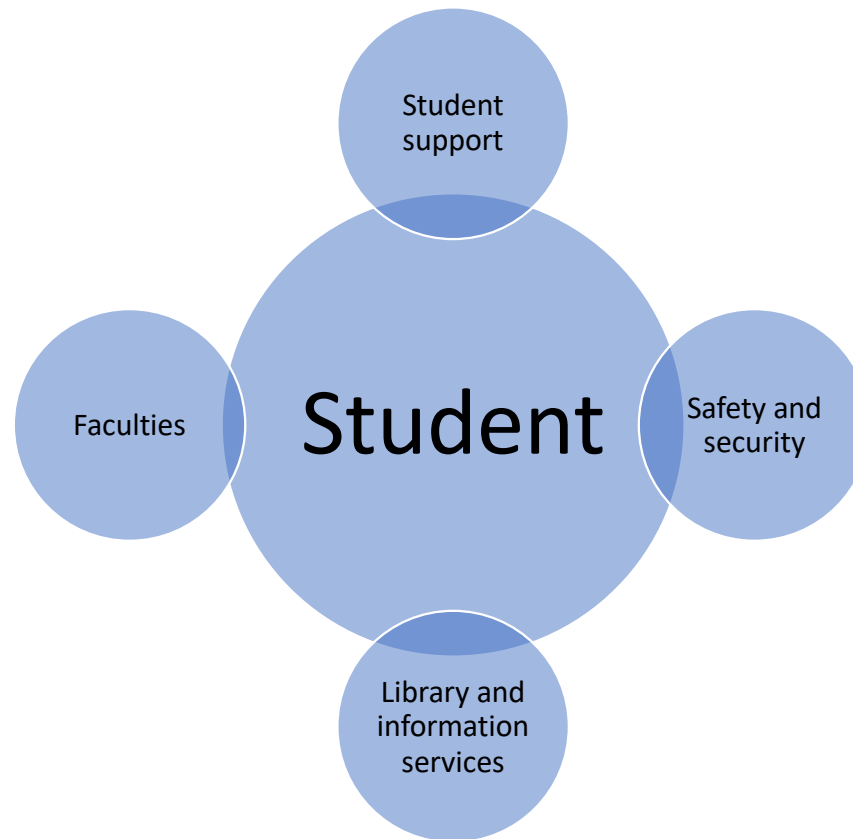
## VINCENT TINTO'S INTEGRATION MODEL



# TRADITIONAL APPROACH




# INTEGRATED APPROACH





## CONCLUSION

- It is important at this stage to stress the importance of thinking of institutions of higher learning as systems comprised of several divisions which include: academics, student affairs or student services, the administration and the management. While some educational professionals acknowledge these structured silos, today's students see a different configuration.
- Students experience higher education ultimately as multifaceted and inclusive of academics and other campus services. The melding together of sections as faculties, student support services and other institutional services, becomes a critical component of the educational process.



“ In building organisations there  
is no ultimate destination or end  
state, only a life-long journey.”

**- Peter Senge**





**Thank you**

