

Presentation to Kean Board of Trustees Meeting

Kean Hall 127

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By: Maria del Carmen Rodriguez, Acting KFT President

Good afternoon, my name is Maria del C. Rodriguez. I am the Acting KFT President. I have also been a full-time faculty member of the Counselor Education Master Program for the last 12 years. I have served as senator for the last three years, and I have served on many department, college and university-wide committees all the years that I have been employed by this institution. I have also served as trustee for NAMI-NJ or the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill of New Jersey for the last three years – the primary advocacy state organization for people with mental illness. I have also been a regular consultant for the N.J. Department of Education, especially in the evaluation of state parent initiatives.

I am interested in sharing some research data about Kean students with you and explore the salient implications of these data with all of you. This survey is not the first time that I have examined people's level of satisfaction in a systematic fashion. As part of my master's degree, I conducted a structured inferential study with an urban community in the process of being relocated, and most of the variables under study were related to their levels of satisfaction with the government structures implementing the changes that were affecting their livelihood as community members. For this current survey, I interviewed both graduate students and undergraduate students. They were of various gender, cultural, racial and socio-economic backgrounds. The survey consisted of seven questions, which allowed them to rate their satisfaction and concerns with their life as Kean students.

Main obstacles when attending classes/activities at Kean University

They were asked to identify the main obstacles they face when they come to classes and/or activities on campus. The main obstacles they identified were:

- 1- *Inadequate parking facilities*
- 2- *Crowded classrooms*
- 3- *Insufficient library offerings*

Main resources/assets they find at Kean University. They identified these top choices:

- 1- **The faculty.** They used adjectives to describe Kean faculty such as: "informative, caring, enlightening, knowledgeable, understanding and supportive".
- 2- **The staff.** For the most part, they described the staff as people who want all students to do well.

3- **A sense of safety.** They feel safe when they are here.

Main difference between having full-time versus part-time (adjunct) faculty.

The main differences are the following:

- 1) F.T. faculty members are more committed, dedicated, and available to help students; better prepared when teaching.
- 2) F.T. faculty are more familiar with university rules and procedures;
- 3) F.T. faculty “know us as students, making us feel more comfortable and confident;”
- 4) F.T. faculty is much easier to contact whenever there’s a need to do so.

Main changes they would implement first if they were the president of Kean University. These were their top recommendations:

- 1) Coordinate better the administrative structure of the University.

Examples: a) Improve the registration process;

b) Deal with ways of reaching employees via phone or e-mail.

A comment from a student: “It is impossible to reach people on the phones or via e-mail here, excluding faculty.”

- 2) Improve parking facilities.

3) Improve the system dealing with financial aid – they want this issue “to be professionally operated.”

Effectiveness of Library Services:

They were given a 5 pts Likert Scale with 1 = being extremely ineffective and 5 = being effective. The question they were asked was what was the overall degree of effectiveness of the Kean library system.

Graduate students rate was $X = 2.78$ (ineffective)

Undergrad students $X = 4.5$ (effective)

Degree of satisfaction with Kean University (as a whole concept):

They were given a 5 pts Likert scale to rate their overall satisfaction with the University. The values read as:

1 = insufficient

2 = regular

3 = good

4 = very good

5 = excellent

Graduate students overall rate for KU $X = 3.71$ (good)

Undergrad students $X = 3.5$ (good)

Implications of all these results:

1) The physical expansion of Kean University over the last years does not parallel the quantity and quality of services that the students expect for the money they pay to attend KU.

Students are criticizing basic services while their tuition rates go higher every year. They can't find a parking space easily, their access to library resources is not satisfying them, the access to computer based information is inadequate, and they identify the questionable teaching provided by many adjunct faculty.

2) I would not criticize adjunct faculty but more the planning vision of this University whereby for every full-time faculty, there are almost three adjunct faculty being hired.

3) They perceive adjunct faculty (as a whole) as less committed to Kean as well as less invested in their relationship to Kean as an institution.

4) Students perceive administrators (on the average) as removed from their basic concerns and needs.

When they were asked to rate all the basic employees at KU, these were their ratings using a 5 pt Likert scale of satisfaction (with 1 = totally dissatisfied and 5 = totally satisfied).

Overall satisfaction rate with F.T. faculty = 4.78 (totally satisfied)

With F.T. Prof. Staff = 3.86 (satisfied)

With Adj. faculty = 3.28 (satisfied)

With Maintenance crew = 2.57 (dissatisfied)

With Campus Police = 2.43 (dissatisfied)

With Administrators = 2.28 (dissatisfied) – lowest score

Students are demanding a university that is well managed, that works cohesively and that brings together all of its different units in a meaningful way. These were the students' salient recommendations:

- To coordinate better the administrative structure of this university.
- Ex 1: Improve the registration process.
- Ex 2: They want to reach people on the phone or via e-mail, excluding faculty.
- They want better and more parking.
- They want a financial-aid system that is professionally operated.
- They want better articulated library services (their overall rate for the library was 2.78 = ineffective. Some of them mention that they never go to our library and prefer to use Rutgers library system.
- Their overall rating for Kean as an institution comparing Kean 5 yrs ago and now was for the graduate students equal to 3.71 and for the undergraduate students equal to 3.5 (both levels being just good).

The key question we need to ask ourselves is whether we can answer all of these serious concerns raised by our students if basic information that is needed to address all of these concerns is completely in the dark. This is the real and complete budget that is managed by Kean University. Repeatedly, we have

asked this administration to provide the complete budget to the people that work and study here in different meetings and different managers. All we have received is a watered down version of the university budget. What do we need to do to get this basic data so significant for the overall management and planning of this institution of higher education? Do we have to stop working to get this basic information that we are entitled to see and study given the public nature of this institution?