

NP 38 - Designing Student Support Around Student Needs, Not Institutional Structures

Colleges have spent years building programs to help students succeed, but having support available does not always mean students can actually use it. Work schedules, commuting, family responsibilities, and the realities of everyday life can make traditional office hours and campus-based resources difficult to access. That raises a different question for higher education. Instead of asking why students are not engaging with the systems already in place, institutions can look at whether those systems are designed around the students they serve today.

In this episode, Page Keller, Vice President of Academic Relations at Knack and former president of the College Reading and Learning Association, shares what she has learned from 25 years working inside higher education in academic affairs, student success, learning assistance, and peer education. Now, working across hundreds of campuses, Page has a broader view of the challenges institutions share and the places where well-intended support can still fall short.

We talk about why meaningful change goes beyond adding another program or extending a few office hours, and how institutions can identify the smaller points of friction that make a real difference in a student's experience. We also touch on the role peer learning can play in belonging, engagement, and academic success, along with a simple exercise leaders can use to see their own institution through a student's eyes. The goal is not necessarily to offer more resources, but to make sure students can find, access, and benefit from the resources that already exist.

Show Notes:

[02:35] Page Keller shares her background in student success, academic support, and peer education.

[05:43] Institutions should ask whether their support systems actually work for the students they serve today.

[08:20] True redesign goes beyond adding flexibility to existing programs and starts with students' real needs.

[11:17] Thinking beyond current constraints can help institutions generate more creative approaches to student support.

[14:49] Looking beyond outcome data can reveal the barriers and friction students encounter before they disengage.

[18:06] Peer learning can be a proactive part of the educational experience rather than a remedial intervention.

[20:45] Peer connections can strengthen student success, belonging, engagement, and career readiness.

[23:33] Page explains how leaders can experience institutional processes from a student's point of view.

[25:32] Start by fixing one place where students are being asked to work around the institution instead of the institution working around them.

Links and Resources:

[Civitas Learning](#)

[Page Keller - LinkedIn](#)

[Knack](#)