

Optimizing the Integrated Management of One-Stop Student Communities in Chinese Universities: A Holistic Governance Perspective

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Abstract: One-stop student communities have become an important mechanism for integrating student education, services, and governance in Chinese universities. However, their development is increasingly constrained by fragmented functional positioning, insufficient coordination among educational actors, limited student participation, and uneven technological empowerment. Drawing on holistic governance theory, this paper analyzes the conceptual alignment between holistic governance and the integrated management of one-stop student communities and develops a systematic framework for addressing these challenges. The framework comprises four pathways: multidimensional integration to create comprehensive community-based educational spaces; multi-actor coordination to strengthen collaborative governance; demand-oriented mechanisms to enhance student agency and participation; and digital empowerment to develop smart community platforms. By integrating student-centered governance, cross-departmental collaboration, and digital technologies, the proposed framework offers a coherent approach to overcoming fragmented governance and improving the educational and managerial effectiveness of one-stop student communities in Chinese universities.

Keywords: One-stop Student Communities; Holistic Governance; Integrated Management; Fragmentation.

1. Introduction

University student communities are important sites for ideological and political education and a key mechanism for completing the “last mile” of all-staff, whole-process, and all-round education [1]. In recent years, the Ministry of Education has attached great importance to the development of the integrated management model of one-stop student communities. In 2019, it launched a pilot program involving 10 universities; in 2021, the pilot was expanded to 100 universities. In 2023, a dedicated work conference called for continued improvement of student-community education models. In 2025, the first national cohort of 100 exemplary university one-stop student communities was announced, together with the Guidelines for Improving the Quality and Effectiveness of the Integrated Management Model of University One-Stop Student Communities (2025 Revision). These successive initiatives have advanced the model from pilot exploration to demonstration and from initial development to standardized quality enhancement, making it an important mechanism for strengthening student education and management in universities. Nevertheless, fragmentation remains a prominent governance challenge in practice. Against this background, exploring ways to optimize the integrated management model of one-stop student communities from a holistic governance perspective and to fully realize their educational potential has important theoretical and practical significance for improving ideological and political education and effectively completing the “last mile” of all-staff, whole-process, and all-round education.

2. The Intrinsic Value of University One-Stop Student Communities

As an important component of the education and

governance systems of universities in the new era, the value of the one-stop student community lies not only in the integration of physical spaces, but more fundamentally in the systematic renewal of educational models, service logics, and governance concepts. It has therefore become a key vehicle through which universities can fulfill educational goals, respond to practical needs, and adapt to emerging development trends.

2.1. A Key Arena for Advancing the Fundamental Task of Fostering Virtue through Education

Fostering virtue through education cannot be confined to course delivery. Students’ residential settings bring together ordinary routines and repeated interpersonal encounters, and thus provide opportunities for education beyond the classroom. One-stop student communities seek to make use of these settings rather than treating everyday life as peripheral to formal teaching. Party-building guidance, academic assistance, and moral education can be incorporated into residential life, while residential mentors and peer exchanges on ideological and political issues provide continuing educational contact. Community culture, in turn, shapes the informal circumstances in which students develop judgments and habits. For Generation Z students, whose learning preferences often include concrete experience, such arrangements connect educational principles with situations encountered in daily life. Their significance lies in establishing continuity between classroom learning, lived experience, and the gradual cultivation of values, rather than simply adding occasional extracurricular activities.

2.2. A Service Platform Better Aligned with Student Needs

In an increasingly diverse higher education system, students require more than basic residential support.

Academic difficulties, psychological adjustment, career decisions, and social interaction may each call for assistance from different university offices. Where those offices operate through separate administrative channels, resources become dispersed and students may encounter delays in obtaining appropriate support. The one-stop student community provides a setting in which student affairs, academic administration, logistics, psychological health centers, and related offices can coordinate their services. The benefit depends, however, on linking the procedures of these units rather than merely locating them within the same physical area. Student self-governance organizations can gather views through surveys, while online feedback offers an additional means of identifying needs that differ across student groups. Used to inform service adjustments, these channels make a student-centered approach more responsive to students' actual circumstances.

2.3. A Concrete Practice for Modernizing University Governance

The modernization of university governance entails changes not only in administrative procedures but also in the allocation of responsibility and the participation of those affected by institutional decisions. Department-based management remains necessary, yet separate handling of related student affairs may limit coordination and lead to inefficient use of resources. One-stop student communities allow responsibilities ordinarily distributed among different offices to be addressed closer to students' learning and residential environments. Under the university Party committee's leadership, administrative staff, educators, and service personnel can work through arrangements for handling shared community matters. Community self-governance committees also provide a channel through which students may discuss rules, propose activities, and participate in managing collective affairs. Bringing institutional coordination together with student participation illustrates the contribution that community development can make to more responsive university governance.

3. Fragmentation Challenges in Developing the Integrated Management Model of University One-Stop Student Communities

Developing one-stop student communities is a complex and systemic undertaking that requires coordinated participation across multiple departments and improvements across multiple educational dimensions. Given this complexity and the fact that the model remains in an exploratory stage, various forms of fragmentation inevitably emerge during implementation, creating implementation bottlenecks that impede the effective establishment of the integrated management model.

3.1. Fragmented Functional Positioning of Student Communities

University student communities encompass a physical environment for residential life and a social and cultural environment formed through learning and interaction. Their simultaneous status as institutional management units and student learning-and-living communities gives them a remit that extends from Party-building guidance and academic support to peer communication and everyday services [2]. In

practice, however, this dual status is not reflected evenly in community development. Three discontinuities merit attention. The first lies between administrative control and community life. When planning is dominated by administrative requirements, spaces for student initiative and arrangements for mutual support tend to receive less attention. Students may consequently experience the community more as an extension of institutional supervision than as a setting to which they belong. A second discontinuity concerns the distribution of educational resources. Party and Youth League activities and general cultural events may be well established, while disciplinary education, academic ethos, peer mentoring, and practical learning receive less consistent support. Without connections among these activities, completed facilities do not necessarily become communities with identifiable disciplinary characteristics or enduring educational functions. The third concerns the purpose of the cultural environment itself. Where activities are selected primarily for their immediate appeal, their capacity to prompt intellectual engagement and reflection on values may be overlooked. Entertainment-oriented provision that offers limited ideological or intellectual guidance cannot alone fulfill the community's educational mission [3]. These problems show that fragmentation concerns the relationship among administrative roles, educational content, and community culture, not simply the adequacy of physical provision.

3.2. Fragmented Collaboration among Educational Actors

Participation by university leaders, student-affairs personnel, ideological and political educators, and service staff is a defining feature of the integrated management model. Their involvement can bring different forms of educational and administrative expertise into a common setting. A wider range of participants does not, however, guarantee that their work will be coordinated. In the absence of clear commitments and shared procedures, some units remain involved only nominally. Services may then be duplicated in certain areas while other educational needs receive no sustained attention. The simultaneous occurrence of gaps and overlapping investment points to a weakness in collaborative arrangements rather than to the number of participating actors alone.

Two difficulties are particularly apparent in cooperation among educational actors: limited agreement about their shared educational responsibilities and inefficient coordination between departments. The development of one-stop student communities is generally led by university student-affairs departments. Although student-affairs staff and teachers responsible for ideological and political theory courses generally recognize the educational purpose of student communities, this understanding is less consistent among faculty members whose work falls outside these areas. Some disciplinary instructors, for example, continue to regard the classroom as the principal setting for their educational work and therefore seldom extend subject-specific guidance into residential communities. Their limited participation and investment can therefore create a gap in community educational participation. Effective integrated management also depends on university-level departmental cooperation; the resources and authority of an individual school or college are insufficient for this task. The relevant units include, on the educational side, student affairs departments, university Youth League committees, and schools or colleges, and, on

the support side, logistics and campus security departments. The two categories differ significantly in their primary objectives. The former generally assess activities in relation to educational outcomes, student participation, and competence development, whereas the latter must also give priority to campus order and the practical requirements of service provision. When departmental rules reflect only the operational priorities of the issuing unit, the educational purpose of community activities may be subordinated [4]. Differences in procedures and development targets, even among related units, can then delay joint decisions and make it difficult to align resources with students' needs.

3.3. Fragmented Student Participation

An administration-led approach may establish a one-stop student community efficiently, but does not necessarily establish a role for students in its governance. When administrative decisions continue to dominate beyond the initial stage, student participation is likely to remain limited in both extent and substance. This is apparent, first, in how student needs enter community planning. Students may have little opportunity to discuss the use of shared spaces or contribute to management rules before decisions are made. Community activities and facilities are then organized around demands presumed by administrators, with differences in students' educational and developmental circumstances reduced to generalized preferences. A programme designed in this manner may attract little sustained engagement despite the availability of physical facilities. Low use of community spaces and poor attendance at organized activities should therefore be considered alongside the limited influence of student input. Second, student Party-member apartment service stations and community self-governance groups have been established in some universities, but their presence has not always resulted in substantive student participation. In many cases, members carry out supporting duties, such as maintaining order, communicating notices, or recording attendance, rather than exercising responsibilities in community decision-making. Their limited involvement in reviewing management rules and deciding how resources are allocated means that participation rarely extends to the central issues of community governance. Suggestions submitted through forums, meetings, or feedback channels may likewise remain unresolved when departmental coordination is weak or existing procedures leave little scope for adjustment. Repeated difficulties in implementing such suggestions can weaken students' confidence that participation has practical value.

3.4. Fragmented Outcomes of Technological Empowerment

Offline activities continue to occupy a central place in the development of university one-stop student communities, while information technologies are not yet consistently used in educational and administrative work. Community-based educational practice has not consistently kept pace with changes in how students communicate and obtain information. Institutional understanding of digital methods, the funds available for implementation, and the capacity to maintain technical systems also differ across universities. Two issues consequently require separate consideration: the absence of appropriate technological support in some settings and the failure to translate installed systems into educational or administrative improvements in others.

One source of fragmentation is the absence of digital support from routine community work. Students increasingly obtain and exchange information through online channels, yet some universities continue to organize community activities and daily administration largely through face-to-face events and manual procedures. Under these conditions, information technology contributes little to the accessibility of services or the range of educational interactions available to students. Limited use of new media further restricts the ways in which community educators can communicate with the student population. A different difficulty arises where systems have been introduced but their educational uses remain marginal. Electronic access controls, for example, may be connected with smart logistics platforms as part of smart-campus development, without a corresponding procedure for using the information in educational services. If data remain at the level of routine description, they do not readily support differentiated online ideological and political education or the early recognition of students' practical concerns. The difficulty therefore concerns more than the installation of digital equipment. It also depends on whether technical resources are connected to identifiable educational tasks and responsive management practices. Without those connections, the introduction of new systems may leave the underlying patterns of community work largely unchanged across universities.

4. Congruence between Holistic Governance Theory and the Integrated Management Model of One-Stop Student Communities

Holistic governance emerged in public-administration discussions toward the end of the twentieth century, when the division of responsibilities associated with New Public Management prompted concern about discontinuities in public services. Rather than treating each organizational unit as a self-contained provider, the approach begins with problems that cross administrative boundaries and with the needs of service users. Cooperation between organizations and across administrative levels, together with information exchange, is central to its understanding of governance. The aim is to connect responsible actors and related functions so that public services are experienced as an integrated whole [5]. These premises are pertinent to one-stop student communities, where educational guidance, management, and everyday assistance concern the same students but are commonly assigned to different university departments.

4.1. A Demand-Oriented Value Orientation

The demand orientation of holistic governance distinguishes the needs of service recipients from the internal convenience of administrative organizations. Citizen needs are not merely information gathered when a service is first designed; they provide a basis for reviewing governance procedures and adjusting them as circumstances change. In one-stop student communities, the corresponding reference point is students' development. Their academic progress, everyday difficulties, and opportunities to acquire broader competencies should inform the organization of community education and services. This orientation also has implications for students' position in governance. If their needs are to influence community arrangements, they require opportunities both to express those needs and to participate in

decisions affecting the community. The practices of self-management, self-service, self-education, and self-supervision give organizational form to this student-centered principle [6].

4.2. An Organizational Imperative Centered on Collaboration

The organizational argument of holistic governance rests on the recognition that specialization, while necessary within institutions, can create discontinuities when related tasks are undertaken separately. Effective coordination therefore requires arrangements through which actors with distinct responsibilities can address shared problems. This is particularly relevant to one-stop student communities: student-affairs personnel, teaching staff, and logistics teams contribute different resources, but no single group can independently perform every educational and service function. When responsibilities are ambiguous or arrangements for joint decisions are weak, participation by additional units may not resolve fragmentation. Cooperation between departments at the same organizational level, combined with links between university-level administration and schools or colleges, can bring educational provision into closer alignment. The intended result is not merely a larger group of participants but a more consistent relationship between community needs and the resources available to meet them.

4.3. Information-Based Means of Technological Empowerment

In holistic governance, information systems serve an organizational purpose: they enable related public functions to work with connected information rather than isolated records and procedures. Their contribution to integrated services depends on the administrative decisions and cooperative relationships that the information makes possible. The same distinction applies to one-stop student communities. Digital development should not be assessed only by the number of applications or devices introduced. Its relevance lies in whether information technologies connect educational activities, community services, and administrative processes; permit participating departments to exchange the information necessary for their work; and improve the timeliness of support. Technological empowerment is therefore best understood as a means of putting integrated community management into practice, rather than as an independent objective.

5. Optimizing Practical Pathways for Developing the Integrated Management Model of University One-Stop Student Communities

The fragmentation described above arises at several points within the same process of community development. Educational space may be provided without a corresponding range of educational activities; participating units may lack working arrangements; opportunities for student input may have little influence on decisions; and technical systems may remain detached from everyday practice. From a holistic governance perspective, these limitations need to be addressed in relation to one another. Accordingly, the proposed pathways encompass multidimensional integration of community educational spaces, multi-actor coordination in

collaborative governance, demand-oriented mechanisms for student agency and participation, and digital empowerment through smart community platforms. The following sections consider these tasks as related aspects of the integrated management model, while recognizing that implementation must respond to the circumstances of individual universities.

5.1. Integrating Multiple Dimensions to Build a Panoramic Community Educational Space

The development of one-stop student communities should be assessed in relation to their educational functions rather than the provision of physical facilities alone. Their roles as university management units and student learning-and-living communities need to be connected through spaces that accommodate value guidance, interaction between faculty and students, academic support, cultural activities, and everyday services. First, the physical environment should include appropriately planned areas for study, discussion, residential life, cultural engagement, and integrated services, supported by improvements to existing facilities. The selection and organization of these facilities should reflect the different circumstances of student groups and make educational resources accessible where they are needed. Second, attention must be given to the cultural and educational purposes served by these spaces, rather than treating the visible completion of facilities as sufficient. To begin with, the educational positioning of the community must be clarified. Universities should address an excessive emphasis on accommodating preferences, follow the requirements of the Soul-Shaping Project for New-Era Youth, distinguish the complementary roles of formal teaching and community education, and retain ideological and political education as an important community function. Next, content and resource allocation should be optimized in line with students' disciplinary training goals and categories of professional competence development. Activities related to Party and Youth League development, academic ethos, labor education, psychological counseling, and employment services can be organized according to disciplinary training requirements and students' professional development needs. Finally, educational activities should provide more opportunities for reflection and participation, including programs on revolutionary culture, rather than relying predominantly on similar entertainment-oriented formats. Programs involving academic support, competence development, voluntary service, labor practice, and aesthetic education can connect moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education with community life, while increasing contact between faculty and students and extending the community's role beyond basic residential services.

5.2. Mobilizing Diverse Actors to Deepen a Collaborative Community Education System

Improving cooperation among the actors involved in one-stop student communities requires both a shared understanding of educational responsibilities and arrangements for more effective joint action. Where participation has remained largely formal, universities can clarify responsibilities through institutional requirements while strengthening recognition of the educational purpose of community work. Such responsibilities may be reflected in

university leaders' regular contact with students, the appointment of residential mentors, assessments of class advisers, and faculty promotion procedures. Alongside formal obligations, policy guidance and recurring professional development should enable teachers whose primary appointments lie outside student affairs and ideological and political education to undertake community-based educational work in coordination with administrative and service personnel.

Coordination also requires an institutional framework able to accommodate the different mandates of educational and support departments. The university Party committee should retain responsibility for overall direction, while the student-affairs department coordinates implementation and participating units act within defined areas of responsibility. Educational activities undertaken by student affairs, the university Youth League committee, and schools or colleges need to be planned in conjunction with the work of logistics and campus security. To make this division of labor operational, universities should specify objectives for successive stages of development, assign concrete tasks to responsible units, and establish quantitative criteria for assessing implementation and educational outcomes.

Regular deliberations involving Party and administrative leadership can be used to consider community matters that educational and support units cannot resolve separately. When an activity is proposed, for example, the responsible educational unit should identify its educational objectives and the intended form of student participation. Logistics and campus security personnel can then coordinate the facilities, order maintenance, and other support required for implementation. Departments would also benefit from a common inventory of staff, spaces, and other educational resources, considered alongside information about students' needs. Such an arrangement makes gaps and overlapping provision easier to identify before activities are organized. By incorporating coordination into ordinary procedures, universities can reduce reliance on temporary negotiations and connect separate contributions to a common programme of community education.

5.3. Orienting Services toward Demand to Activate Student Agency in Community Education

Students occupy two positions within university one-stop student communities: they use educational and residential services, but are also directly affected by the rules governing those services. Placing student services in the community provides an institutional setting in which students' experience of service provision can inform the management of shared affairs [7]. First, service provision needs to reflect students' actual concerns as well as their broader developmental interests. The selection of activities and their forms of organization should draw on students' expressed preferences and on evidence about participation. Practical difficulties and questions concerning values and development should be considered together, so that educational guidance is connected to issues students encounter in everyday life. Second, students should be given meaningful roles within a structure of self-management, self-service, self-education, and self-supervision, rather than being limited to receiving services arranged by administrators. Community student self-management committees and student-apartment Party-member service stations can provide organizational channels

through which student leaders participate in community affairs under appropriate university guidance. Peer-led academic support, exchanges on employment experience, student forums, and policy consultation can further extend participation by drawing on the experience of other students. Participation should also extend to decisions on community rules, activity plans, and the organization of programs. A sustained approach to student self-governance would thus combine opportunities to provide services with opportunities to develop students' capacities for collective decision-making.

5.4. Using Digital Empowerment to Build a Smart Community Education Platform

A smart student community connects online and offline education and services through digital networks in order to support students' all-round development [8]. Digital empowerment should be assessed by its capacity to improve how community educators understand and respond to student circumstances. An initial requirement is information infrastructure that links relevant community services with the university's existing ideological and political education work, rather than creating separate technical systems with limited practical application. Data from facial recognition, campus-card access records, and sensor-based facilities may, where such systems are in use, offer indications of residential routines, late returns, and study-related behavior. Considered across several dimensions, these records may assist educators in understanding student circumstances, identifying issues that warrant attention, and providing more differentiated guidance [9]. Technical data alone, however, do not constitute an educational response; the responsible departments must be able to use the information in their daily work. A further task is to connect the separate online systems through which students complete administrative procedures. Within a unified service portal, departments would retain specified responsibilities while students could access related services throughout enrolment, study, graduation, and departure. Coordination of information and service resources across these stages could reduce repeated processing and make the online platform a functional part of one-stop community management.

6. Conclusion

The analysis indicates that fragmentation in one-stop student communities concerns the connections among educational purposes, departmental responsibilities, student participation, and technological support, rather than any single resource considered in isolation. Holistic governance offers a rationale for addressing these relationships jointly, with students' needs serving as a reference point for institutional coordination. The framework discussed here identifies ways of linking community functions, organizational cooperation, student participation, and technological support in the continuing development of university governance in China.

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