

Challenges and Optimization Pathways in the Construction of “One-Stop” Student Communities in Chinese Universities

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Abstract. The “one-stop” student community model in Chinese universities serves as a crucial platform for strengthening Party leadership, practicing holistic education, innovating smart student services, and building harmonious campus environments. However, several challenges hinder its development: insufficient physical and ideological infrastructure; a lack of shared understanding and synergy in educational efforts; weak student agency and low self-governance capacity; and underdeveloped cultural and conceptual depth. To address these issues, it is essential to optimize spatial allocation, reinforce educational foundations, integrate and align educational forces, enhance students’ sense of ownership, and further cultivate distinctive campus cultures.

Keywords: “One-stop” student community in higher education; construction challenges; optimization pathways; collaborative education.

1. Introduction

The “One-Stop” Student Community in universities is an important initiative to thoroughly implement General Secretary Xi Jinping’s key statements on education and to fulfill the fundamental mission of fostering virtue through education. It serves as a crucial platform and vehicle for creating a comprehensive educational environment involving all staff and for enhancing students’ mental health education. It also represents a significant innovation in ideological and political work in universities under new circumstances.

At the National Education Work Conference in January 2024, Minister of Education Huai Jinping emphasized the need to innovate organizational mechanisms—including elements such as the “One-Stop” Student Community. In fact, under the leadership of the Party, several documents and initiatives have already mentioned the “One-Stop” model. For example, in 2019, the Ministry of Education launched efforts to promote the comprehensive management model of “One-Stop” student communities. In 2020, the Ministry further proposed intensifying the development of such platforms.

Under the strong leadership of the Communist Party of China and the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, the Ministry of Education and universities across the country have been actively advancing the construction of this comprehensive management model, achieving significant results while also facing certain challenges.

Universities bear the important responsibility of cultivating talent and training the builders and successors of socialism. In recent years, with the widespread adoption of the credit system and elective course system in higher education, students have become increasingly reliant on and in need of community support. As a result, student communities are becoming a critical educational space outside the classroom. Fully leveraging the “One-Stop” Student Community as a platform for ideological and political education is of great significance. Addressing the current developmental challenges facing student communities is thus both necessary and essential.

2. Origins and Connotation of the “One-Stop” Student Community in Chinese Universities

(1) Origins

In recent years, with the rise of the credit and elective course systems in Chinese higher education, the phenomenon of “same class, different schedules” and “same students, different classes” has become increasingly common. As a result, the traditional organizational roles of class monitors, youth

league secretaries, and counselors have been significantly weakened. Students now have less unified schedules and more discretionary time, yet institutional-level guidance has not kept pace.

From the broader perspective of national rejuvenation, youth are viewed as critical builders and successors of the Chinese Dream. Their ideological and moral guidance is thus of utmost importance. In 2014, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the Opinion on Further Strengthening and Improving Ideological and Political Education for College Students, which first introduced ideological and political (I&P) work into student communities. In this context, the "One-Stop" Student Community emerged as a vital mechanism in youth education.

(2) Connotation

At the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Higher Education, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized the need to “adapt I&P work to specific events, evolve with the times, and innovate in response to changing circumstances.” The “One-Stop” Student Community reflects these principles and embodies a student-centered philosophy.

This model creates an integrated educational and living community based on the geographical clustering of student residences, serving as the nearest space for I&P education. It is grounded in students' shared living environments and aims to support their growth outside of formal classroom learning. Relying on modern residential college systems or dormitory communities, it promotes reforms in student organization, management structures, and service mechanisms. The model encourages the presence of Party and Youth League branches, administrative offices, and service providers within the community, enabling direct interaction with students and enhancing the role of Party leadership.

Ultimately, it transforms student communities into multi-functional spaces that integrate ideological education, faculty-student interaction, cultural activities, and everyday services, thereby promoting a holistic, whole-process, and all-staff approach to student development.

3. Challenges in Constructing the “One-Stop” Student Community

(1) Insufficient Infrastructure and Functional Spaces

Rapid expansion in China's higher education sector has led to significant increases in student enrollment without a corresponding rise in campus resources. This has resulted in strained infrastructure and inadequate investment in student communities.

Many campuses lack modern, well-equipped spaces that meet students' evolving needs. Students often report a shortage of public learning spaces and poorly designed layouts. Additionally, the limited functions of student communities and the lack of supportive living facilities hinder the integration of physical and social spaces.

At the same time, space designated for educational work within communities remains limited. Most I&P management responsibilities fall on counselors, yet due to limited campus resources, public areas in residential colleges or dormitories are often unavailable for their use, which diminishes the educational function of these communities.

(2) Lack of Shared Understanding and Collaborative Efforts in Student Development

Although more than 2,000 universities across China have implemented the “One-Stop” model, many did so hastily and without a comprehensive plan. Due to weak institutional support, many departments, counselors, and faculty members focus narrowly on their core responsibilities due to heavy workloads and fragmented priorities.

Coupled with rigid hierarchical structures, these challenges have prevented the formation of a shared vision for student development. Teams often work in silos, neglecting the importance of collaboration. As a result, the integrated educational force envisioned by the model has yet to materialize, limiting its capacity to offer moral guidance, cultural enrichment, service-oriented education, and the holistic development of students.

4. Challenges in the Development of "One-Stop" Student Communities in Universities

(1) Lack of Student Agency and Weak Self-Governance

Ideological and political (I&P) education must remain student-centered, emphasizing students' cognitive and developmental needs and fostering their agency. The "One-Stop" student community is a key avenue for delivering I&P content. However, in some universities, excessive emphasis on administrative management and top-down communication has led to the neglect of student agency, weakening the implementation of student-centered I&P instruction.

Students are the primary constituents of the student community, and active participation and self-governance are essential. Yet in many institutions, student governance is either weakened or entirely absent. Traditional assumptions often place students solely as subjects of management due to perceived immaturity or lack of experience. While some institutions have established student-led bodies, student participation is often limited to low-stakes tasks such as dorm inspections or on-call duty. Furthermore, these roles tend to involve only a small group of students, leaving most without opportunities for involvement, and hindering the development of self-governance capabilities.

(2) Underdeveloped Community Identity and Cultural Function

Although "One-Stop" communities are intended to align with contemporary I&P needs by providing ideological guidance and cultural enrichment, implementation has been uneven. While pilot projects at select institutions have yielded valuable insights, many universities adopt models from others without adapting to their own local or institutional contexts. This results in a homogenous "one-size-fits-all" approach that lacks distinctive cultural substance and risks becoming superficial in practice.

5. Strategies for Optimizing the "One-Stop" Student Community Model

(1) Optimize Spatial Allocation to Strengthen Educational Functions

First, universities should allocate more resources to community infrastructure, enhancing learning and living spaces to support multifunctional development. Student communities should evolve from being merely residential spaces to integrated hubs for learning, interaction, and services—for example, through facilities like student lounges, study rooms, or club activity spaces.

Second, where physical resources are limited, universities can leverage digital platforms to improve service delivery. This includes integrating smart access systems, online payment and repair services, and establishing hybrid online-offline service centers to increase efficiency and engagement.

Third, strengthening the educational capacity of these communities requires investment in human resources and institutional mechanisms. Dedicated counselors can be stationed within student communities, supplemented by part-time roles for junior graduate students. To ensure sustainability, institutions should develop robust systems for counselor training, assessment, and evaluation.

(2) Decentralize Services and Integrate Educational Resources

Institutions should embed educational and support resources within student communities, guided by strategic planning from university leadership. A top-down leadership team should coordinate functional departments to shift I&P and student support resources closer to students.

Collaboration should also be fostered across departments and colleges to create synergy in student development. Internal stakeholders (e.g., Marxism Institutes, Propaganda Departments, logistical services) and external resources should work together to build a multidisciplinary, cross-sectoral educational model.

(3) Encourage Student Self-Governance and Sense of Ownership

Universities should establish a policy framework that promotes student-led governance bodies and meaningful self-management opportunities. These might include organizing cultural festivals, dormitory showcases, and safety campaigns. Structured training programs can further support students' capacity for self-education and self-governance. Activities such as academic mentoring and

career counseling within residential communities can also increase student engagement and sense of belonging.

(4) Develop Culturally-Rooted Community Identity

To deepen the community's educational and cultural functions, institutions should emphasize local and institutional cultural assets. For example, ethnic minority universities might center community development around national unity themes; agricultural institutions could offer hands-on labor education; and medical schools might integrate traditional Chinese medicine into programming. This approach fosters cultural depth and helps avoid homogeneity across campuses.

6. Conclusion

The comprehensive “One-Stop” student community model reflects both a timely response to evolving educational needs and a strategic effort to modernize student services. Over the past five years, the model has moved from pilot implementation to nationwide adoption, with notable achievements. However, achieving sustainable, high-quality development requires continued reflection on existing challenges and strategic optimization.

This article has outlined the origins, key concepts, challenges, and optimization pathways of the “One-Stop” model, emphasizing its significance for the educational system and the necessity of ongoing development. As a complex but essential undertaking, its success depends on shared commitment from both educators and students, continuous improvements in space, staffing, and governance, and further exploration of effective practices.

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