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# **The Three-Tiered Leuphana Model of Student Support**

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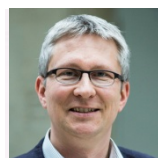
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# **The Three-Tiered Leuphana Model of Student Support**

## **Abstract**

In response to growing needs for student counselling, Leuphana University Lüneburg has recently introduced a three-tiered support model for undergraduates. Each of three sub-programmes (College Tutorial, College Study Reflection and College Privatissimum) has different functions and applies to different periods of college studies. Having introduced the main features of each of these, we focus on the College Study Reflection, discussing its rationale, core ideas and implementation. We present results of an initial evaluation and discuss emerging challenges. We close with a critical summary and the potential transferability of the Leuphana approach to other higher education institutions.

## **Keywords**

Leuphana University Lüneburg; College Study Reflection; Tutoring, College Privatissimum

## **Das dreistufige Studierenden-Betreuungsmodell der Leuphana**

### **Zusammenfassung**

Vor dem Hintergrund eines wachsenden Unterstützungsbedarfs wurde an der Leuphana Universität Lüneburg ein dreistufiges Studierenden-Betreuungsprogramm eingeführt. Jedes der drei Elemente College Tutorium, College Studienreflexion und College Privatissimum erfüllt bestimmte Funktionen in unterschiedlichen Phasen des Studiums und wird kurz vorgestellt. Der Schwerpunkt liegt auf der College Studienreflexion, ihrer grundlegenden Ziele und Umsetzung. Wir diskutieren die Ergebnisse einer ersten Evaluation sowie anstehende Herausforderungen. Der Beitrag schließt mit einer kritischen Zusammenfassung und einer Diskussion der potenziellen Übertragbarkeit des Leuphana-Ansatzes auf andere Hochschulen.

### **Schlüsselwörter**

Leuphana Universität Lüneburg, College Studienreflexion, Tutorium, College Privatissimum



# 1 Introduction: The need for reform in student support and tutoring

In the course of the Bologna reform process on “harmonising the architecture of the European Higher Education system”, the introduction of modularised study programmes has radically changed the requirements for university students. In the ongoing transitional period of moving from existing study regimes to new Bachelor and Master programmes, academic curricula have been undergoing a rapid change. Adaptation to Bologna demands has often led to somewhat chaotic periods of uncertainty for both university teachers and students, experimenting and gaining experience with new structures. In Germany and elsewhere, not only have university studies thus become more complex, but study times are also expected to be substantially shorter than before the Bologna process. Moreover, in the era of globalization, students are increasingly expected to gain additional experience abroad and through internships (Spoun 2005). Yet, students are left with less time and opportunities for detours and experimentation on study paths.

Arguably, these developments risk compromising the quality of the substance of higher education, thus also compromising the academic standards of graduates. According to a survey by Schomburg et al. (2012), academic teachers at German universities believe that the quality of studies has been reduced, mainly as a result of limiting freedom and intrinsic motivations for students (*ibid.*, p. 114).

In this context, undergraduate students in particular, faced with having to work their way through increasingly complex study structures, would be in need of additional support, tutoring or mentoring. The German Federal and State Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion (BLK) underscores the importance of counselling for students in new study programmes in the context of curricular restructuring. Pointing to the rising complexity of study structures, the Commission calls for more intensive support for students in designing their course of studies. Indeed, the Commission regards accompanying support programmes for students within modularized study programmes as key to students’ academic success (BLK 2002).

Against this backdrop, Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany, has recently introduced a three-tiered, novel student support model for undergraduates, building on the following elements:

- I. College Tutorial,
- II. College Study Reflection,
- III. College Privatissimum.

Each of these elements has different functions and applies to different periods of undergraduate (college) studies. Together, they aim to substantially improve student support through (I) direct contact with experienced students, (II) the development of a trusted mentoring relationship with a member of academic staff during the main period of undergraduate studies; and (III) through intensive, almost “private” academic teaching courses.

In the remainder of this contribution, we first give an overview of each of these elements of student support at Leuphana University Lüneburg (section 2). Subsequently, we discuss the importance of these innovations within the broader mission of the university (3). We then elaborate on the most developed element, the College Study Reflection, introducing its aims and core ideas (4) as well as its concrete implementation, before sharing experiences of how the model has so been working in practice so far (5). We then discuss results of a first qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the Study Reflection (6), before turning to some particular challenges that we have identified (7). We close with a critical summary and an outlook on further developments and the potential transferability of the Leuphana approach to other higher education institutions (8).

## 2 College Tutorial, College Study Reflection, College Privatissimum – an overview

Offered in the very first phase of college studies, the *College Tutorial* aims to help newly enrolled students to get acquainted with the university structure and their own study programme. Several student tutors studying in their third (or higher) semester support newly enrolled students of the same major in various group meetings during the first and second semester. Between group meetings, student tutors are available for support via e-mail. Popular topics discussed with tutors include course selection, study regulations, exams, and general planning of the course of studies, but also jobs and internships and student initiatives. Students have the opportunity to link up and exchange with fellow students. They learn from the experience of their tutors and their peers, and receive useful information. Prior to supporting students, tutors receive training on how to coordinate and lead group meetings and facilitate helpful exchange of experiences. They are also given training in the area of study regulations and contact persons for specific concerns. In the current winter semester, 43,6% of all newly enrolled students were taking part in the College Tutorial.

**Table 1:** The three elements of the Leuphana study support programme in comparison.

	College Tutorial	College Study Reflection	College Privatissimum
Who?	All students on a voluntary basis (approx. 40 percent participate)	All students on voluntary basis (approx. 15 percent participate)	All students taking seminars in 'complementary studies'
When?	First two College semesters	Total duration of college studies (starting in second semester)	Seminars can be taken once, starting from second semester
Why?	Help students get acquainted with university structures and study programme	Deeper reflection on personal goals and strengths in studying, personal mentoring	Improve competences in reading, academic writing and debate
How?	Student tutors support new students in small groups in various meetings; e-mail support	Mentoring through regular one-on-one meetings with academic staff; written reflection reports	Academic teaching in seminar groups of five students, regular preparation of essays

Following the College Tutorial, students have the opportunity to participate in the *College Study Reflection*. Starting from the second semester, interested students have two individual meetings per semester with their chosen academic staff member. The aim is to support students more broadly with their study planning through discussions with a more experienced academic. This involves a reflection of students' personal goals, strengths and their individual decisions regarding their studies. As a basis and in preparation for meetings, students prepare a short written report, reflecting on their current situation and upcoming plans and decisions. Profiting from guided self-reflection as well as the experience of their personal mentor, students build capacity to make better-informed decisions and generally cope better with study requirements. Ideally, students are supported by the same mentor from their second semester until they graduate.

The most recent element of Leuphana's three-tiered student support model, the *College Privatissimum* is about to be implemented with the start of the academic year 2013/14. Inspired by the model of Oxford and Cambridge universities, teaching is conducted in small seminars of five participants. Realized as part of the 'complementary studies' – a stream of modules that is studied

jointly by students across all majors, – this teaching model aims to substantially improve student competencies in reading, academic writing, structured reasoning, and debate. Seminars focus on reading academic texts with students developing provocative statements and preparing essays on a regular basis, which are then commented on by teachers and discussed in the group. Such a setup allows for a highly intensive interaction among students and teachers, and allows the teacher to provide more thorough feedback on the student's work than is possible in 'normal'-sized seminars of 15 to 40 students.

### **3 Leuphana student support as an essential part of the university's mission**

Leuphana University Lüneburg, a “university for civil society in the twenty-first century”, has adopted a general mission of a humanistic, sustainable and proactive university. As a proactive university, “Leuphana fosters the development of responsible and proactive individuals who demonstrate the creativity and thoughtfulness as well as the willingness and ability to creatively shape society”<sup>1</sup>. As a humanistic university, Leuphana University seeks to combine personal and academic development. In this sense, the communication of values and personality development are treated as equal to the teaching of knowledge and academic competencies (Spoun and Wunderlich 2005: 19). The College Study Reflection, in particular, explicitly aims to support personality development through, for example, strengthening reflection competence, problem-solving competence, and decision-making competence.

Following this mission, Leuphana University Lüneburg is characterised by a novel structure of academic studies within the German higher education landscape. Undergraduate studies in the Leuphana College start with the interdisciplinary ‘Leuphana semester’ (Michelsen 2013; Chrubasik et al. 2013), during which all students – independent of their particular majors – take part in interdisciplinary courses on sustainability, history of science, or methods. Following the same logic, the interdisciplinary course of ‘complementary studies’ (Komplementärstudium) constitutes another innovation, covering roughly one third of all credit points that students have to acquire next to their regular major and minor subjects. This way, the greater freedom of ‘classical’ German study programmes is to some extent incorporated into the undergraduate study programmes remodelled along the Bologna lines. At the same time, this may lead to uncertainties and a higher need for counselling. The three-tiered student support programme aims to respond to this demand.

### **4 College Study Reflection – rationale and basic concept**

As a novel mentoring programme that exists on a voluntary basis, the College Study Reflection was developed to provide intensive student support by academic staff beyond academic teaching. It aims to support undergraduate students with the planning and focusing of their course of studies, building on their personal strengths (Spoun 2005; Newig et al. 2011). The Study Reflection builds on personal contacts between students and academic university staff in individual one-hour meetings twice per semester. In order to strengthen personal relationships between stu-

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.leuphana.de/en/university/profile/mission-statement.html>.

dents and their staff mentors, students ideally will keep their personal mentor for the entire period of their undergraduate studies.

Ideally, this will allow students to create strong, trusting relationships and also improve communication between students and teachers. As Kennedy et al. (1995) maintain that “faculty contact plays a significant role in student attitudes towards the university”, the Study Reflection should help improve students’ identification with their university. This, in turn, can be expected to lead to higher satisfaction of students with their studies (Astin 1993; Westermann et al. 1996). Generally, Myers and Dyer (2005) found that “student advising (...) has a direct impact on institutional fiscal stability, student retention and progression, and overall student satisfaction” (p. 35). There is evidence that a more reflective way of studying reduces study time and drop-out rates (Skordoulis and Naqvi 2010; Stevenson et al. 2006-07).

With regards to the academic aspects of teaching, personal and more informal individual interaction with staff members allows students to formulate questions and voice critique regarding courses, which they are not likely to do in a class setting. Thus, teaching profits from being able to more quickly detect (and possibly address) any deficits. Courses can be designed to be livelier as teachers become more familiar with the perspectives of their students in informal meetings.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, mentors may find it rewarding to accompany and follow the development of their mentees. Teachers may also wish to share their personal academic research experiences; thus, students may learn and develop clearer ideas of what the research process entails, and what the quality requirements of scholarly and scientific research are, which then may positively influence the quality of student academic work. Boettcher and Meer (2000) argue that students ought to be encouraged to move confidently within the academic discourse, while acknowledging that the capacity to undertake independent academic work only develops over the course of their studies. With regard to the bottom line, the apparent additional cost of participating in the Study Reflection is likely to be outweighed by the material benefits of higher study quality.

Moreover, mentoring programmes such as the Study Reflection are expected to contribute positively to personality development of students (Spoun 2005). Chao (1997) and Scandura (1992) found that student participants in mentoring programmes develop a stronger self-confidence with regard to their own competencies, and typically find the more ‘successful’ career paths as compared to non-participants. According to a study by Cosgrove (1986), mentoring participants showed clearly improved capabilities in the areas of setting and achieving goals, problem solving, and decision-making abilities. In addition, mentees developed a better ability to cope with stress (Liang et al. 2002).

Next to these expected benefits, the College Study Reflection was designed to enhance the reputation and competitiveness of the university in the broader higher education landscape.

## 5 Implementation of the College Study Reflection

Following an 18-month period of conceptualisation and operational planning, the College Study Reflection was offered as a completely new programme at Leuphana University Lüneburg. It started in April 2012 with the beginning of the summer semester, targeting the then second-semester students. Because of the unusually high number of newly enrolled students in this year (due to the German transition from a 9-year- to an 8-year secondary school system), the need for student support was particularly high.

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<sup>2</sup> This aspect is supported by interviews with mentors at the University of Duisburg-Essen (Germany).

The Study Reflection is open to all undergraduate students from their second semester on. Mentors include faculty (professors) and other academic staff (research associates and assistants as well as scholarship holders and PhD students), who have at least had six months work experience at the university, and who will stay for at least another year. As of winter 2013, 105 academic staff support a total of 482 students, with mentors supporting between one and 16 students each. Roughly 15 percent of undergraduate students in their first and second year participate in the programme.

Two individual meetings of mentor and mentee are held per semester. In preparation for the first meeting, students deliver a short written reflection report, in which they reflect on the past semester, their plans for the upcoming semester and any other issues they deem important, such as self-management, or plans for internships, or studies abroad. The second meeting is typically devoted to reflecting on the achievements of the semester in light of the aims and goals formulated at the outset. However, there is much flexibility in how the meetings are held, allowing for a wide variety of topics to be discussed, including self-motivation, self-organisation, and time management, learning strategies, proper citation of literature, how to cope with uncooperative fellow students in group work, and the like. While meetings are mostly held in the office of the respective mentor, some prefer to meet in a café or walk around the campus. Next to the two regular meetings, additional ones can be arranged, and some mentors also offer group meetings to their mentees. Moreover, mentors are available for e-mail contact throughout the semester. In times when mentees are spending time abroad, meetings can be held via skype or telephone.

A number of elements are worth highlighting, which now form part of the Study Reflection, but which are levers to be potentially adjusted as experience with the novel programme is growing.

**Voluntary participation:** Participation in the College Study Reflection is voluntary for both students and academic staff. It is expected, however, that both sides fully commit to the programme and that participation is lasting throughout the period of college studies. This voluntary basis bears the huge advantage that no student is forced to take yet another mandatory ‘course’ and that all the troubles of formalisation (formal approval by university bodies, elaboration of sanctions etc.) can be avoided. Likewise, no academic staff member is required to serve as mentor in the programme, nor is the number of mentees per mentor predetermined, thus allowing full flexibility according to disposition and capacity of staff members.

The disadvantage of the voluntary approach is that some students, who are perhaps less active and who do not voluntarily subscribe to the programme, may be those who could profit most from the Study Reflection. The expectation is, however, that word-of-mouth recommendation reaches all those who could potentially profit from the programme. Another challenge is to advertise the programme through different channels (presentations in lectures, maintenance of the website [www.leuphana.de/college-studienreflexion](http://www.leuphana.de/college-studienreflexion)) and to reach all potential participants.

**Matching of mentors and mentees:** In order to ensure a good ‘fit’ between mentees and mentors, students have the opportunity to name up to three mentors from those academic staff who participate in the programme and who have capacity to support additional students. Academic teachers maintain a profile on the Study Reflection’s website, from which students select three potential mentors in order to allow for some technical flexibility in matching. Students may choose a mentor from their own field of study (which two thirds of students do) or from a different field. This web-based matching has worked quite smoothly up to this point. Matching has been mostly successful, with only five students requesting to change their mentor.

**Preparation of meetings and reflection reports:** In order to maximize the usefulness of reflection meetings, students prepare reflection reports in advance of every second meeting. Written reports such as “personal study plans” in Finland have proved useful to “help the students to ori-

entate themselves better in academia and make better informed decisions during his or her studies” (Lahti 2009). Reflection reports are meant to encourage students to express their thoughts more clearly, and help mentors prepare for the meeting, allowing them to inquire and to comment, thus stimulating a constructive meeting atmosphere. After one year of experience, students have judged the reports as highly useful. The vast majority value the reports as a basis for reflection meetings and as a reflective exercise for themselves. When asked which element of the Study Reflection should be kept (no predetermined responses), the reflection report ranks highest by far, and mentors judge the quality of reflection reports equally high<sup>3</sup>. Last but not least, for both mentors and mentees, the reports serve to document students’ development over a longer time period.

**Training and support of mentors:** The role of a mentor can be very challenging, in particular for less experienced academic staff. According to the study by Skordoulis and Baqur Naqavi (2010), mentors are in particular need of training with regards to the university system and its specific regulations, but also with regard to general issues of personal mentoring and supervision. Addressing these needs, Study Reflection mentors are offered regular trainings on the mentioned issues as well as on communication skills in general. Moreover, mentors are provided with a comprehensive guide on conducting reflection discussions, including concrete suggestions for constructive questions and comments particularly suited to initial meetings. Moreover, a central contact person as part of the programme coordination is available for mentors’ requests. Regularly, network meetings are organised in which mentors exchange their experiences and share both problematic and rewarding aspects of their role as mentor.

**Launching event:** To mark the start of each new cohort of Study Reflection participants, a formal launch event is held at the beginning of each summer semester. In the previous events held in April 2012 and April 2013, a welcome address by the university president and contributions by initiators, mentors and mentees of the Study Reflection were followed by a reception in which new mentors and mentees have the opportunity to get to know each other.

**Compensation:** Involvement as mentor in the Study Reflection is rewarded through compensation either as a teaching assignment or as an increase in teaching budget, assuming an equivalent of one semester contact hour (Semesterwochenstunde) per group of seven to eight mentees.

## 6 Evaluation of the College Study Reflection

### Formative evaluation in autumn 2012

In order to gain insight into the development of the Study Reflection and participant satisfaction, an initial formative evaluation was conducted in autumn 2012. Participating students were asked to complete a two-page online questionnaire, which included issues regarding the reflection report, communication with programme administration, meetings with mentors, suggestions for improvement, and visibility of the Study Reflection. 95 out of the then 225 mentees participated in the survey, representing a response rate of 42,2 percent. A summary of results is depicted in table 2.

As a result of the survey, two main ‘functions’ of the Study Reflection emerged that were mentioned most often by student participants: structuring of thoughts and reflection on personality and opportunities for further (personal) development. These functions are also reflected in what respondents mentioned as main outputs of reflection meetings, which include: (1) an increased

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<sup>3</sup> Result of an online evaluation among academic staff mentors (autumn 2012).

confidence in study organisation, (2) new perspectives through interaction with mentors, (3) increased commitment to personal goals by defining concrete milestones with mentor; (4) a trusted contact person who cares about the mentee; (5) lower perception of pressure by students because of the realization that nobody is perfect, and that even unorthodox biographies can be successful by conventional criteria.

**Table 2:** Key results of the 2012 online survey among mentees in the College Study Reflection.

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Key results on selected items</b>
Reflection report	<i>Is writing the report useful?</i> Yes, according to 82 percent. <i>What is particularly useful about writing the report?</i> The self-reflection as such; looking back and forward; structured writing down; reflection on own strengths and weaknesses; goal orientation.
Overall programme communication	General response that communication with programme coordination goes well.
Reflection meetings	<i>Good atmosphere during meetings?</i> Yes, according to 85 percent. <i>Benefit to my own studies?</i> Yes (85 percent). <i>Open comments on reflection meetings:</i> Gained more clarity on concrete planning (internship, studying abroad, civic engagement).
Themes discussed during meetings	Graduate studies (potential Masters programmes to pursue); work strategies, self-organisation, time management; planning of course of studies; semesters abroad; internships; coping with stress and work-life balance (e.g. accomplishing private life, job, civic engagement and studies); general coping strategies; personal matters; exams; academic discussions.
Satisfaction with the programme	<i>Satisfied with the programme?</i> Yes (94 percent). <i>What should be kept as is?</i> Reflection report (20 percent), individual meetings (12 percent), choice of mentors (9 percent), launching event; “everything” (8 percent).
Suggested improvements	<i>Suggested improvements?</i> Whereas most students mentioned no suggestions, some suggested to have more reflection meetings or more exchange with other participants.

### Summative evaluation summer 2013

Moving beyond the initial findings of the autumn 2012 evaluation, an in-depth survey of both participants and non-participants aims to generate a more reliable understanding of the functioning and the effects of the Study Reflection. It is to be conducted on an annual basis, starting in summer 2013.

Based on the stated goals for the Study Reflection (Newig et al. 2011), the authors of this article developed a questionnaire, which defines and operationalizes the respective dimensions of student personality, competence, and satisfaction. Based on the results of an online pilot survey (N = 64), the questionnaire was improved, retaining 71 items, which measure ten different constructs with high internal consistency as measured by Cronbach’s alpha (see table 3). The first seven constructs refer to a self-assessment of capabilities needed to succeed in one’s studies. The following two constructs measure student satisfaction with their study programme. The last construct gauges students’ assessment regarding different effects of the Study Reflection.

**Table 3:** Dimensions of the online survey on study behaviour with example items (N = number of items,  $\alpha$  = internal consistency) to be conducted in regular intervals from 2013 with participants and non-participants of the Study Reflection.

Dimension	Example item	N	$\alpha$
Reflection competence	I have a clear notion of competences I want to attain.	8	.772
Problem-solving competence	I have strategies to cope with challenges in my studies.	16	.863
Goal-setting competence	I can justify my goals well.	9	.862
Decision-making competence	I can put my decisions into a broader context.	10	.771
Ability to cope with uncertainty	I can sustain uncertainty.	6	.747
Autonomy	I decide myself about what concerns me.	3	.701
Self-organisation	I take the time to consciously make decisions regarding my studies.	8	.752
Satisfaction with studies	On the whole, I am satisfied with my studies.	5	.792
Identification with university	I like to study at this university.	4	.773
Effects of Study Reflection	My mentor's perspective helps me to plan more clearly.	5	.836

The study is designed to allow both longitudinal as well as cross-group comparison (quasi-experimental study design). Conducted regularly, it will allow one to assess development of student's competences and behaviour over time. As a control group, a number of students equal to those participating in the Study reflection will be surveyed (not including questions on the one construct specifically targeted at assessing the effects of the Study Reflection). In summer 2013, all mentees were asked to fill in the questionnaire on paper during a reflection meeting (typically before discussion starts). As of 23 January 2014, 41,5 percent of questionnaires were returned. As a control group, a matching population of students (same semester, and mostly the same study programmes) completed questionnaires during major lectures. Completing the questionnaire took about 20 minutes. While the respondent identity generally remains anonymous, students were asked to provide a unique code that will allow us to follow student development over multiple survey instances. Using this research design, the study will allow us to assess the actual effects of the Study Reflection on student capabilities and competence development.

## 7 College Study Reflection – challenges

While the Study Reflection has been well established during the first year, some mostly organisational issues have surfaced that must be addressed. Moreover, a number of more fundamental concerns persist, that presumably are of general interest to all those who set up and maintain similar programmes.

**How to reach those students who are in greatest need of mentoring?** Repeatedly, mentors have been mentioning that some of their mentees do not seem to 'need' the additional support of the Study Reflection, because they are already well organized and capable of realistic planning.



Although these students, too, profit from the programme, the question remains of how to reach those who do not participate voluntarily.

**Commitment on the part of mentees:** While student commitment to the Study Reflection is generally very high, some mentees apparently drop out without informing either the programme coordination or their mentor. The current practice is to contact them a number of times, and in the case of continued non-response, participants are suspended from the programme.

**How to enlist sufficient staff members?** The Study Reflection can only accommodate so many students as can be mentored by voluntary academic staff. Up to now (September 2013), there has been no shortage of mentors. However, experience from three rounds of entry suggests that saturation will be reached at some point. It is unclear whether additional incentives, advertising or other changes in the programme will be needed to accommodate the growing number of students until all semesters are being served (as of now, only students of the first two years participate, as the programme always starts in the second semester). Moreover, the word of mouth appears to result in growing percentages of student participation. An ultimate solution would be to introduce a fixed capacity that can be served by those participating staff, with new students allowed to enter only as others finish.

**Fixed-term contracts of mentors:** The majority of academic staff members involved in the Study Reflection have fixed-term contracts. If mentors leave the university before their mentees have graduated, students in most cases have to change their mentors (unless the mentors agree to continue their involvement from outside for a limited time). This runs counter the idea of developing an enduring relationship between mentor and mentee. With a minimum period of two semesters for new mentors, changes of mentor cannot be fully avoided.

**Financing:** Running the Study Reflection entails costs for programme coordination and compensation for mentors. Currently, the programme is sponsored through European Union funds and tuition fees. As both will discontinue in the foreseeable future, new funding will have to be made available.

## 8 Conclusions

In response to the growing need for student mentoring and counselling following Bologna reform developments, the Leuphana model of student support has been developed. With two of the initiative's elements – the College Tutorial and the College Study Reflection – already being implemented, the third element – College Privatissimum – is about to be launched with the start of the academic year 2013/14.

Our main emphasis was on the College Study Reflection, for which initial evaluation results are available. Certainly, this is a still young programme, and any evaluative findings must be interpreted with caution until more reliable results will be available from the systematic and quasi-experimental assessment that started in summer 2013. While generally, satisfaction with the Study Reflection appears high by both participating mentors and mentees, a number of critical issues remain. The two most important challenges appear to be, first, the financing of such a comprehensive programme open to all college students, and second, the availability of motivated and engaged academic staff to serve as mentors in the programme.

To what extent could the Leuphana model (or any of its elements) be of potential interest to other higher education institutions in Germany and beyond? First, the Leuphana model is not entirely new. Many of its individual elements have been inspired by best practice elsewhere. (1) Student

tutorials, the least costly of the three elements, exist in other universities and should be rather easily implemented. (2) An academic mentoring scheme takes more time and diligence to develop and put in place, even if sufficient resources are available. An existing programme such as the College Study Reflection is also less easily transferred to other institutions because a lot of individual components are highly university specific. For example, compensation schemes may differ among universities. Also, most larger universities may have difficulty to introduce such an encompassing programme university-wide. Other German public universities such as Duisburg-Essen run a somewhat similar mentoring scheme on the level of the faculties, resulting in substantial differences across faculties. Yet even for smaller institutions, a cross-faculty scheme may be difficult to achieve due to the organisational structures of a university. The clear advantage of a university-wide programme lies in the possibility for students to choose their mentor from any faculty or department; also, networking across both mentors and mentees is greatly facilitated. Leuphana University has had the unique opportunity to introduce such a university-wide programme shortly after a major process of restructuring had taken place. (3) With regards to the College Privatissimum, its introduction has certainly been facilitated by the structure of the Leuphana college with its 'complementary studies'. Other universities would have to find a suitable structure, which may not be easy.

Student mentoring, coaching and counselling undoubtedly is on the rise. Combined programmes such as the one we reported on here are still the exception rather than the rule. Care should be taken that student support programmes are not merely implemented because they are currently fashionable. Rather, it will be crucial to continuously and rigorously evaluate the unfolding and the success of such programmes.

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