University Centre Peterborough - The case for Student Ambassadors

The role of student ambassador has grown from the humble beginnings of campus tour guide for prospective students, to a more widely diverse and complex role, and will vary from university to university (Ylonen, 2010). The role not only consists of being a guide and a face of the university or college, but now covers elements of marketing, networking, decision making and being a representative of the students at faculty and student meetings.

First and foremost, the role of student ambassador is the representative of the university or college. They must be able to actively listen, in an empathetic and unbiased manner, and communicate with different people of varied ages and abilities. They are sometimes the first port of call for current students who need advice and guidance, for those students who feel they cannot approach the staff at the institutions which they attend, for various reasons, but feel more comfortable in talking to someone they see as being neutral, and ‘one of the gang’.

Prospective students, when choosing universities and colleges, are more likely to use different sources of information in regards to choosing an institution, often using older siblings and family members, and friends (Slack, et al., 2014). However, the prospective students and parents/carers, will definitely approach student ambassadors at open days for further information. There is evidence that indicates that prospective students meeting current students, plays a big part in the decision of which institution to attend (Slack, et al., 2014). It is the information gathered from the grapevine (Ball & Vincent, 1998), the first-hand knowledge which generally refers to direct experiences or knowledge of the current student. If a student ambassador presents themselves in a positive and knowledgeable manner, there is greater chance that they will encourage the prospective student to study at the university or college.

Although there are many benefits for a university or college which employs ambassadors, there are also some important outcomes for the ambassadors themselves. Being an ambassador, would normally require attendance at board and faculty meetings, giving a sense of belonging and control over decisions and the study environment (Baratta, 2010). Employers will look favourably at students with the transferable skills gained whilst undertaking ambassadorial tasks (Ylonen, 2012). The activities of the student ambassador can be placed onto a CV, and show evidence of good social and networking skills, of commitment, that the ambassador can multitask and meet deadlines. Other important skills that can be noted are good communication, time keeping, leadership, and team working, all life skills which can be showcased to future employers. Confidence raising is also another positive outcome for the student ambassador (Ylonen, 2010) where often shy students become more confident in speaking and interacting with large groups.
In summary, there are so many positives for HE institutions and the student ambassadors themselves. Institutions benefit from having influential peer mentors for current students and those looking for a place to study. The student ambassador in the process also gains those important transferable/life skills, which, hopefully, future employers will instantly identify.

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**References**


