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Academic performance of boarder and commuter students in Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology board programs: Informing the development of an academic tracking program

Tomas, Mary Jane L. ✉
Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, Philippines (jengltomas@gmail.com)

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Abstract

This study examines the academic performance of boarder and commuter students enrolled in board programs at Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST). It utilizes a descriptive correlation design to compare student grades, including dropped and incomplete subjects, absences, and overall GPA. Additionally, the research explores the relationship between academic performance and non-cognitive factors such as time management, physical environment, emotional well-being, peer influence, and family support. The findings reveal that boarders face challenges with dropouts, absences, and incomplete grades, while commuter students achieve slightly better academic performance. Interestingly, only time management and family support significantly influence both groups' performance. The study recommends a multi-pronged approach to support both student populations based on these results. This includes targeted programs, strengthened family engagement, a comprehensive academic tracking system, and the development of non-cognitive skills. Ultimately, the aim is to improve student success and licensure exam results for both boarder and commuter students at NEUST

Keywords: boarder VS commuter students, academic performance, non-cognitive factors, academic tracking program, licensure exam success

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1. Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right and an essential factor in the growth and development of individuals, communities, and nations (Philippine Constitution, 1987). The Philippine education system is built on the foundation of Article XIV Section 1 of the 1987 Constitution, which guarantees all citizens the right to quality education at all levels. Parents, particularly those from middle to lower-income families, strive to provide their children with such an education by sending them to the best schools they can afford (UNESCO, 2023). However, not all families have the financial resources to provide a quality learning environment at home. Students experiencing poverty may live in environments with less stimulation and fewer resources (Chinyoka & Naidu, 2014). The lack of support and cognitive stimulation can significantly disadvantage students academically (Chinyoka & Naidu, 2014). Overcrowding and the lack of privacy and space have also been linked to lower academic performance (Chinyoka & Naidu, 2014). These poor home conditions can negatively impact children's physical well-being and ability to learn.

At Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, Sumacab Campus, Philippines, students are classified as either commuters or boarders. Many educators believe that living and learning environments should be in close proximity, with boarders potentially having an advantage due to a more structured environment (Oluwascyi, 2015). Vincent Tinto's Social Integration Theory (1975) states that student success is linked to their integration into academic and social life (Tinto, 1975). This theory aligns with research suggesting that on-campus students (boarders) may have better access to resources and activities that promote this integration (Karp, Hughes & Lauren, 2008). However, some student-boarders report challenges adapting to living away from home (Oluwascyi, 2015). For student-commuters, Physical exhaustion resulting from long commutes and managing household responsibilities can pose significant challenges for individuals (Oluwascyi, 2015). Student success is a top priority for any educational institution. Understanding the multifaceted factors influencing academic performance allows educators to tailor support systems for optimal student outcomes (Wu, 2023). Academic performance is a key indicator of student achievement, measured by classroom performance, graduation rates, and standardized test results (Wu, 2023).

Purpose of the Study - Understanding these differences in academic performance and coming up with a systematic academic tracking program is crucial, especially since it can positively impact the performance of the students on the licensure examination results after graduation (Professional Regulation Commission, Philippines, 2023). Thus, this study investigates the academic performance of student boarders and student commuters enrolled in board programs at NEUST Sumacab-Main Campus during the academic year 2022-2023. By examining their perceptions, challenges, and outcomes, a strategy to enhance student success through a systematic academic tracking program can be proposed. Based on the above statement, the purpose of the study is to determine the differences between the academic performances of selected student-boarders and student-commuters from the board programs in NEUST Sumacab-Main Campus, Cabanatuan City Philippines during the 1st and 2nd semesters of the Academic Year 2022- 2023.

Research Questions

- How may the academic performance of the respondents be described based on the following indicators: Dropped subjects; Incomplete subjects; Failed subjects; and Incurred absences?
- Is there a significant difference between the Academic performance (GPA) of student-boarders and

student-commuters?

- Is there a significant relationship between the academic performances and the non-cognitive factors of student-boarders and student-commuters in terms of: Time management; Physical Environment; Emotional Factor; Peer Influence; and Family Support?

The study's findings can inform the creation of an academic tracking program that supports the academic success of all students, including both boarders and commuters. The system can:

- identify students who might be at risk of academic difficulties based on their living situation and factors.
- provide targeted support services, such as time management workshops or peer mentoring programs, for boarders or commuters facing challenges.
- track the effectiveness of interventions and adjust the tracking system accordingly.

Theoretical Framework - Academic performance can be influenced by several factors, including the environment. The home environment, in particular, has a significant impact on academic performance, as the family is the primary socialization agency that plays a crucial role in a child's development (Threlfall et al., 2013). Students who experience poverty may live in environments that offer less stimulation and fewer resources for learning. The lack of support and cognitive stimulation in a student's home environment can account for one-third to half of the disadvantages in verbal, reading, and mathematical skills among persistently poor students (Chinyoka & Naidu, 2014). Children have reported that poor home conditions, such as overcrowding and a lack of privacy or space to be alone, can negatively affect their academic performance. Poor home conditions can also impact a child's physical well-being and ability to learn. The home environment has a significant influence on a student's psychological, emotional, and social state, which can ultimately affect academic performance. Therefore, the importance of a conducive home environment for learners' academic performance cannot be overstated since it is the source of basic motivation (Bronfenbrenner, 2008). The living condition plays a vital role in building the character of students and enhancing academic performance, making it a crucial starting point for this study.

2. Review of Related Literature

There have been several studies on the academic performance of students living in boarding houses compared to those commuting (Sikhwari et al., 2020; Aquino, 2019; Feliciano, 2022). Research on boarding vs. day school performance yields mixed results. Some studies, like the National Association of Independent Schools (2019) report no significant difference in overall academic achievement. Others like Khan (2014), suggest day students might outperform boarders in some areas. Additionally, A recent study by Sikhwari et al. (2020) found that resident students performed slightly better than non-resident students, suggesting a potential advantage to living on campus. However, Aquino's (2019) study found no significant relationship between commuting and academic performance. Feliciano's (2022) research showed that commuter students might prioritize grades more and participate more actively in class compared to boarders, but boarders faced fewer daily disruptions. While these studies provide valuable insights, none have proposed the development of a systematic tracking program to address the specific challenges faced by each group (Sikhwari et al., 2020; Aquino, 2019; Feliciano, 2022).

Factors affecting academic performance have been studied extensively, with research indicating a strong correlation between effective time management and higher GPAs. However, boarding students may face challenges in managing their time due to limited social interaction within the boarding environment. This was emphasized by Khan (2014). Furthermore, Khan highlights the key role of family support in academic performance. Parental encouragement for academic participation has been shown to significantly impact student

outcomes. In terms of sleep and wellbeing, Khan suggests that boarding students may get more sleep than day students. This study on the academic performance of boarder and commuter students from the board programs in Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology is an important topic as it can provide insights for the development of a tracking program that can address the gaps identified in the study.

An academic tracking program is an educational system that organizes students into distinct learning pathways based on perceived academic ability, interests, or future goals. These pathways typically involve predefined course sequences designed to prepare students for specific academic or career outcomes (Gamoran, 2001). Parents can also utilize the program to stay informed about their child's academic progress, allowing them to offer targeted support and guidance when needed. A recent report by the Institute of Education Sciences suggests that students who are aware that their parents and teachers can access their progress data tend to display greater responsibility for their work and take more ownership of their learning (https://nces.ed.gov/). Academic tracking programs can serve as an effective communication tool between parents and teachers. According to a study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, schools using tracking programs reported increased parental involvement, most likely due to easier access to real-time information about their child's academic progress. (https://ies.ed.gov/). This leads to more productive discussions with teachers about a child's individual needs and learning journey.

Overall, academic tracking programs, when implemented effectively, can be a valuable asset in promoting student success. By fostering transparency, accountability, and communication, these programs can empower both students and parents to take a more active role in the learning process. This review suggests that while the academic performance differences between boarders and commuters are inconclusive, there are distinct challenges and advantages for each group. A well-designed tracking program could bridge these gaps by providing targeted support and fostering better communication between students, parents, and teachers.

3. Methodology

This study utilized descriptive correlation design to gather information on the academic performance of commuter students and boarder students (from 1st year to 3rd year) enrolled in board programs at Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST) Sumacab-Main Campus during the Academic Year 2022-2023 (Creswell, 2014). The target population consisted of 3,772 students enrolled in various board programs at NEUST Sumacab-Main Campus. A sample size was calculated using Raosoft® (Sample Size Calculator) considering a 5% margin of error, a 95% confidence level, and a 50% response rate. Stratified random sampling was employed due to the large population of boarder and commuter students (Saunders et al., 2012). The total sample size is again divided into half to equally represent boarder and commuter students. Table 1 shows the distribution of the repondents by board courses in Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, Sumacab Campus Cabanatuan City.

Table 1
Distribution of the Respondents

College/Department	Population	Percentage	Sample
Criminology	711	18.85%	66
Architecture	735	19.49%	68
Education	463	12.27%	43
Engineering	1,863	49.39%	173
TOTAL	**3772**	**100.00%**	**350**

The researcher used frequency count, percentage, weighted mean, t-test, and correlation to analyze and interpret the collected data (Walpole et al., 2016). A self-administered survey questionnaire was developed and subjected to a reliability test to collect data on student academic performance. The questionnaire consisted of two parts:

- **Part I: Academic Performance Indicators:** This section gathered information on the respondents'

academic performance by asking about the number of dropped subjects, incomplete subjects, failed subjects, and incurred absences during the previous academic year.

- **Part II: Non-Cognitive Factors:** This section focused on non-cognitive factors that might influence academic performance. Students were asked questions related to time management skills, the impact of their physical environment (e.g., living situation for commuters vs. boarders), emotional well-being, peer group influence, and the level of support received from their family.

Informal interviews were also conducted among the respondents to validate the answers gathered on Part II – Non-Cognitive Factors on the survey questionnaire.

4. Results

Research Question 1. How may the academic performance of of the respondents be described based on the following indicators: Dropped subjects; Incomplete subjects; Failed subjects; and Incurred absences?

Dropped Subjects. Table 2 summarizes the number of dropped subjects during the academic year 2022-2023, as reported by the respondents.

Table 2
Distribution of the Students as to Dropped Subjects

Dropped Subjects	BOARDERS		COMMUTERS	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
0	149	85.14%	158	90.29%
1 to 3	25	14.29%	17	9.71%
4 to 6	1	0.57%	0	0%
TOTAL	175	100%	175	100%

Out of the total number of boarders, 149 or 85.14% did not drop any subject during the academic year 2022-2023, while 25, or 14.29% dropped 1 to 3 subjects. Only one boarder dropped 4-6 subjects during that academic year. On the other hand, out of the total number of commuters, the majority (158 or 90.29%) did not drop any subject, while 17 or 9.71% admitted to dropping one to three subjects. None of the commuters dropped 4-6 subjects. In conclusion, the incidence of dropped subjects was higher among student-boarders as compared to commuters. Based on these findings, the overall incidence of dropped subjects appears slightly lower among commuter students compared to boarders**.** This result is somewhat unexpected, considering previous research suggesting that commuter students often face challenges managing time due to longer commutes and potential distractions outside the campus environment (Blazer et al., 2009).

Follow-up interviews with commuter students provided some insights**.** Students revealed that managing part-time jobs alongside academic workloads often led them to drop subjects. The pressure to balance financial independence with academic demands resulted in difficult choices. This aligns with prior studies highlighting the financial strain on commuter students and the need to balance work and studies, which can negatively impact academic performance (Pascarella et al., 2004). Additionally, some students expressed feeling overwhelmed by their responsibilities, contributing to dropped subjects. This finding resonates with research on student stress and its negative influence on academic outcomes (Eisenberg et al., 2009). Further research is needed to explore these factors in more detail. Future studies could investigate the specific challenges faced by part-time working students and explore strategies for effective time management and workload distribution, considering the unique circumstances of both boarders and commuters.

Incomplete Subjects. Table 3 summarizes the number of incomplete subjects incurred by boarders and commuters during the 2022-2023 academic year.

An analysis of completed subjects revealed an interesting trend between boarders and commuter students. Among boarders, a large majority (80.00%, n = 140) successfully completed all their subjects during the 2023-2024 academic year. However, a significant portion (20.00%, n = 35) encountered challenges, resulting in

one to three incomplete subjects.

Table 3
Distribution of the Respondents as to Incomplete Grades

Incomplete Subjects	BOARDERS		COMMUTERS	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
0	140	80.00%	143	81.70%
1 to 3	35	20.00%	31	17.70%
4 to 6	0	0%	1	0.60%
TOTAL	175	100%	175	100%

Commuter students, on the other hand, displayed a slightly higher success rate in completing all subjects (81.70%, n = 143). While a similar proportion (17.7%, n = 31) reported one to three incomplete subjects, only one student (0.6%) had four to six incompletes. Interestingly, commuter students exhibited a marginally higher rate of completed subjects compared to boarders**.** This finding contradicts the assumption that boarders might have a slight advantage due to their proximity to academic resources. There are two possible explanations for this:

Time Management and Work Commitments**:** Follow-up interviews with boarding students shed light on this unexpected result. Many students highlighted the struggle to balance academic workloads with part-time jobs. Time management difficulties or insufficient time dedicated to studies often result in incomplete subjects. This aligns with Song's (2013) research, which suggests that a significant number of students rely on part-time employment to manage their financial needs. These students may prioritize work over attending classes, fearing job loss due to missed shifts. In some cases, skipping classes to cover for sick colleagues or other work-related obligations can contribute to incomplete subjects (Blazer et al., 2009).

Commuters' Focus on Academics**:** Alternatively, commuter students, who may face longer commutes and distractions outside the campus environment, might be more likely to prioritize completing their coursework during on-campus time (Pascarella et al., 2004). This focused approach during available study hours could contribute to their slightly higher rate of completed subjects.

Further research is needed to explore the nuances of this phenomenon**.** Future studies could investigate the specific time management strategies employed by both boarders and commuters, alongside the types of part-time jobs undertaken and their impact on academic commitments. Additionally, examining the influence of commute times and distractions faced by commuter students could provide a more comprehensive understanding of this unexpected result.

Failed Subjects

Table 4
Distribution of the Respondents as to Failed Subjects

Failed Subjects	**BOARDERS**		**COMMUTERS**	
	Frequency	**Percentage**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
0	114	65.14%	141	80.36%
1	38	21.72%	21	11.90%
2	23	13.14%	12	7.14%
3	0	0%	1	0.60%
TOTAL	**175**	**100%**	**175**	**100%**

Examining student performance through failed subjects revealed a surprising trend. Among boarders during the 2022-2023 academic year, 114 (65.14%) successfully passed all their subjects. However, a significant portion (38 students, or 21.72%) failed one subject, and another 23 students (13.14%) failed two subjects. Notably, no boarders failed three subjects. Commuter students, in contrast, displayed a considerably higher success rate. A strong majority (141 students, or 80.36%) passed all their subjects. While a similar proportion (21 students, or 11.90%) failed one subject, there were fewer failures overall. Only 12 students (7.14%) failed two subjects, and just one student (0.60%) failed three.

Interestingly, commuter students exhibited a lower overall failure rate compared to boarders**.** This finding challenges the assumption that boarders might benefit from a more structured environment conducive to academic success. Follow-up interviews with boarders yielded some insights into their academic struggles**.** Students mentioned encountering distractions and temptations associated with newfound freedom away from parental supervision. This aligns somewhat with the concerns raised in Villanueva et al.'s (2007) citation of Collen and Anderson's (2003) study. The study suggests that co-ed living arrangements in dorms could lead to distractions such as romantic relationships, potentially impacting academic performance. However, it's important to acknowledge limitations in drawing causal conclusions from student interviews alone.

Further research is needed to explore the factors influencing academic performance for both boarders and commuters**.** Future studies could investigate the specific types of distractions encountered by boarders, while also examining the time management strategies and study habits employed by both groups. Additionally, exploring the potential influence of social and family support systems on academic achievement could provide a more holistic understanding of these results.

Incurred Absences. Table 5 presents the absences of the respondents during the academic year 2022-2023.

Table 5
Distribution of the Respondents as to Incurred Absences

Incurred Absences	BOARDERS		COMMUTERS	
	Frequency	**Percentage**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
0 to 5	141	80.57%	123	70.29%
6 to 10	30	17.14%	52	29.71%
11 to 15	4	2.29%	0	0%
above 15	0	0%	0	0%
TOTAL	**175**	**100%**	**175**	**100%**

Boarders' and Commuters number and percentage distribution of incurred absences during the first and second semesters of AY 2022-2023. Incurred absences can significantly impact a student's ability to stay current with coursework and ultimately affect academic performance (Weller et al., 2008). This study examined absence data for both boarders and commuter students during the 2022-2023 academic year. In terms of incurred absences, the majority of student-boarders (141 or 80.57 percent) had absences ranging from 0 to 5, while 30 or 17.14 percent incurred absences from 6 to 10, and only 4 or 2.29 percent incurred absences ranging from 11-15. Similarly, 123 or 70.29 percent of student-commuters incurred absences ranging from 0 to 5, while 52 or 29.71 percent incurred absences ranging from 6 to 10. The results suggest that the student-boarders had a higher percentage of frequent absences compared to the student-commuters.

Previous research has explored various factors influencing student absences. For example, Teixeira et al. (2012) identified a correlation between part-time work and increased absences, potentially due to scheduling conflicts or fatigue. Conversely, Tinto (1999) suggests that a strong sense of belonging to the academic community can positively impact attendance. During casual conversations with some of the boarders, it was revealed that boarding houses and dormitories lack the presence of strict parents who can provide important reminders to attend school. This absence of parental guidance can contribute to higher rates of absenteeism. Moreover, student commuters who were interviewed for the study reported that they travel for hours to get to school, often arriving late or missing classes altogether. The long distance, travel time, and traffic congestion are common factors that make it difficult for these students to attend school on time.

Additionally, Song's (2013) study estimated that 82% of students from the institution commute to school, with many traveling for over an hour in each direction. He noted that students tend to stay at home unless attendance is required due to factors such as bad weather, unreliable public transportation schedules, and automobile problems. Students often cite these issues as reasons for missing classes. The data revealed a trend that warrants further exploration. Understanding the reasons behind these differences could be crucial in developing strategies to improve student attendance. By understanding the root causes of absences, universities can develop targeted interventions to support students and improve overall academic performance.

Research Question 2. Is there a significant difference between the Academic performance (GPA) of student-boarders and student-commuters?

Comparison between the Academic Performance of student-boarders and student-commuters

Table 6
Significant Difference between the Academic Performance of the student – boarders and student – commuters

Respondent	Mean	SD	Computed *t*	Critical *t*	Decision	Interpretation
Boarders	2.48	0.02	10.5	$t \geq 4.303$ $df = 2$ $\alpha = 0.05$ two-tailed	Reject H_o	Significant
Commuters	2.27	0.01				

According to the statistical data presented above, the calculated t-value of 10.5 is greater than the critical t-value of 4.303. This indicates that there is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant difference between the academic performance of student boarders and student commuters at a 5% level of significance. As observed from the table, the weighted mean of student boarders' GPA was 2.48 while the weighted mean of student commuters' GPA was 2.27. This means that student commuters performed better in academics. During an informal interview with some of the boarding students, they revealed that they could not focus on their studies due to being exposed to temptation and engaging in undesirable activities. This could be attributed to the lack of implementation of rules and regulations by the landlord/landlady.

Villanueva et al. (2007) stated that the looseness or laxity of rules or policies, particularly regarding visitation, is a common cause of student renters engaging in worthless activities. Furthermore, due to the non-existence or laxity of policies in the boarding house, they are encouraged to bring partners and engage in activities such as drinking sprees and sexual activities, among others. The researcher concluded that the landlords/landladies' concern seemingly focuses more on bills and rentals rather than the welfare of the students.

Research Question 3. Is there a significant relationship between the academic performances and the non-cognitive factors of student-boarders and student-commuters in terms of: Time management; Physical Environment; Emotional Factor; Peer Influence; and Family Support?

Relationship between the academic performances and the non-cognitive factors of student boarders and commuters

Table 7
Relationship between Academic Performance and Non-cognitive Factors

Non-Cognitive Factors	Academic Performance	
	r	p-value
Time Management	.566	.002[s]
Physical Environment	.987	.000[s]
Emotional Factor	.847	.001[s]
Peer Influence	.887	.012[s]
Family Support	.679	.003[s]

Legend: s – significant ($\alpha = 0.05$ – 2 tailed)

This analysis explores the relationship between academic performance and various non-cognitive factors. As the table shows, time management and family support emerged as significant influences. The analysis revealed strong positive correlation between time management and academic performance ($r = .566$, $p = .002$). This indicates a strong positive relationship, suggesting that students who effectively manage their time (set goals, prioritize tasks, and utilize tools like to-do lists) tend to perform better academically (Kausar, 2013). Conversely, poor time management habits like excessive social media use, disorganized schedules, and lack of clear goals can hinder academic achievement.

Table 7 displays the analysis positive correlation between family support and academic performance (r = .987 p = .000). Research by Henderson & Mapp (2002) confirms this connection, highlighting that parental involvement leads to higher academic achievement, enrollment in challenging programs, and improved social skills. Additionally, Fan (2001), as cited by Khan and Chohan (2010), demonstrates that parental aspirations for their children's education positively impact student academic growth. In addition, the academic achievement of the students were also found to be significantly relation emotional factor (r = .847, p = .001). peer influence (r = .887, p = .012) and family support (r = .679, p = .003). Mushtaq and Khan (2012) highlight that various factors can affect student performance, but these factors may vary based on individual coping mechanisms and cultural contexts. Further research is needed to understand the nuances of these relationships and how they might differ across student populations. Overall, this analysis emphasizes the critical role of time management and family support in academic success. While other factors may play a part, their influence can be more complex and requires further investigation.

5. Summary

The analysis revealed some key differences between student-boarders and student-commuters. Boarders had higher dropout rates, incomplete grades, and more absences. In contrast, commuters finished their subjects, passed most of them, and missed fewer classes, resulting in slightly better academic performance. Interestingly, time management and family support were the only non-cognitive factors significantly impacting both groups. Factors like physical environment, emotions, and peer influence didn't seem to have a major effect. This suggests not all non-cognitive factors play an equal role in shaping students' learning dispositions. Finally, the analysis highlights the importance of student performance, as it reflects on the university's image through licensure exam results. This paves the way for proposing a comprehensive academic tracking program to support the academic success of both boarder and commuter students.

Concluding Remarks - Boarders faced challenges with drop-outs, absences, and incomplete grades, while commuters achieved better results. Time management and family support emerged as crucial non-cognitive factors for both groups. Further research on the remaining non-cognitive factors may be beneficial. The impact of student performance on the university's licensure exam results emphasizes the need for a well-designed academic tracking program to identify students who might be at risks of academic difficulties based on their living situation and factors, provide targeted support services, such as time management workshops or peer mentoring programs, for boarders and commuters facing challenges, and track the effectiveness of interventions and adjust the tracking system accordingly.

Recommendations - This analysis highlights the need for a multi-pronged approach to support both student-boarders and student-commuters. Firstly, targeted programs can address the specific needs of each group. Boarders would benefit from additional academic resources, mentorship, and time management training to combat challenges like dropouts and absences. Commuters, while generally performing better, could be further supported through improved access to academic advisors, dedicated study spaces, and even assistance with transportation. Secondly, strengthening family engagement is crucial. Family orientation sessions, resources for parents, and open communication channels can empower families to be active participants in their children's education. Thirdly, a comprehensive academic tracking program is essential. Early identification of students at risk through absenteeism or incomplete grades allows for intervention with tutoring, counseling, and targeted support programs to keep them on track. Fourthly, recognizing the importance of non-cognitive skills, integrating programs that develop resilience, self-regulation, and communication into the curriculum can benefit both student groups. Fifthly, ensuring success in licensure exams is vital. Offering review classes, study materials, and guidance on exam strategies equips both boarders and commuters for this crucial step. Finally, ongoing research and evaluation are key. Regularly monitoring academic performance trends and student challenges allows for tailored interventions and support programs to maximize student success for both boarders and commuters.

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