

The Current Challenges and Strengthening Strategies of Ideological and Political Leadership Capacity of College Counselors

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Abstract: Ideological and political leadership is the primary content and inherent requirement of building an educational power. College counselors are the backbone force for the construction of an educational power, and it is necessary to effectively strengthen the forging and improvement of their ideological and political leadership. Ideological and political leadership essentially represents an influence and shaping power, including political leadership that can unite students' emotional identification, influence their political and ideological identification, ideological guidance that can respond to students' theoretical confusion and enhance their theoretical confidence, value shaping that can stimulate students' thoughts and emotions and evoke their higher-level motivations, and action incentive that can lead students to unite and strive and guide them to serve the country and build the nation. Currently, there are practical difficulties in college counselors' ideological and political leadership, such as traditional content and methods of leadership, loose ways and methods of leadership, weak leadership ability and level, and inefficient exploration and utilization of leadership resources. It is necessary to comprehensively enhance the ideological and political leadership of college counselors in terms of doing things, borrowing wisdom, leveraging resources, and taking advantage of opportunities.

Keywords: College counselors; Ideological and political leadership power; Current predicaments; Strengthening approaches

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1. Introduction

In the speech at the National Education Conference in September 2024, it was emphasized that "The education power we aim to build should be a socialist education power with Chinese characteristics. It should possess strong ideological and political leadership capabilities, talent competitiveness, technological support capabilities, social security capabilities, social collaboration capabilities, and international influence, providing strong support for comprehensively advancing the construction of a strong country and the great cause of national rejuvenation

through Chinese-style modernization.” It was first proposed that the concept of “ideological and political leadership capabilities.” This article explores the current predicaments of the ideological and political leadership capabilities of university counselors and the corresponding strengthening strategies.

2. The current challenges of ideological and political leadership capacity of college counselors

2.1. Incompatibility between the content enhancement and the development of new media

At present, the content and methods of ideological and political guidance by college counselors are rather conventional, with limited innovation and insufficient highlights. On the one hand, the way some university counselors provide ideological and political guidance still focuses on the one-way transmission of knowledge, while neglecting the individual characteristics of students. The guiding approach is relatively rigid, there is insufficient interaction between teachers and students, and the ability to explain, refine, and lead theories needs to be improved. When dealing with current affairs and difficult issues, they are unable to provide clear and understandable answers. There are sometimes problems of empty preaching and rote learning. There are also issues of presenting content that is too simple and catering to others. There is a lack of systematic analysis from the perspective of students as the main body ^[1]. The explanatory power for real-world issues is insufficient at times. On the other hand, the worldviews, life views, and value systems of college students are still not fully formed, and they are highly susceptible to external influences, often wavering. As the network informatization has entered the era where “everyone is a self-media”, and with the rapid development of algorithms and other technologies, various social trends, after disguising themselves, enter students’ daily lives through modern and diversified information dissemination methods, impacting the formation of students’ correct values. The ideological and political guidance work is facing an unprecedentedly complex situation, and the educational quality and effectiveness are showing a downward trend. This puts forward higher standards and requirements for the content and methods of ideological and political guidance by college counselors ^[2].

2.2. Mismatch between method improvement and technology update

Due to the strong characteristics of the network, such as elasticity, virtuality, and absence of presence, college counselors often have difficulty precisely aligning with the spiritual needs of college students. On one hand, in reality, front-line college counselors have been working under great pressure for a long time, often working in a “frantic” manner and getting lost in numerous assessment standards. They often lack sufficient time and energy to comprehensively grasp the ideological dynamics and emotional needs of students and cannot precisely solve students’ problems. On the other hand, constrained or dominated by the values deeply rooted in the minds of college students, leading to the fragmented, independent, and centrifugal phenomenon of the discourse system between college counselors as educators and college students as the educated. They are not on the same discourse channel, unable to enter each other’s information circle, unable to touch the hearts, gain recognition, form resonance, and achieve the best effect ^[3].

2.3. The mismatch between the improvement of educational resources and the actual needs of work

The process of conducting ideological and political work involves a situation where educational resources are interconnected and supported, blending together, complementing each other, and achieving mutual enhancement.

If each educational resource operates independently, fails to cooperate with one another, and becomes fragmented, only functioning within their respective domains and aspects, then these educational resources will ultimately be unable to form a combined force. The purpose of ideological and political work will not be truly accomplished or realized. Therefore, the mutual collaboration, compatibility, and empowerment among educational resources are of great significance ^[4]. However, nowadays, most college counselors act alone and perform “one-man shows”, mostly in a one-to-one unidirectional output manner, lacking multi-point “joint diagnosis.” There is a lack of full mobilization of the enthusiasm and initiative of multiple time and space educational resources and forces to participate in the educational work, and no educational synergy has been formed. Relying solely on the efforts of individual college counselors, it is difficult to “accurately diagnose the problem” or “prescribe the right medicine.” Even if the “prescription” is correct, choosing the wrong time and space will result in minimal or even no effect. The inefficient utilization of leading resources is also closely related to the fragmented nature of the university’s ideological and political work mechanism. From an internal mechanism perspective, university ideological and political work is situated in a hierarchical system environment of “departmental separation” and “function division”, with the problem of educational resources being scattered and fragmented among various departments and systems, unable to achieve sharing. It faces fragmented, superficial dilemmas such as each department acting independently, weak connectivity, low integration, and a lack of communication, resulting in a significant reduction in the effectiveness of ideological and political leadership ^[5].

3. Strengthening strategies for enhancing the ideological and political leadership capacity of college counselors

3.1. Enhancing the ideological and political leadership capabilities of university counselors through practical work

The ideological and political guidance work is a cause that concerns the development of the country and the future of the nation. It requires college counselors to continuously improve and perfect their abilities and skills in the process of loving, being loyal, pursuing, and doing well in this work. They should also enhance the internal driving force for doing a good job in ideological and political guidance, and thereby actively enhance their ideological and political guiding power. First, it is achieved through deep love for the cause. Genuine and heartfelt love is an inexhaustible source for the development of the cause. Marx pointed out: “Passion and enthusiasm are the essential driving forces that enable humans to pursue their objects with great intensity.” If college counselors are passionate, enthusiastic, and full of vigor in their work of ideological and political guidance, then they will maximize their creativity and vitality to do this job well, and will regard ideological and political guidance work as a cause, dedicating themselves to it with an energetic and confident attitude. The love for this cause of ideological and political guidance will prompt college counselors to find every possible way to do this job well, to firmly adhere to the goals of the cause without wavering, and to strive and work hard with determination. With a proactive professional attitude and a noble and full professional sentiment, they will carefully handle this work, and in the process of loving the cause, consciously enhance their ability of ideological and political guidance ^[6]. The second point is to enhance through the pursuit of a career. Persistent pursuit is the driving force for achieving success in one’s career. Firm Marxist beliefs and firm socialist ideals and beliefs are the spiritual motivation for college counselors to enhance their ideological and political leadership capabilities. If college counselors do not have firm beliefs and convictions, they will not be able to consciously strengthen their study of the Party’s innovative theories and enhance their ideological and political leadership capabilities, nor will they be able to do a good job

in ideological and political education. Only if college counselors regard the education of socialist modernization and the building of a strong country as the goal of their career pursuit, constantly stimulating their strong desire to do a good job in ideological and political work, enhancing their sense of mission and responsibility for doing ideological and political work, can they maintain an enterprising and never-tiring spirit, actively promote the great cause, and consciously enhance their ability in ideological and political work in the process of their persistent pursuit of the great cause. Third, enhance through achieving success in one's career. Striving to do a good job is the fundamental guarantee for the success of a career. To successfully complete a career, merely having good ideas and enthusiasm is clearly insufficient. College counselors must use their practical actions to promote the vigorous practice of building a powerful and strong educational country. If college counselors do not get down to work earnestly, strive for practical results, and strive to do their job well, there will be no improvement in the guiding power of ideological and political work ^[7].

3.2. Enhancing the ideological and political leadership capacity of university counselors through knowledge borrowing

The enhancement of ideological and political leadership ability cannot be achieved without the cultivation and development of comprehensive professional qualities. First, it should be improved through learning. Universities should clarify the content and boundaries of the work of university counselors, and make full use of new technological means, such as the Internet and big data platforms, to liberate them from complex, fragmented, and mechanical routine tasks and the roles of "safety officers" and "firefighters." Attention should be paid to evaluating the educational ability and effectiveness of university counselors. At the same time, it is necessary to ensure that university counselors receive education first, providing them with more learning opportunities and communication platforms to broaden their horizons and deepen their understanding. This will enable them to possess excellent political qualities and profound theoretical knowledge, so that this team is qualified and capable of truly fulfilling their due responsibilities in the process of guiding the ideological values of young students. Second, enhance through research. Mastering research methods and being good at conducting research are inevitable requirements for the professionalization and vocationalization of the university counselors' team, and it is also an objective requirement for enhancing the ability and level of university counselors in equipping young students with scientific theories, guiding them with correct ideas, and cultivating them with core values ^[8]. To enhance the ideological and political leadership, university counselors should adopt effective measures and methods, and conduct research not only on educational laws, the laws of ideological and political work, and the laws of students' growth and development, but also on new developments in students' physical and mental development, the phased characteristics of the times, new trends in online public opinion and Western diverse social ideologies, and new situations in the dissemination of social ideologies. They should also strengthen research based on the actual work of university counselors, summarize practical experience, further deepen understanding of the laws, and find effective solutions and methods to better enhance the ideological and political leadership of university counselors. Third, enhance through humble learning. The ideological and political guidance work covers a wide range, involves multiple fields, and has a long educational cycle. Therefore, college counselors should become expert-type guides and leaders in implementing the fundamental task of fostering virtue. College counselors should be adept at actively learning from experts with rich educational wisdom, senior colleagues, and colleagues, to obtain the continuous driving force for progress ^[9].

3.3. Enhancing the ideological and political leadership capabilities of university counselors through leveraging external resources

Empowering education refers to a series of educational methods and behaviors adopted by university counselors to cultivate students under the fundamental task of fostering virtue and promoting all-around development. They leverage external abundant educational resources and forces to assist students in their growth and development. University counselors should be adept at “leveraging resources”, use them skillfully, focus on the targeted nature of empowering education, strictly safeguard the dominant position of empowering education, and promote ideological and political guidance from “mass irrigation” to “precise irrigation”, thereby effectively enhancing the effectiveness of education and doing a good job in ideological and political guidance. Firstly, educators need to leverage the power of the Internet, artificial intelligence, big data, etc., to enhance precise ideological and political education, and improve the scientificity, targeting, and effectiveness of ideological and political leadership work. Ideological and political leadership, in essence, is a human-oriented task ^[10]. How to precisely focus on, care for, and pay attention to every real person and specific individual requires distinguishing levels and targets, strengthening categorized guidance, and achieving precise profiling of young people and precise supply of value content. With the core of intelligent algorithms, computing power, and big data, big data provides technical support for college counselors to accurately depict and outline students’ academic, psychological development, and changes in thoughts and behaviors, offering technical support for the foresight and forward-looking nature of ideological and political leadership work ^[11]. Thus, it can scientifically provide educational content and achieve precise leadership. Secondly, it is necessary to gather the educational efforts of the entire school and implement the “all-round education” concept. On the one hand, efforts should be made to tap into the internal talent resources of the school. Through effective mobilization and integration of various educational resources including school leaders, ideological and political theory teachers, teachers from related disciplines in the field of philosophy and social sciences, and the university’s counselor team, a “concentric circle” of education should be formed with a unified direction and goal, addressing the issue of a large number of educational personnel but weak educational strength. On the other hand, the exemplary role of outstanding party members, student cadres, and advanced role models should be utilized to play a leading and exemplary role, with particular attention paid to identifying and widely publicizing typical figures and advanced deeds among college students, in order to educate and guide the student body. Thirdly, there should be a purposeful, planned, step-by-step approach to leveraging outstanding alumni, renowned experts, and advanced figures from various sectors of society to “match” and “connect” with the growth needs of students. These forces and resources should be transformed and integrated into the “infiltration power” that enables students to observe society, reflect on life, and achieve growth and success. This should result in a subtle and imperceptible educational effect ^[12].

3.4. Enhancing the ideological and political leadership capacity of university counselors through leveraging opportunities

The concept of “taking advantage of the trend” means to follow the development trend of things, grasp the themes of the times, reflect the requirements of the times, seize the opportunities of the times, and be good at leveraging various internal and external forces to quickly achieve the goal. To do a good job in ideological and political guidance, college counselors need to be good at taking advantage of the trend, formulating the trend, and creating the trend, ultimately achieving “adaptation to the trend and innovation”, keeping pace with the times, and innovating. First, one must assess the situation and base oneself on the “two major situations.” By focusing on

the current trends and hotspots of concern both domestically and internationally, and from multiple perspectives, including China and the world, history and the future, right and wrong, advanced and backward, conduct student ideological and political guidance work. Educate and guide students to establish correct worldviews, outlooks on life, and values. One should grasp the research and development trends of ideological and political work, keep pace with the general trend of the times, change the working approach, study the growth patterns of students and the laws of ideological and political work, and implement ideological and political work at a smaller scale, in detail, and with practicality^[13]. Second, educators should place greater emphasis on optimization and innovation. In the process of ideological and political guidance work, we should adapt to circumstances, keep pace with the times, and innovate according to the changing circumstances. College counselors must accurately grasp the “pulse” of students, remove the “barriers” in their hearts, open up their “hearts”, and promptly and positively respond to and resolve practical problems closely related to students’ vital interests, guiding students to grow and achieve success^[14]. Thirdly, one should consciously adapt to the changes in the situation and deeply understand that the Internet has become the “new normal” for college students’ study and life. One should actively occupy this ideological and political “new battlefield” on the internet. Regarding this, college counselors should actively pay attention to the active media platforms of students, such as “Bilibili”, “Kuaishou”, “Douyin”, “Xiaohongshu”, etc., popular applications. They should actively learn and understand the functions of these media platforms, create personal WeChat public accounts, Weibo accounts, etc., expand the space and domain of daily ideological and political education, and regularly push carefully produced ideological and political education text and image messages, including case analysis, short plays, story sharing, current affairs comments, etc., to disseminate ideological and political knowledge in a popular and down-to-earth way. On new media platforms, college counselors should actively understand the expression techniques of online discourse in the new media era, the art of guiding online public opinion, and the methods of online publicity and mobilization. They should transform complex and profound ideological and political theories into “internet language” and “micro-language” that students are willing to accept. They should use technical means to summarize and analyze students’ interests, to touch them emotionally and convince them with reason, and enhance the attractiveness, affinity, and infectivity of ideological and political leadership work.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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