Implementation of student assistance and its contribution to the achievement of the SDGs

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Abstract: This case analysis investigated whether the Student Assistance initiatives for undergraduate students at the Federal University of Grande Dourados (UFGD) seek to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) numbers 3, 4, 10, and 16, which are adapted to the context of Student Assistance. Through documentary research, it was observed that the UFGD operates within the standards required by the SDGs, requesting only some adaptations regarding SDG 10, which deals with student assistance for those in the Distance Learning modality.

Keywords: Student Assistance; Agenda 2030; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Implementação da assistência estudantil e sua contribuição para o cumprimento dos ODS

Resumo: Esta análise de caso investigou se as iniciativas de Assistência Estudantil, para alunos da graduação da Universidade Federal da Grande Dourados (UFGD), buscam cumprir os Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODS), números 3, 4, 10 e 16, os quais se adaptam ao contexto da Assistência Estudantil. Observou-se, por meio de pesquisa documental, que a UFGD atua nos padrões

exigidos nos ODS, necessitando apenas alguns alinhamentos quanto ao ODS 10, que trata sobre assistência estudantil para discentes da modalidade de Educação a Distância.

Palavras-chave: Assistência Estudantil; Agenda 2030; Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODS).

Implementación de la asistencia estudantil y su contribución al logro de los ODS

Resumen: Este estudio de caso investigó si las iniciativas de Asistencia al Estudiante para estudiantes de grado de la Universidad Federal de Grande Dourados (UFGD) buscan cumplir los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS) números 3, 4, 10 y 16, que se adaptan al contexto de la Asistencia al Estudiante. La investigación documental mostró que la UFGD cumple con los estándares exigidos por los ODS y solo necesita alinearse con el ODS 10, que trata de la asistencia estudiantil para los estudiantes de Educación a Distancia.

Palabras clave: Asistencia al Estudiante; Agenda 2030; Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS).

1 INTRODUCTION

The expansion of access to higher education in recent decades has been due to the increase in institutions, vacancies and public policies for social inclusion, such as the University for All Program (Prouni), the Program to Stimulate the Restructuring and Strengthening of Higher Education Institutions (Proies), the Program to Support Restructuring Plans for Federal Universities (REUNI), the Unified Selection System (Sisu), the new Higher Education Student Financing Fund (FIES), the Quota Law in Federal Institutions, and the National Student Assistance Plan (PNAES), which have changed the socioeconomic profile of students (Ristoff, 2014).

This change in the profile of Brazilian undergraduate students (whether in the public or private sector) in terms of race/color, income, and religion, at least until 2015, has as a possible consequence, in addition to the public policies adopted in Brazil at the beginning of the 21st century, an improvement in socioeconomic indices, especially with the improvement in the labor market, which changes the spending decisions of families (Oliveira, 2021). In the context of public universities, it is observed that this democratization of higher education is not always achieved (Mariuzzo, 2023).

Access to universities has been expanded, but it is still necessary to ensure that students remain in university and perform well. The responsibility for facing this challenge cannot fall solely on teachers. It is important that there are public and institutional policies for the reception of students and their social and academic integration (Nonato *et al*., 2020).

It is not possible to talk about "Quality Education" as stated in SDG 4 of the UN 2030 Agenda, which aims to promote sustainable development on a global scale, without the minimum necessary for students to remain and complete their academic path. In this context, we seek to investigate the following research question: has the UFGD developed student assistance initiatives to ensure the inclusion and retention of students, both face-to-face and distance education, in situations of socioeconomic vulnerability, thus fulfilling the SDGs of the UN 2030 Agenda?

Therefore, the National Student Assistance Program (PNAES) is a central element in guaranteeing the inclusion and retention of students in situations of socioeconomic vulnerability in Brazilian federal public universities (Brazil, 2010).

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

We will begin by discussing Student Assistance in Brazil and then look at the UN's 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to understand the importance of the issue both globally and in national policy. We will then address the relevance of the SDGs for student assistance in the Brazilian context and the contextualization of student assistance at the Federal University of Grande Dourados (UFGD) for face-to-face and distance education students.

2.1 Student Assistance

Student Assistance can be defined as a set of policies, programs, and actions developed by educational institutions to promote equal opportunities in access and retention of students at all levels of education. These initiatives aim to ensure conditions for students to overcome socioeconomic, cultural, and personal barriers that may affect their academic performance and completion of studies (Gomes, H.; Brasileiro; Gomes, L., 2023).

The history of student assistance in Brazil dates back to the beginning of the 20th century, with the first initiatives to grant scholarships and financial aid by educational institutions and some philanthropic entities. However, it was not until the 1950s that the country witnessed more structured efforts to promote student assistance policies in higher education institutions (Imperatori, 2017).

During the 1960s and 1970s, the student movement played a crucial role in demanding more comprehensive student assistance policies that could meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population with specific demands. With the return of democracy in the 1980s, there was a significant expansion of government policies in support of higher education, marking a major advance in student welfare as an essential component of education policy in Brazil (Imperatori, 2017).

The promulgation of Decree No. 7,234 of July 19, 2010, which establishes the National Program of Student Assistance (PNAES), represented a fundamental milestone in the institutional recognition of student assistance as a student right and as an essential component for promoting equity and inclusion in the country's higher education system (Vasconcelos, 2010).

Among the most important student assistance programs and policies implemented throughout Brazil's history, initiatives such as the creation of university restaurants, scholarship programs, housing assistance, transportation assistance, psycho-pedagogical support, and professional insertion

programs, among others, stand out (Assis et al., 2013).

These programs have played a fundamental role in promoting equal opportunities and mitigating socioeconomic inequalities, reducing dropout rates, and increasing the inclusion of historically marginalized groups in the Brazilian educational context (Griner; Sampaio, L.; Sampaio, R., 2015).

2.2. UN 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda is a fundamental milestone in advancing sustainable development on a global scale. Seventeen sustainable development goals were established at the UN General Assembly in New York in September 2015, with the participation of 193 member states. The 2030 Agenda aims to mobilize international efforts to address humanity's most pressing challenges, covering socioeconomic, environmental, and institutional issues (Franzin; Leite, 2022).

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their 169 targets, an integral part of the 2030 Agenda, represent an ambitious and comprehensive agenda aimed at eradicating poverty, promoting equality, protecting the environment, and ensuring prosperity for all. The SDGs address critical issues such as eliminating hunger, promoting health and well-being, access to quality education, gender equality, and combating climate change, among other global challenges (UN Brazil, 2015). The 17 SDGs are listed in Chart 1.

Chart 1 – Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and main targets

SDG 1 – No poverty	End poverty in all its forms, everywhere.
SDG2 – Zero Hunger and Sustainable Agriculture	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture .
SDG 3 – Good health and well-being	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for everyone, at all ages.
SDG 4 – Quality education	Ensure inclusive, equitable and quality education, and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
SDG 5 – Gender equality	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
SDG 6 – Clean water and sanitation	Ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
SDG 7 – Affordable and clean energy	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
SDG 8 – Decent work and economic growth	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.

SDG 9 – Industry, innovation and infrastructure	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation.
SDG 10 – Reduced inequalities	Reduce inequality within and between countries.
SDG 11 – Sustainable cities and communities	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
SDG 12 – Responsible consumption and production	Ensure sustainable production and consumption patterns.
SDG 13 – Climate Action	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
SDG 14 – Life below water	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, waters and marine resources for sustainable development.
SDG 15 – Life on Land	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and prevent biodiversity loss.
SDG 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions	Promote transformative and inclusive societies for sustainable development, ensure access to justice and build effective and accountable institutions.
SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Source: Adapted from UN Brasil (2015).

According to Franzin and Leite (2022), activities aimed at the common good should be aligned with the SDGs so that the resources invested are more expressive, orderly, and focused on achieving the agreed goals.

2.3 Relevance of the SDGs for student assistance in the Brazilian context

Higher education institutions (HEIs) have been identified as key actors in the process of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda. As agents of knowledge, HEIs have a critical role to play in working towards a socially just, economically viable, and environmentally sustainable world (Serafini, 2022).

The role of universities in the implementation of the SDGs goes beyond institutional governance, as they apply the SDGs internally. Universities position themselves as important sources of knowledge and experimentation, where interaction can contribute to the production and dissemination of knowledge as a basis for action (Corbari et al., 2021).

These institutions play a prominent role in external leadership, public engagement, and participation in decision-making on the SDGs, facilitating intersectoral dialogue and action and contributing to the design of public policies based on the SDGs. By acting locally while being globally oriented, universities become protagonists in transforming the reality of the city (Corbari *et al.*, 2021).

In this way, universities become policymakers, responsible for implementing solutions that guide a culture towards sustainable development, and therefore capable of developing techniques for evaluating a country's public policies, promoting awareness, knowledge, and attitudes towards the SDGs in higher education, inspiring the community and its surroundings to fight inequality, define lifestyles, healthy work environments and universal health coverage (Smaniotto *et al*., 2020).

Thus, the SDGs provide a solid foundation for promoting public policies, such as student assistance, until they are aligned with the principles of equity, inclusion, and sustainability. Integrating the SDGs into the context of student aid in Brazil provides a comprehensive framework for the development and evaluation of education policies that seek to promote universal access to quality education.

This intersection between the SDGs and the PNAES highlights the need to strengthen student assistance programs so that they can effectively contribute to the achievement of the SDGs, especially those related to inclusive education, gender equality, poverty eradication, and the reduction of inequalities.

Overcoming challenges such as lack of financial resources, bureaucracy, and lack of coordination between different actors is crucial to ensure continued progress towards achieving the SDGs and strengthening student assistance as a fundamental pillar of sustainable development.

2.4. Contextualization of Student Assistance at the Federal University of Grande Dourados (UFGD)

The Federal University of Grande Dourados (UFGD), the university selected for this study, stands out for its inclusive student assistance policies, ranging from food programs to financial assistance for housing and transportation. These policies are fundamental in promoting equity and combating socioeconomic inequalities among students.

The UFGD Student Assistance Policy was created by Resolution No. 173 of the University Council of the Fundação Universidade Federal da Grande Dourados (COUNI) of November 24, 2011, which was revoked by COUNI Resolution No. 412 of February 24, 2023, which approved the current UFGD Student Assistance Policy.

The UFGD Student Assistance Policy is an instrument that regulates the principles and guidelines of the National Student Assistance Program

(PNAES) of the Ministry of Education, according to Decree No. 7,234 of July 19, 2010, which guides the elaboration and implementation of policies and programs that guarantee the access, permanence and graduation of UFGD undergraduate students, with the aim of social inclusion, complete education, production of knowledge, improvement of academic performance and biopsychosocial well-being.

UFGD student assistance policies and programs are planned and implemented by the Pro-Rector's Office for Community and Student Affairs (PROAE/UFGD), whose main responsibilities include preparing and managing policies, projects, and programs aimed at student assistance and community integration.

The target population of this Student Assistance Policy includes students regularly enrolled in undergraduate courses, with priority given to students from public schools who are in a situation of socioeconomic vulnerability. The resources for the implementation and financing of the Student Assistance Programs come from the National Student Assistance Program (PNAES) and the UFGD's own budget, as determined by the appropriate bodies and by the budgetary allocations established by the UFGD.

The scholarships and grants offered by the Pro-Rectory of Student Affairs (PROAE) range from R$60.00 (sixty reais) to R$1,400.00 (one thousand four hundred reais), including Emergency Assistance, Food Assistance, Permanent Grant (UFGD), Permanent Grant (MEC), Transportation Assistance, Program to Encourage Participation in Academic Events, International Academic Mobility Program, Emergency Financial Assistance, Pedagogical Assistance- Foreign Language and Mathematics, Pedagogical Assistance- Trainer, Pedagogical Assistance- Monitor, Toymaker Grant, Early Childhood Education Aid Program, Mental Health Care Program, Menstrual Dignity Program, Housing Assitance and Student Housing Program.

The Socioeconomic Assessment is a prerequisite for participation in the PROAE/UFGD student assistance programs. The objective of the Socioeconomic Assessment is to identify students according to the guidelines of the National Plan for Student Assistance (PNAES) and the UFGD Student Assistance Policy, to detect indicators of socioeconomic vulnerability, and to promote a policy that encourages students with a more vulnerable socioeconomic profile to remain in school and complete their undergraduate studies, who must prove the per capita income of their family group.

It is worth noting that the structuring of the Faculty of Distance Education of the UFGD

(EaD/UFGD) began in 2011 when the first selection process for the entrance exams for the Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science and the Bachelor's Degree in Pedagogy were held, starting in 2012, in partnership with the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) through the Open University of Brazil (UAB).

The Distance Education Faculty, initially inserted in the organizational structure of the UFGD as the Distance Education Sector, subordinated to the Pro-Rectory of Undergraduate Education (PROGRAD), gradually sought an adequate infrastructure, especially technological, as this was the main factor for the implementation of the educational modality, such as the location by the institution, to continue and lead to autonomy as an academic unit (Vilela, 2019).

The accession of the UFGD to the UAB allowed the implementation of the structural conditions promoted by the managers, which culminated in the construction and constitution of the Faculty of Distance Education of the UFGD, with the same organization as the presential courses. There was also the participation of representatives of the Distance Education Faculty, along with the higher councils for deliberative purposes (Vilela, 2019).

Rocha and Herrmann (2019) mention that the absence of a budget matrix for undergraduate students in public distance education, with the exception of what the federal government makes available to the UAB, shows that the public policies developed for Brazilian education, despite considering distance education more strongly since 2000, a modality with strong potential to reach many, in terms of democratization and access to public higher education, in different corners of Brazil and even outside it, do not consider it from an institutional perspective.

In this context, although the UFGD Student Assistance Policy only deals with students of presential undergraduate courses, the COUNI Resolution No. 437, of March 30, 2023, created the Emergency Assistance Program for Distance Education Students at the UFGD, which aims to assist students of permanent institutional undergraduate courses in the Distance Education modality (Licensure's and Bachelor's Degree in Libras Letras), in a situation of socioeconomic vulnerability, using resources from the UFGD's budget for this purpose.

The aforementioned financial assistance for distance education students aims to provide conditions to meet travel and accommodation needs during activities at the course headquarters in the city of Dourados. This assistance aims to contribute to students' permanence and course completion at the institution, and the student may receive up to four installments of assistance annually.

3 METHODOLOGY

This case study was developed from descriptive and qualitative research, from 2011 to 2023, on the actions foreseen in the UFGD documents in the area of student assistance for presential and distance students to understand the crucial role of student assistance in promoting inclusion and equality in Brazilian higher education, and also to verify whether the paths taken by the UFGD in the area of student support are in line with the interests established by the SDGs.

The data collection methods used were bibliographic and documentary research. As indicated by Sousa, Oliveira and Alves (2021, p. 64, translated by us), bibliographic analysis consists of "the investigation or evaluation of previously published sources related to the theory that will guide the scientific study. It requires considerable commitment, in-depth understanding, and careful analysis on the part of the researcher responsible for conducting the scientific study".

First, a bibliographical survey was carried out by consulting the theories related to the topic and its specificities through books, articles, monographs, dissertations, and information available on the Internet.

The subject was based on a bibliographic survey of the following scientific journals Scientific Electronic Library Online (Scielo), Redalyc, Capes Periodicals, Google Scholar, Capes Theses and Dissertations Catalog, Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD), Library of the National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Education (ANPED) and Brazilian Journal of Education Policy and Administration (RBPAE). The terms "student assistance", "SDG", "distance education", "higher education" and "Federal University" were used for the searches.

In the second step, the inclusion and exclusion criteria were used to select four of the 17 SDGs directly related to student assistance for this study, that is, SDGs that did not have a theme or general goal directly related to the nature of student assistance were excluded, and those that did were included, as shown in Chart 2.

Chart 2 – Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) analyzed in this research

SDGs	GENERAL GOAL
SDG 3 – Good health and well-being	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for everyone, at all ages.
SDG 4 – Quality education	Ensure inclusive, equitable and quality education, and promote lifelong learning

SDGs	GENERAL GOAL
	opportunities for all.
SDG 10 – Reduced inequalities	Reduce inequality within and between countries.
SDG 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, ensure access to justice and build effective and accountable institutions.

Source: Adapted by the authors of ONU Brasil (2015).

Subsequently, a documentary research and data collection were carried out in the UFGD documents related to student assistance, namely: the resolutions of the University Council on the creation of student assistance programs; the student selection notices; the UFGD PDI 2022 to 2026; the UFGD Institutional Self-Assessment Reports; the UFGD in Numbers Reports for 2022; and the UFGD electronic portal.

The work entitled "UFGD in Numbers" is a joint effort between the Pro-Rectory of Institutional Assessment and Planning, through the Planning Department (DIPLAN/COPLAN), and several sectors of the Institution, and aims to create an institutional database that can be used in different ways, such as in the preparation of simple indicators, performance indicators, management indicators, and even in the compilation of statistical series.

In addition to the management of the actions and activities developed by the UFGD, this information can be used to evaluate institutional goals, as well as an instrument for reporting to society and as a basis for planning. The data presented in the Student Assistance category includes information on student assistance programs, quantifying the types of services provided and the amounts spent.

Then, 5 Student Assistance Programs of the UFGD were selected for the present study, using the inclusion and exclusion criteria, that is, only programs that have a direct financial impact on students were included in the research, namely: the MEC Permanent Scholarship Program; the UFGD Permanent Scholarship Program; the Food Assistance Program; the Emergency Financial Assistance Program; and the Emergency Financial Assistance Program for Distance Education Students.

The MEC Permanence Scholarship Program is an action of the Federal Government, made possible through the granting of financial assistance to students enrolled in Federal Higher Education Institutions in vulnerable situations, especially Indigenous and Quilombola students, intending to enable them to remain in the course, reducing the costs of maintaining vacancies due to student dropouts and promoting the democratization of access to higher education.

The UFGD Permanent Scholarship Program is a financial benefit granted to students in a

situation of socioeconomic vulnerability, with the purpose of financially supporting the student for their permanence in the institution, seeking to reduce the dropout rates due to socioeconomic reasons.

The UFGD Student Food Assistance Program is a financial benefit that aims to create conditions for meeting the basic food needs of UFGD students in situations of socioeconomic vulnerability, in order to contribute to their permanence and completion of their course at the institution. It is intended for students who are regularly enrolled in presential undergraduate courses and who do not have a university degree.

Another program, the UFGD Emergency Financial Assistance Scholarship aims to meet emergency demands that jeopardize the permanence of students enrolled in the first semester of UFGD presential undergraduate courses, living outside the city of Dourados and in a situation of extreme socioeconomic vulnerability when it is impossible to meet the deadlines and programs of the regular notices of UFGD Student Assistance Programs. The assistance is offered for a period of three months.

The Student Assistance Program for Distance Education Students at UFGD aims to support students of permanent institutional undergraduate courses in the Distance Education modality at UFGD who are in a situation of socioeconomic vulnerability. The financial aid is intended to create conditions for the satisfaction of travel and accommodation needs during activities at the course headquarters in the city of Dourados, in order to contribute to the permanence of the students and the completion of the course at the Institution. The assistance is offered for a period of three months.

For the data analysis, the approach of Bardin (2011, p. 128, translated by us) was adopted, which emphasizes the importance of selecting data that serve as a source of relevant information, "(...) in order to correspond to the objective that raises the analysis and will be closely related to the objective of the study". It is important to emphasize that the analysis was carried out taking into account the research related to the topic under analysis, and the data were categorized into two interrelated strands: UFGD's student assistance programs and the SDGs that directly correspond to them.

Thus, an associative chart was created with the 5 UFGD Student Assistance Programs, which provide financial assistance to students, and the 4 SDGs that have a direct correspondence with these programs. In addition, in order to verify whether the UFGD meets the UN 2030 Agenda regarding student assistance, columns were created with the following criteria: meets, does not meet, partially meets, and does not apply, considering the numbers and percentages of the UFGD in Numbers Report.

In the final considerations, observations were made regarding the fulfillment of the SDGs and the scope of the UFGD Student Assistance Program selected for this study, as well as directions for future research to overcome the obstacles identified in this case analysis.

4 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

This case analysis details how some student assistance policies for undergraduate students at UFGD contribute to the achievement of specific sustainable development goals. It includes an examination of UFGD's financial assistance and food programs, examining their impact on promoting diversity and inclusion and strengthening educational equity.

The data analysis began by reviewing the UFGD in Numbers Report on Student Assistance, which provides a history of the number of students who received scholarships and grants from the student assistance programs selected for this study. The information contained in the aforementioned report is from the years 2014 to 2021, as shown in Table 1, which was prepared with data referring to the situation in December of each year (reference month for the final reports of the UFGD).

Table 1 - History of the number of students receiving scholarships and grants from the Student Assistance Programs

Type of Scholarship	Year							
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Food Assistance Scholarship	863	780	696	699	1.048	986	915	694
Emergency Financial Assistance Scholarship	-	1	0	0	1	2	21	20
Distance Education Emergency Financial Assistance Scholarship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MEC Permanent Assistance Scholarship	-	-	390	224	325	320	294	212
UFGD Permanent Assistance Scholarship	535	546	497	547	959	933	872	656
Total	**1.398**	**1.327**	**1.583**	**1.470**	**2.333**	**2.241**	**2.102**	**1.603**

Source: Source: PROAE. Org.: DIPLAN/COPLAN/PROAP, with adaptations (2022).

In the table above, it can be seen that between 2014 and 2021, UFGD maintained a constant granting of assistances, in greater numbers, of permanent assistance, both from the MEC and UFGD. It can also be seen that the assistance for distance education students has not yet been created, even though EaD/UFGD has been institutionalized in UFGD since 2012.

Next, information was obtained on the number of students benefiting from each of the

assistance programs selected for this analysis, with reference to the year 2021 (the year of the last report published by UFGD), by college, namely: Food Assistance, Emergency Financial Assistance, MEC Permanent Assistance, and UFGD Permanent Assistance, according to Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Table 2 - Number of Students benefiting from the Food Assistance Scholarship program active in 2021, by college

FACULTY	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
FACALE	45	45	45	45	44	41	41	40	43	42	41	39
FACE	38	37	37	37	37	33	33	30	32	32	27	26
EAD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
FACET	81	81	82	82	81	68	68	64	73	71	66	65
FADIR	46	45	45	45	45	43	43	40	41	40	38	38
FAED	50	45	45	45	44	35	35	34	41	40	37	36
FAEN	166	163	163	163	162	140	140	131	141	139	131	131
FAIND	7	7	7	7	7	5	5	5	6	6	6	6
FCA	144	144	143	143	142	130	130	126	129	129	124	123
FCBA	87	86	85	85	84	76	76	74	83	80	76	76
FCH	102	101	101	101	101	95	95	91	102	100	98	96
FCS	78	77	77	77	76	69	69	63	65	61	58	58
TOTAL	**844**	**831**	**830**	**830**	**823**	**735**	**735**	**698**	**756**	**740**	**702**	**694**

* The criterion for consolidating the number of students benefiting was all active students (even if suspended) in their respective periods.

Source : PROAE. Org.: DIPLAN/COPLAN/PROAP (2022).

Table 2 shows that the number of students is much higher at the beginning of the year, in January, and that there is a gradual dropout rate throughout the year in all the faculties that received the benefit. On the other hand, it is also noted that EaD/UFGD is the only academic unit that did not have any students who benefited.

Table 3 - Number of students benefiting from the active Emergency Financial Assistance Scholarship program, in 2021, by college

FACULTY	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOTAL
FACALE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	4
FACE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
EAD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

FACULTY	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOTAL
FACET	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	6
FADIR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	4
FAED	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
FAEN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
FAIND	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
FCA	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	3	9
FCBA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	5	11
FCH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	4	10
FCS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	14	20	50

Table 3 shows that FACE, EAD, FAIND, and FCS colleges did not have any students who benefited from the Emergency Financial Assistance Scholarship Program in 2021. Table 4 below provides data from the MEC Permanent Assistance Program for fiscal year 2021.

Table 4 - Number of students benefiting from the MEC Permanent Assistance Scholarship Program active in 2021, by college

FACULTY	Jan/21	Feb/21	Mar/21	Apr/21	May/21	Jun/21	Jul/21	Aug/21	Sep/21	Oct/21	Nov/21	Dec/21
FACALE	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
FACE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
EAD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
FACET	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	10	10
FADIR	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
FAED	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	5
FAEN	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
FAIND	204	204	203	204	204	204	204	205	205	180	157	157
FCA	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
FCBA	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	3	3
FCH	21	21	19	19	19	19	19	18	18	18	13	13
FCS	6	6	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
TOTAL	274	274	269	270	270	270	270	270	270	245	212	212

Note: The criterion for consolidating the number of students benefiting was all active students (even if suspended) in their respective periods.

Table 4 also shows that EaD/UFGD is the only academic unit that did not have any students

benefit from this program. Finally, Table 5 includes data from the UFGD Permanent Assistance Scholarship Program for fiscal year 2021.

Table 5 - Number of students benefiting from the UFGD Permanent Assistance Scholarship program active in 2021, by faculty

FACULTY	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
FACALE	40	40	40	40	39	34	34	34	37	36	35	33
FACE	37	36	36	36	36	31	31	28	32	31	26	25
EAD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
FACET	75	75	76	76	75	64	64	59	68	66	62	61
FADIR	45	44	44	44	44	41	41	37	38	38	36	36
FAED	50	45	45	45	44	35	35	33	41	40	37	36
FAEN	164	161	161	161	160	136	136	127	139	135	128	128
FAIND	7	7	7	7	7	5	5	5	6	6	6	6
FCA	138	138	137	137	137	125	125	119	127	125	120	119
FCBA	80	79	78	78	78	68	68	66	76	74	70	69
FCH	94	93	93	93	93	87	87	83	94	92	90	88
FCS	73	72	72	72	71	64	64	58	60	58	55	55
TOTAL	**803**	**790**	**789**	**789**	**784**	**690**	**690**	**649**	**718**	**701**	**665**	**656**

Source: PROAE. Org.: DIPLAN/COPLAN/PROAP (2022).

Once again, Table 5 shows that EaD/UFGD was the only academic unit that did not have any benefited students. Then, in Table 6, the number of incoming students was analyzed by faculty and course at UFGD, in order to verify the percentage of enrolled students for comparison with the number of students served by the Student Assistance Programs during the same period.

Table 6 - History of the number of incoming students, by faculty and course

Faculty	Course	2014		2015		2016		2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
		Ss		Ss		Ss		Ss		Ss		Ss		Ss		Ss	
		1st Sem	2nd Sem	1st Sem	2nd Sem	1st Sem	2nd Sem	1st Sem	2nd Sem	1st Sem	2nd Sem	1st Sem	2nd Sem	1st Sem	2nd Sem	1st Sem	2nd Sem
EAD	Public Admin.	88	-	0	-	0	-	87	-	0	-	1	0	-	-	-	-
EAD	Biol. Sci.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	181	6
EAD	Computing	0	-	0	-	0	-	176	-	0	-	0	0	-	-	-	-
EAD	P.E.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	142	6
EAD	Physics*	78	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	0	-	-	47	3

Faculty	Course	2014		2015		2016		2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
		Ss		Ss		Ss		Ss		Ss		Ss		Ss		Ss	
		1st Sem	2nd Sem	1st Sem	2nd Sem	1st Sem	2nd Sem	1st Sem	2nd Sem	1st Sem	2nd Sem	1st Sem	2nd Sem	1st Sem	2nd Sem	1st Sem	2nd Sem
EAD	Human Resour. Mgmt.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	268	10
EAD	Letras – Portuguese Brazilian Sign Language (BSL)	10	-	0	-	31	-	0	-	30	-	33	0	44	-	28	0
EAD	Letras BSL – Trad./BSL Interpreter	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	0	34	-	8	21
EAD	Pedagogy	99	-	40	-	0	-	122	-	0	-	0	0	-	-	-	-
FACALE	Scenic Arts	36	2	54	-	52	-	51	4	45	0	42	2	44	-	36	4
FACALE	Letras	66	-	79	1	85	-	76	1	68	4	69	1	66	-	41	6
FACE	Admin.	65	-	56	-	49	-	48	-	48	0	51	0	50	-	48	11
FACE	Acctg.	47	3	49	1	51	-	49	-	47	0	53	0	52	-	50	4
FACE	Economics	63	-	73	-	49	-	44	2	51	0	47	5	49	-	34	8
FACET	Computer Science	58	1	63	4	75	-	63	1	59	3	61	1	54	-	54	6
FACET	Physics	25	-	29	-	38	1	33	-	34	0	24	1	30	-	13	2
FACET	Math	84	1	95	-	51	46	42	38	34	50	49	16	58	8	28	12
FACET	ABI–Chemestry	45	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FACET	Chemestry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	71	3	-	-	-	-
FACET	Chemestry (Bachelor's degree)	-	-	28	-	23	2	27	6	23	1	-	-	20	-	16	3
FACET	Chemestry (Licencse)	41	36	-	1	59	-	59	-	47	1	-	-	61	-	38	1
FACET	Info. System	60	-	61	-	64	-	52	3	52	3	57	6	72	-	48	6
FADIR	Law	52	-	60	1	66	1	55	-	47	1	55	0	55	-	55	7
FADIR	Intern. Relatsh.	67	-	55	-	76	1	52	-	53	0	55	0	55	-	55	5
FAED	P.E.	50	2	50	-	70	-	50	-	46	0	52	0	50	-	51	5
FAED	Pedagogy	64	-	53	4	58	-	45	5	53	2	49	7	48	-	42	7
FAEN	Civil Engg.	56	6	59	9	64	-	67	8	61	3	54	5	57	-	51	8
FAEN	Food Engg..	47	1	52	-	35	-	54	2	33	0	39	0	44	-	26	1
FAEN	Electrical Engg.	53	1	61	-	49	-	50	-	44	1	37	0	41	-	23	4
FAEN	Production Engg.	59	-	52	-	63	-	52	-	49	0	49	4	49	-	25	6
FAEN	Mechanics Engg.	59	1	66	5	74	-	80	8	59	5	58	4	60	-	47	3

Faculty	Course	2014 Ss 1st Sem	2014 Ss 2nd Sem	2015 Ss 1st Sem	2015 Ss 2nd Sem	2016 Ss 1st Sem	2016 Ss 2nd Sem	2017 Ss 1st Sem	2017 Ss 2nd Sem	2018 Ss 1st Sem	2018 Ss 2nd Sem	2019 Ss 1st Sem	2019 Ss 2nd Sem	2020 Ss 1st Sem	2020 Ss 2nd Sem	2021 Ss 1st Sem	2021 Ss 2nd Sem
FAIND	Rural Education – Nature Sci.	148	-	-	63	-	-	73	-	52	0	56	0	58	-	51	3
FAIND	Indigenous Intercultural Licencse	-	-	70	-	-	-	69	-	0	0	67	0	-	-	-	72
FCA	Agronomy	48	-	50	-	49	-	51	-	48	0	51	10	50	-	48	2
FCA	Agricultural Engg.	57	1	57	1	56	2	52	1	44	0	41	0	52	-	33	5
FCA	Chemestry Engg..	39	2	44	-	30	-	25	1	34	0	45	1	30	-	12	-
FCA	Zootechny	53	2	53	-	54	-	44	-	43	0	45	2	50	-	41	2
FCBA	Biotech.	56	-	56	1	54	-	47	-	49	1	54	1	43	-	44	-
FCBA	ABI – Bio. Sci.	44	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FCBA	Bio. Sci.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	54	5	-	-	-	-
FCBA	Bio. Sci. (Bachelor's degree)	11	-	29	-	28	2	28	2	30	4	-	-	26	-	29	3
FCBA	Bio. Sci. (License)	-	1	22	1	26	7	28	-	31	-	-	-	23	-	19	-
FCBA	Envir. Mngmt.	42	-	32	-	26	-	32	-	22	2	34	0	26	-	30	1
FCH	Social Sciences	61	2	50	2	52	-	42	1	39	0	38	0	52	-	24	1
FCH	Social Sciences - PRONERA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FCH	Geography	61	-	66	2	65	1	63	2	49	0	54	2	47	-	14	4
FCH	History	45	1	75	-	77	-	66	1	72	2	68	0	51	-	43	5
FCH	Psychology	73	57	64	-	64	-	59	9	72	2	63	0	65	-	60	2
FCS	Medical Science	40	40	64	16	41	40	43	53	39	43	43	40	43	40	40	22
FCS	Nutrition	56	-	59	-	55	-	50	-	52	0	51	0	51	-	54	2
Total		2206	160	1926	112	1859	103	2206	148	1659	128	1800	116	1760	48	1997	279
Total Year		2366		2038		1962		2354		1787		1916		1808		2276	

Source: INEP (Microdata from the Higher Education Census 2006-2017) and Censup (2018 to 2021). Org.: DIPLAN/COPLAN/PROAP (2022).

From the comparative analysis of Tables 2 to 6, referring to the year 2021, it can be seen that students in distance education (EaD) courses were not covered by any of the student assistance benefits studied here, although the number of students enrolled in distance education courses was 720, which corresponds to 31% of the total number of students enrolled in UFGD in 2021.

Considering that the EaD Emergency Financial Assistance was created only in March 2023, there is no data for 2021. In the search for updated information on the said assistance, the result was the PROAE/UFGD Notification No. 178, dated August 28, 2023, which granted assistance to two students of the Permanent Institutional Course of Brazilian Sign Language at the Faculty of Distance Education.

In addition, in order to understand the profile of incoming and graduating students at the UFGD in 2021, and to assess whether these programs serve historically underrepresented groups, such as indigenous people and people with disabilities, Table 7 was observed:

Table 7 - Profile of UFGD students in 2021 (%)

Variables		Presential	Presential	Distance	Distance
		New Students	**Graduates**	**New Students**	**Graduates**
		Total	Total	Total	Total
Sex	Masculine	45,82%	40,38%	32,36%	49,01%
	Feminine	54,18%	59,62%	67,64%	50,99%
Color/Race	White	49,29%	53,25%	40,28%	37,75%
	Brown	29,24%	33,89%	40,42%	41,72%
	Yellow	1,80%	3,13%	0,83%	0,66%
	Black	6,23%	6,85%	7,64%	5,96%
	Indigenous	10,15%	2,64%	8,47%	13,91%
	No statement	3,28%	0,24%	2,36%	0,00%
Disability	Yes	1,03%	0,48%	1,53%	15,23%
	No	94,28%	98,44%	97,78%	84,77%
	No disabilities	4,69%	1,08%	0,69%	0,00%
High school education	Public	80,21%	75,48%	89,72%	90,07%
	Private	19,79%	24,52%	10,28%	9,93%

Source: INEP (Microdata from the Higher Education Census 2006-2017) and Censup (2018 to 2021). Org.: DIPLAN/COPLAN/PROAP (2022).

Table 7 shows that a higher percentage of women than men entered and completed undergraduate programmes. It is also noted that the percentage of women enrolled in distance education was higher than in regular education.

Another important fact observed was that the percentage of people with disabilities who managed to complete their degree in the distance education modality was 15.23%, while presential

modality it was only 0.48% of the total number of students graduating in 2021, thus concluding that the distance education undergraduate modality is more favorable for people with disabilities in terms of completing the course.

In the same way as the analysis above, it can be seen that the same occurred with students who identified themselves as brown and indigenous, that is, there was a higher percentage of graduates in the distance education modality.

It can also be seen that a higher percentage of new students and graduates came from public high schools, which shows success in the fight against inequalities and demonstrates compliance with the first requirement for the granting of student assistance.

In this way, the above data demonstrate success and compliance with SDG 10 - Reduce inequalities, even if there is no obvious relationship with the granting of student aid.

In order to associate the previously verified data from the UFGD Reports in Numbers on Student Assistance, an associative table was created with the 5 UFGD student assistance programs, which refer to the granting of direct financial assistance to students, and the 4 selected SDGs, which have a direct relationship with the aforementioned student assistance programs, in order to verify UFGD's compliance with the SDGs of the UN 2030 Agenda, using the following criteria: complies, does not comply, partially complies, and does not apply. Twenty associations were reached, as shown in Chart 3:

Chart 3 – Association of SDGs and UFGD Student Assistance Programs selected and analyzed in this research

SDGs	UFGD Permanence Scholarship	MEC Permanent Scholarship	Food Assistance	Emergency Financial Assistance	Distance Education Emergency Financial Assistance
SDG 3 - Good health and well-being	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK
SDG 4 - Quality education	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK
SDG 10 - Reduced inequalities	Partially	Partially	Partially	Partially	Partially
SDG 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

In order to reach the conclusion of the above chart, each SDG and each assistance program was analyzed. Regarding SDG 3 - Health and Well-being, it is observed that the student assistance of UFGD Permanent Scholarship, MEC Permanent Scholarship, Food Assistance, Emergency Financial

Assistance, and Distance Education Emergency Financial Assistance, as they are direct financial benefits, aim to help meet the basic needs of students, which include their health and well-being, therefore SDG 3 is met by UFGD.

Regarding SDG 4 - Quality Education, it can be seen that the student assistance programs of UFGD Permanent Scholarship, MEC Permanent Scholarship, Food Assistance, Emergency Financial Assistance, and Distance Education Emergency Financial Assistance ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote learning opportunities, thus meeting SDG 4.

Regarding SDG 10 - Reduce inequalities, although the University Access Policy states a reduction in the percentage of gender and social class inequalities, the student assistance programs of UFGD Permanent Scholarship, MEC Permanent Scholarship, Food Assistance, Emergency Financial Assistance and Distance Education Emergency Financial Assistance, because in terms of permanence and reduction of dropouts, by not including students from all courses, especially Distance Education courses in partnership with UAB/CAPES, in all the benefits analyzed, it is not possible to guarantee equality of opportunity and the reduction of inequalities in results.

The lack of a national policy that covers distance education students in terms of student assistance benefits, and the absence of student assistance for students of distance education courses offered by federal universities in partnership with UAB/CAPES, are reflected in the lack of resources to be included in the institutional policy of the UFGD, which harms these students.

Finally, in relation to SDG 16 - Peace, Justice and Effective Institutions, it was concluded that the UFGD, through the implementation of the Student Assistance Policy through the UFGD Permanent Scholarship, the MEC Permanent Scholarship, the Food Assistance, the Emergency Financial Assistance and the Distance Education Emergency Financial Assistance, is fulfilling SDG 16, since it is developing as an effective, responsible and transparent institution, since, in relation to student assistance, it includes a portion of the population that is satisfied with the experience with these public services.

It is then concluded that of the 20 associations made between the SDGs and the selected UFGD student assistance programs shown in Table 3, 15 of them are fulfilled and 5 are partially fulfilled, which means that UFGD fulfills the SDGs in the majority (SDGs 03, 04 and 16) regarding student assistance programs, but partially regarding SDG 10.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This case study highlights the critical role of student assistance for undergraduate students at UFGD in promoting inclusion and equity in higher education, which directly contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The lessons and directions that emerge from this study can guide the formulation of more comprehensive student assistance policies in higher education institutions in Brazil and other similar contexts.

Effective implementation of the SDGs in the context of student assistance in Brazil requires an integrated and collaborative approach involving strategic partnerships between educational institutions, government agencies, civil society, and the private sector. Overcoming challenges such as lack of financial resources, bureaucracy and lack of coordination between different actors is crucial to ensure continued progress towards achieving the SDGs and strengthening Student Assistance as a fundamental pillar of sustainable development.

Despite the lack of resources from the federal government through the PNAES for distance education students, in the UFGD Action Plan and the PDI 2022 to 2026, it is observed that the success in granting emergency financial assistance to distance education students is due to the new management 2022/2026, which includes in its objective the scope of distance education in the benefits of student assistance.

However, it was observed that there was no support for students of the undergraduate distance education courses in partnership with UAB/CAPES since the regulation of the Student Assistance Program - Emergency Assistance for Students in Distance Education at UFGD only covers students of permanent institutional courses at the Faculty of Distance Education, located in the city of Dourados.

Therefore, it is concluded that SDGs 03, 04, and 16 are fully met; and as for SDG 10, it is partially met since there is no national policy dealing with student assistance for students in the distance education modality, which is reflected in the institutional policy of the UFGD, despite the great step already taken by the new management in granting emergency assistance to distance education students, but which still has a great challenge ahead in order to fully include these students, including students in courses in partnership with the Open University of Brazil (UAB/CAPES), in the right to food and permanent assistance from the UFGD.

Educational equity is essential to ensure that all students have equal opportunities for academic success. Financial aid and food programs can help reduce socioeconomic disparities among students, especially in distance education.

Given the limitations and absence of institutions that use their own resources to sustain distance education courses and students, this is an issue that needs to be addressed at the national level (Rocha; Herrmann, 2019).

As stated by Bittencourt and Mercado (2014, translated by us), "there is no effective policy to combat dropouts in distance learning courses, which have increased significantly in recent years," meaning that in Brazil it is a topic that needs to be rethought to better implement distance higher education, in addition to the processes of democratization and access to distance education, which will provide the effective implementation of the SDGs in the context of student assistance, which requires a more comprehensive, integrated and collaborative approach at the national level.

According to Mugnol (2016), there is a need to pay more attention to the debate and seek public policies to identify where we are failing to collaborate with the permanence of students in higher education, both distance and presential, and thus contribute to increasing the number of graduates, since overcoming challenges such as lack of financial resources, bureaucracy and coordination between different actors is essential for continuous progress and the full inclusion of distance learning students in the benefits of Student Assistance.

Therefore, to promote full compliance with SDG 10, it is recommended to study how to include all students who have a profile according to the PROAE/UFGD evaluation criteria in the institutional student assistance policy, and to study the effectiveness of the programs implemented, in order to propose possible improvements to the existing programs and which areas deserve greater attention.

Future studies should focus on examining how the UFGD can adapt its policies to better achieve its goals, especially concerning distance education students, given the lack of student access to the program, including semi-structured interviews with representatives of the university administration, student assistance professionals, and students who benefit from student assistance.

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