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Amanda Wilson, University of Iowa


This newsletter series reports activities of the Bringing Theory to Practice Project that encourages people in higher education to advance learning and discovery, to advance students' potential and well-being, and to advance education as a public good that sustains a civic society.


The authors' overview of theories provide the foundation for student affairs practice. They describe the creation process, constant evolution, and the importance of using theory to guide practice. They also summarize the theoretical families that guide the student affairs profession, such as development, students, social identities, organizations, campus environments, student success, and typology. This chapter also introduces paradigms for theory construction and application, such as positivism, constructivism, critical theory, and post-structuralism.


This seminal article articulates theory as the formulation of a reasonable explanation for experience and observation, the role of research in assessing the accuracy of that explanation, the nature of practice guided by theory and values, and the role of evaluation in assessing the effectiveness of practice. This cycle of experience, theory, research, practice, and evaluation is offered as a framework for professional practice.

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If Student Affairs–Academic Affairs Collaboration Is Such a Good Idea, Why Are There So Few Examples of These Partnerships in American Higher Education?

Transforming Our Approach to Education: Cultivating Partnerships and Dialogue

Victor J. Arcelus, Gettysburg College

W hy do some faculty and staff believe it is a good idea to develop academic and student affairs partnerships? At many universities people have reevaluated their goals for the future and aspire to create a learning-centered environment within an organizationally and programmatically seamless campus community. Their goal is for students to appreciate the interconnectedness among components of their lives, strengthen their intellectual development, and cultivate a disposition toward lifelong learning. To achieve this shift, faculty and student affairs staff need to rethink their roles and consider ways to develop a campus ethos that encourages students to become more actively involved in their education while integrating their disciplinary and experiential learning.
This rich educational experience is possible when faculty, staff, and students engage in substantive interactions that help students develop a sense of self through increased understanding of others. Some faculty and staff have navigated their way toward increased partnership, but for many it has been difficult to plot a course through complex campus climates and deeply entrenched cultures that often limit our ability to work collaboratively across campus to develop an integrated approach to higher education.

Richard Hersh explained that "the best education takes place at the nexus of profound intellectual and social/emotional development," so institutions dichotomize the various facets of learning, as if our intellectual, emotional, and ethical lives were compartmentalized. To develop an integrated and transformational educational experience, faculty and staff must work together to create synergistic relationships across institutional divisions, particularly those responsible for educing students—academic affairs and student affairs. According to Hersh, the modus operandi for colleges should be to undo the "false dichotomy and foster a more global and holistic version of education."

George Kuh advocated for the development of a seamless learning environment, one in which a college campus strives to be a "tapestry of previously unconnected experiences carefully stitched together by points and practices," thus allowing students to merge their in-and-out-of-class learning. Alexander Astin, Ernest Pascarella, Patrick Terenzini, and Vincent Tinto support the seamless learning approach, for their research demonstrates that students' whole collegiate experience provides a platform for learning. The student's intellectual and social integration play a key role in satisfaction, persistence, and learning.

Pascarella and Terenzini in How College Affects Students noted that educational research disseminated since 1990 shows "the broad scope of the dimensions of students' lives that change with exposure to college." They identified many areas where students developed through participation in higher education: academic and cognitive, psychosocial, attitudinal and values, career and economic, and quality of life. Most importantly, for the purpose of this essay, they stated that "the evidence strongly suggests that these outcomes are interdependent, that learning is holistic rather than segmented, and that multiple forces operate in multiple settings to shape student learning and change in ways that cross the 'cognitive-affective divide.'" As a result, institutions should dissolve the deeply entrenched division of labor between faculty (attending to students' intellectual development) and student affairs (focusing on students' social and emotional development), acknowledging, as Patrick and Anne Lave stated, "intellectual development does not happen exclusively in the class and that social and emotional development does not happen exclusively out of class."

The Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land Grant Universities published a report that encouraged institutions of higher education to integrate the out-of-classroom "hidden curriculum" into the learning experience. Marcia B. Baxter Magolda supported this recommendation:

"Students" cannot be expected to connect the cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions of their adult lives if their education has led them to believe these dimensions are unrelated. It is clear—and it has been for some time—that our current approach to bifurcating the cognitive and affective dimensions of learning does not work.

These studies suggest that university administrators need to examine how they can develop an educational approach that acknowledges students' many ways of learning, engages them as active participants in knowledge construction, and capitalizes on the concurrent learning occurring in and out of class. Terenzini and colleagues succinctly declared that "ways must be found to overcome the artificial, organizational bifurcation of our educational delivery systems."

Why Is Cross-Divisional Collaboration So Challenging to Accomplish?

As the United States population grew and access to higher education expanded, universities rapidly became more complex, forcing institutions increasingly to divide tasks. Robert Zemsky, Gregory Wegner, and Will Massy introduced the concepts of administrative lattice and academic ratchet to describe the emerging tension and unproductive competition for resources between academic and administrative units from 1940 to the end of the 20th century. During this period, institutions expanded their administrative staffs and became more specialized. These administrative structures established an increasingly important role in the daily
operations of institutions as their administrators defined their own goals and justified their growth with evidence of their initial successes on campus. Rather than “growth by substitution,” institution officials continued to add administrative functions in their pursuit of continued improvement, which led to faculty becoming “an important minority.”

Simultaneously, the academic ratchet led faculty members progressively to disengage from their home institutions as they redefined their roles in terms of “the more specialized concerns of research, publication, professional service, and personal pursuits.”

Zemsky and colleagues make clear that faculty came to believe that professional status often depended more on their contributions to a discipline than their roles as master instructors at their institution. Thus faculty members began to disengage from their campus communities, which then justified the development of administrative units designed to perform tasks formerly assigned to faculty. As faculty became more specialized and discipline-centered, they were seldom rewarded for time spent with students outside the classroom. Over time, student affairs has assumed more of the out-of-classroom roles with students and differentiated itself from academic affairs to the extent that it is not unusual for the two divisions to compete with each other.

Nevertheless, student affairs as a profession has been attempting to collaborate with academic affairs for more than two decades. However, the cross-divisional collaborative opportunities that have emerged since the 1990s have been largely perceived to be one-sided, for the attempt by student affairs to reach out to involve faculty in their initiatives has seldom been reciprocated. While administrators of academic affairs divisions have also been focusing in the past two decades on collaboration, they have not strengthened their relationship with student affairs. Instead, faculty members have been focusing on developing valuable cross-disciplinary programs and departments.

Cultural differences between the divisions, as well as the real and perceived differences in the deeply held values and beliefs about students and their education, hamper the pursuit of cross-divisional partnerships. As specialization among academic departments deepened and student affairs became more professionalized, academic and student affairs staffs experienced dramatically different training and assumed distinct roles. As a result, student affairs practitioners and academicians do not always understand one another’s discourse, nor do they accurately comprehend each other’s roles and responsibilities. The resulting cultural differences often lead to “misunderstandings, mistrust, disrespect, conflict, disdain, and antagonism.” These sentiments become magnified when people at educational institutions focus on difference rather than on the commonalities that exist in their values and goals for educating students. In fact, the way faculty and student affairs partnerships, and it may be deeply embedded in the cultural norms of both divisions.

In cases where the campus culture is neither conducive to collaborative ventures nor to substantive cross-divisional dialogue, the two divisions can operate in isolation, seeking to advance their own goals at the perceived expense of the other. Often, faculty members conclude that student affairs needs to be “reined in” or the academic program will suffer. Student affairs staff members pursue their work independently of academic affairs because the climate does not support collaboration. They also simultaneously resent academic affairs staff for isolating themselves and not engaging in an inclusive dialogue about the educational mission of the institution. At the root of this struggle is the debate over the mission of the college or university; some believe that the answer is a polarizing one—the institution pursues either an academic mission or an educational mission.

One can trace the origins of this institutional struggle to the debate over whether an undergraduate experience should be about the life of the mind or about educating the whole person. The argument is not new, and one can refer to the writings of Robert Hutchins and John Dewey to see that their different philosophies and theories of education reflect the conflicting perspectives shared by faculty and staff today. In the 1930s, the debate focused on the nature and purpose of liberal education and how institutional leaders should design undergraduate education. Dewey advocated a constructivist approach to education in which students, through experience, made meaning for themselves through personal connections with others. He spoke of a collaborative educational setting rich with interactions and with students engaged in cooperative arrangements. Hutchins, however, promoted an educational approach based in reading and discussing the great books of the Western world facilitated by a moratorium on experiences in society. Hutchins’s intellectual inquiry model conflicted with Dewey’s experiential model.

Hutchins’s concern that faculty and administrators did not believe in the “cultivation of the intellect for its own sake” led him to propose his
theory for the design of higher education. He maintained that institutions of higher learning should stand firm in their "single-minded pursuit of the intellectual virtues" and their "single-minded devotion to the advancement of knowledge." Hutchins's answer to higher education anti-intellectualism was to propose an academically focused general educational program that would provide all students with a common intellectual training.

In contrast, Dewey's philosophy was that colleges and universities have a broad educational mission, one that seeks to enhance students' intellectual development through the acquisition of knowledge and skills and accomplishing this goal by linking knowledge with experience while learning through social interactions. Dewey believed that an effective education extends beyond subject matter learning to include personal experience required careful attention to the many conditions and circumstances within the educational environment that exist beyond the classroom. The environment surrounding students, Dewey affirmed, provides academic and psychosocial learning opportunities to help students make meaning of academic content and vice versa. Dewey cautioned that subject matter and skills learned in isolation from experience are disconnected from reality in a way that makes the material less accessible under real-world conditions.

The application of these philosophies to the modern university reflects very different pedagogies and faculty and student roles in the learning process. In addition, the particular philosophy followed will affect how student affairs staff approach their work. At an institution that adheres to an educational philosophy consistent with Hutchins's approach, the student affairs division would likely be a very small service-oriented operation supporting the academic affairs division. At an institution with a progressive approach consistent with Dewey's philosophy, student affairs would likely operate in tandem with academic affairs to accomplish things: promoting educational experiences that engage students as active participants in their education and cultivating opportunities for continuity and integration within and between the in- and out-of-class aspects of students' lives.

Challenges Facing Institutions

My years as a practitioner and my research centering on the relationship between academic and student affairs influence my current thinking about cross-divisional collaboration. In 2003 I conducted an ethnographic study that investigated the cultures of academic and student affairs divisions in one residential liberal arts institution to consider the barriers and opportunities when trying to develop a mutually supportive educational program. My research questions focused on how faculty and student affairs staff members perceive their own and each other's roles as educators and how these perceptions influence the potential for cross-divisional collaboration. At Crossroads University (a pseudonym), I immersed myself in the campus culture for one academic year, seeking to understand the institutional culture, the divisional cultures, and their interactions.

I found a fragmented and competitive campus. The academic and student affairs divisions operated independently of each other, and administrators and staff of each division appeared to be most concerned with issues that pertained primarily to themselves and their work. The intellectual climate of the university, which felt that the student affairs division was diminishing academic primacy. Student affairs professionals expressed concern that faculty neither valued their roles on campus, nor recognized their roles as educators. Weak institutional leadership fueled the preoccupations of academic and student affairs, which contributed to fragmentation and competition.

The academic and student affairs divisions competed over what I call the core elements (i.e., institutional mission and philosophy, resources as money and assets as student time). Ideally, the institutional mission and philosophy should drive budgetary decisions, which in turn influence the type of programs developed and thus the ways that students spend their time; the circular relationship among these factors is stable and reinforcing in healthy institutions. At Crossroads, however, the sense of competition destabilized the system, limiting institutional progress in planning for the future and undermining the university's educational impact on students. With the academic and student affairs divisions at odds over the core elements and the executive leadership providing insufficient institutional direction, the university struggled to mobilize its resources in a coordinated manner to enhance student engagement on campus.

The Crossroads case depicts a campus climate where one must choose between Hutchins's or Dewey's philosophy of education. Different perspectives on education and the learning process influenced the debate on campus that pitted academic primacy against educating the whole person.
My research concluded that these problems should be addressed in campuswide conversations that focus on learning, rather than on the merits of academic primacy (perceived to privilege academic affairs) or educating the whole student (perceived to privilege student affairs). These phrases pulled people apart at Crossroads rather than bringing them together.

The research evidence justifies consideration of educational strategies that link students' lives in the classroom with their lives outside the classroom. Exploring how Dewey's philosophy of education might assist institutions in advancing student learning does not mean that a commitment to intellectual development is curtailed. Adopting a vision of education where faculty, staff, and students come together as a community of learners enriches the intellectual climate. Institutions that can achieve a campuswide focus on learning are ones that do not minimize the academic mission of the institution, but surround it with a broader and reinforced educational mission.

### Paths Toward Partnerships

Because institutions struggle with fostering cross-divisional partnerships, they perpetuate a campuswide ethos of separation that maintains a divide between academic and student affairs, and thus students' in- and out-of-class experiences. Kuh explained that ethos derives from the Greek word "habit," and he defines ethos as "a belief system widely shared." If the habit is separation, then actions are necessary to break the habit. The cultures and roles of academic and student affairs are different enough that there is a natural tendency for the two to remain separate. It is critical to design multifaceted ways to encourage personnel in the two divisions to come together in the shared purpose of improving student learning.

Adopting a vision of education where faculty, staff and students come together as a community of learners enriches the intellectual climate.

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When I began to study Crossroads, I defined partnership in terms of initiatives. I focused on understanding how people's perceptions of their own and each other's roles facilitated or hindered the potential for projects that enhance student learning. I based my preconception that the goal is to develop a cross-divisional collaborative project on the fact that much of the published scholarship on cross-divisional partnership focuses on specific programs often in isolation of the broader campus ethos. Thus faculty and staff evaluate the effectiveness of partnership-based initiatives as stand-alone components that do not take into consideration the broader institutional context.

As my year in the field progressed, my definition of partnership changed. I eventually concluded that partnership is not about developing a program together; partnership is exhibiting mutual understanding and developing an ethos where people value integrative learning. Of course, the campus ethos does not develop on its own. As Adrianna Kezar explained, "Educators must tend their institution's ethos on an ongoing basis and constantly work to align policies and practices with it." Developing mutual understanding and tending to the ethos together makes it possible for people to recognize their shared purpose and allows for collaborative programs to then emerge from a foundation built of trust and respect, acceptance and appreciation.

We must therefore resist the temptation to quickly initiate cross-divisional collaborative projects because a stand-alone project will have limited influence on the campus ethos. If the goal is to create broad-based partnership, an integrative educational experience, and a learning-centered campus, then we must challenge each other to delve deeply into understanding the purpose and goals of our own divisional work and then engage each other across divisions in dialogue. Conversation moves us beyond bias and competition to a place where we can understand how academic and student affairs work can complement each other to provide students with a rich educational experience.

At Crossroads, a senior student affairs professional acknowledged that faculty members, administration, and students all do things differently, "but all three need to be involved if Crossroads will really reach its fullest potential." To foster integration, a faculty member spoke about the necessity to "remove the attitudes and egos and personal agendas" and instead attend to what is in the best interest of the student. An academic affairs administrator echoed this point, expressing that "we need to, as an institution, be focusing on what the best thing for our students is, and stop..."
this conversation about what's best for student affairs, [and] what's best for academic affairs.24

Why Engage in Dialogue?

Why are there so few examples of these partnerships in American higher education? Put simply, it is because we do not know why we need to speak with each other, and we do not know how to speak with each other. We need to organize our institutions in a way that engages mixed groups of people and forces us to venture outside traditional silos. In this alternative setting, individuals can lay the foundation for change by rethinking their beliefs, assumptions, and ideas. Our collaborations, our pursuit of a cohesive community, and our desire for a learning-centered campus must be built on a solid foundation of mutual understanding. This is largely not the case at most institutions of higher education, and as a result, a campus's ethos does not cultivate cross-divisional partnerships.

The ethos can be changed through dialogue because people have the opportunity to view the organization through different lenses, evaluate their interpretation of their world, and identify new paths to achieve their shared goals. Ethos can be influenced through a two-stage process that engages faculty and staff as learners through intragroup dialogue and intergroup dialogue. These dialogues facilitate change and create the foundation for the development of a learning-centered campus.

Intragroup dialogue serves as the foundation; academic and student affairs leaders facilitate an internal, reflective evaluation of their division regarding their roles on campus, their philosophies and approaches to education, as well as outsiders' key criticisms of their division. Intragroup dialogue allows people in a particular group to ponder their own segment of the institution and discuss the diverse perspectives that emerge within their particular group.25 It is a pivotal yet often overlooked step toward building ongoing partnerships. Peter Magolda emphasized the importance of developing greater self-awareness through a self-reflective process:

I argue that there is a far greater need for these two subcultures [academic and student affairs] to understand themselves before embarking on a quest to learn about the other. One of the most disappointing aspects of partnerships between these two subcultures is members' lack of awareness of the norms and values that guide their own everyday practices.26
An institution's potential will reveal itself once people develop relationships with each other that move them beyond their biased positions to find common ground regarding student learning. The strength of such a partnership must be based on a divisional self-awareness (through intergroup dialogue) and understanding of the perspectives shared by members of the other division (through intragroup dialogue). A foundation of mutual understanding allows collaborative initiatives to emerge naturally and lead to successful, long-lasting, and meaningful opportunities for student learning in a coherent and connected learning-centered campus. To develop partnerships between academic and student affairs, institution officials need to cultivate a synergistic relationship between the two in a collaborative project. Faculty and staff should relentlessly pursue campus dialogue that fosters deep institution-wide commitment to a shared approach for student learning.

Despite the differences between academic and student affairs, they share a critical common goal—advancing student intellectual and personal development.

Admittedly, many people may not know how to structure and facilitate the type of dialogue I propose. Faculty and staff would benefit from a higher education research agenda that further explores fundamental philosophies of education and cultural differences on campus while testing, evaluating, and developing the best practices for dialogue. The intention is to cultivate a campus culture where faculty and staff exhibit confidence and trust in each other, support each other’s work, create a coherent campus life for students, and implement engaging pedagogies that help students see the connections across disciplinary fields and between their in- and out-of-classroom lives.

Notes


2. Ibid., p. 182.


4. Ibid., p. 182.


6. Ibid., p. 182.


8. Ibid., p. 182.

9. Ibid., p. 182.
I largely agree with the work of Victor Arcelus—academic and student affairs in higher education remain divided because of competition for resources, specialization, professional status of faculty, and cultural differences. The root of the division lies in the expansion of higher education that created large and complex organizations with internal competition for resources, specialization among administrative staff, and faculty who redefined their roles by emphasizing professional status as opposed to identities rooted in their home institutions. These changes resulted in significant cultural differences between student and academic affairs. 

Arcelus argues that the path toward more collaboration involving student and academic affairs includes intragroup and intergroup dialogues. These dialogues provide many opportunities for individuals to engage in relationship building, create a common language and philosophy, foster understanding, and, most important, create opportunities for cognitive complexity—a perspective of a problem or issue with nuanced solutions that represents multiple perspectives.2

I argue that for dialogue to develop and be sustained over time, administrators of higher education institutions need to consider structural and cultural changes to remove barriers, create opportunities, and provide incentives to bring together the fragments in organizational life. Fragmented cultures are an outgrowth of complex and multiple cultural identities. Cultural identities (e.g., race, gender, class) shape individuals—who belong to many subcultures. An individual may identify himself or herself as a person of color, have strong ties to religious organizations, be a family member, and work for a university. Each of these identities and allegiances creates a split or fragment of identity that may overlap with other fragments and compete for attention, time, resources, and importance. Organizational contexts that lack a clear center, have unclear boundaries, and little distinction between insiders and outsiders characterize fragmentation.3 This definition moves beyond Arcelus’s observation of fragmented and competitive divisions of academic and student
A Model to Enhance Partnerships

In our book Organizing Higher Education for Collaboration, Adrianna Kezar and I present a three-stage model that enhances internal partnerships and can address fragmentation and create an environment for dialogues to occur. The stages are building commitment, commitment, and sustaining commitment. In the first stage of building commitment, campus administrators need to convince the campus community of the importance and benefits of collaboration and relate collaboration to institutional values. On the collaborative campuses we examined, leaders and change agents identified messages from external groups that supported collaborative work and created public forums for discussion of new accreditation and foundation guidelines, business and industry proposals, and federal agency initiatives. Leaders also distributed research on the advantages of collaboration and held forums and workshops on various forms of collaboration they were trying to encourage, helping people to understand the benefits. During the forums, leaders were able to connect the collaboration to the values of the campus.

The second stage of commitment requires campus leaders to establish a sense of priority for collaboration by reexamining mission and values and articulating the philosophy of collaboration on the campus. In the second stage, the main work of senior executives was to revise the campus mission statement and make sure people were discussing the new mission and vision, creating a sense of priority on campus. On collaborative campuses, senior executives became vocal about the new direction for the campus and the new way work was being carried out. Leaders communicated a sense of collaboration using mission and values specifically through hiring and modeling. For example, several leaders used campus networks as a source of leadership, along with individual dedicated leaders with dynamic energy, enthusiasm, and momentum to push for collaboration and continue a message of interest initially expressed by leaders.

Finally, the third state of sustaining commitment includes macro- and microlevel changes to the institutional structure that will support and sustain collaboration. Sustained collaboration is highly dependent on redesigning campus systems, from computing systems to rewards and incentives to the creation of new structures such as institutes. On each collaborative campus particular structures emerged as most important for helping create an environment that supports collaboration, such as one or more central units for collaboration, a set of centers and institutes, cross-campus teams, presidential initiatives, and new accounting, computer, and budgetary systems. Each structure helped to integrate work and facilitate cross-functional activities and remove common barriers to collaboration. For example, new accounting processes ensured that divisions and departments could easily exchange money on joint research projects of full-time equivalents for team teaching.

Creating Opportunities for Collaboration

Although we did not develop this model to specifically address the divide between academic and student affairs, it implicitly reveals ways that colleges and universities can create opportunities to foster exchanges similar to intergroup and intragroup dialogues across fragmented cultures. First, colleges and universities must create reward structures to provide the incentive for individuals to collaborate. Faculty and student affairs professionals exist in separate spheres of professional influence and are constantly negotiating their identities and the norms and expectations of those spheres. Heavy teaching and advising loads and increased expectations for grant seeking and publishing burden faculty, particularly those who are on the tenure track. Collaborative campuses used rewards in stages two and three of the model to encourage participation to create a collaborative vision, participate in discussions about collaboration, and sustain collaborative efforts over time. More specifically, the focus was on promotion and tenure requirements. If the tenure and promotion system supported collaboration, then the members of campus felt the context of collaboration would be fully sustained. Other important incentives included grants and administrative support. Student affairs professionals interested in engaging in collaborative work (e.g., interdisciplinary research, learning communities) need some relief from their day-to-day activities. Hiring, restructuring, small start-up grants, and release time
from other duties all created incentives for collaboration and helped collaborative work to continue. Rewards also help create and maintain inter- or intergroup dialogues, as the development of trust and relationship building, as Arcelus describes, takes time and energy. Without rewards, there is little time or incentive for individuals to maintain their participation in a time-consuming, yet important, process of trust building.

Second, administrators of colleges and universities need to create networks across campuses that represent individuals from student and academic affairs. Networks maintain and generate more collaboration on campus. Participation in one collaboration may lead to other activities and ongoing connections and a greater degree of formality in the network. For example, at George Mason University, a group called Mason Leaders seeks to inspire the development, emergence, and recognition of leadership throughout the Mason community. Not only is this committee cochaired by representatives from academic and student affairs, it is made up of people from across the campus, from alumni affairs to international programs to human resources. Other examples include a speaker series that addresses teaching and learning inside and outside the classroom, faculty fellowships in student affairs offices, student affairs professional teaching in higher education programs, and the creation of new buildings that house academic and student affairs under one roof. Each example brings people together in the same space to meet and possibly connect regarding a similar interest. These networks help establish relationships, lead to a common language or shared understanding across units, and connect people who may be interested in dialogues.

Third, college and university officials must consider integrating structures across student and academic affairs. As previously noted, collaborative campuses developed particular integrating structures that appeared to be the most important in helping create an environment that support collaboration—central unit(s) for collaboration, a set of centers and institutes, cross-campus teams, presidential initiatives, and new accounting, computer, and budgetary systems—helping to integrate work and facilitate cross-functional activities. These new structures were supportive of each other and solidified the new way of working collaboratively. Another less common practice is to staff student affairs with faculty who devote all their time to an administrative student affairs role. In our book, Adrianna and I introduce Collaborative University (pseudonym), which had a tenured faculty member as vice president for the student affairs division. 

Another example is the creation of service-learning offices that unite faculty and student affairs professionals to create curricula with community engagement at the epicenter. The course may extend to a first-year experience with co-instructors from academic and student affairs. These partnerships create collaborations and capitalize on the strengths and skills of those involved. The integration of structures supports the dialogues Arcelus proposed. Without these structures, dialogues could be wrought with bureaucratic difficulties and frustration, making deep learning and relationship building more difficult.

*We must be intentional about creating opportunities, rewards, networks, and structures to bridge the cultural divide.*

Each of these recommendations is not without barriers. For collaborations between student affairs and academic affairs to develop in a sustained and significant way, campus leaders must understand the need for these collaborations and be willing to articulate the benefits and liabilities to the larger campus community. Campus leaders include positional leaders (e.g., presidents, provosts, and deans) and nonpositional leaders or change agents who advocate for collaboration. These campus leaders need to see the value of collaboration and how collaboration can assist the campus in achieving strategic priorities. Collaboration must have advocates who relate and embed collaboration within the institutional mission and values. While this second point has fewer barriers for those leaders in positional leadership roles, change agents may also tout the benefits of collaboration and create those links for positional leaders. Finally, campus leaders need to use either formal or informal power to create new structures for collaboration to be sustained over time. These structures come in the form of rewards for participation in collaboration, establishment of internal networks of people with similar interests and goals, and the integration of structures (e.g., creation of research centers or cross-campus teams). With efforts of just a few, a context can be created for successful intergroup and intragroup dialogue to occur and thrive.
Conclusion

Arcelus's essay and my response started with a simple question: Why are there so few partnerships between student and academic affairs? There is no single answer; rather, we must acknowledge that organizational life in higher education pulls us apart rather than together. We must be intentional about creating opportunities, rewards, networks, and structures to bridge the cultural divide. The benefits of collaboration are many. Principally, collaboration brings together different perspectives and helps us reframe problems and find new, creative solutions. I doubt that any member of the higher education community would disagree that we need creative solutions to our increasingly complex problems.

Notes


Further Reading and Related Blog

Sarah Meagher, Miami University


Arcelus provides insight to the institutional perceptions, biases, and connections between academic affairs and student services. After a year of observing Crossroads University (pseudonym), Arcelus constructs a possible framework for bridging the divide. This framework requires all professionals to engage in learning-centered education, where students encounter support toward learning in all higher education contexts.


The authors present findings from their empirical research, centering on campuses that create environments to support collaborative work. They discuss partnership possibilities, obstacles, and windfalls, and argue that genuine collaboration requires urgent action, new organizational structures, and the reallocation of campus resources.


This book provides a historical context for the placement of student affairs in higher education and describes approaches for collaboration among higher education offices. The concluding chapter outlines the necessary collaboration of these offices to provide various perspectives that consider the needs of the diverse student populations entering higher education today and in the future. The authors claim that a more effective approach toward student affairs involves multiple perspectives contributing to problem solving for student needs, finding an overlap in learning goals among offices, and considering education more broadly—including students' engagements in and out of the classroom.

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