

2015

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*Journal*  
*of*  
*Student Affairs*

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VOLUME XXIV

Colorado State University

# Colorado State University

## *Journal of Student Affairs*

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### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Colorado State University *Journal of Student Affairs* is to develop and produce a scholarly publication that reflects current national and international education issues and the professional interests of student affairs practitioners.

### **Goals**

- The *Journal* will promote scholarly work and perspectives from graduate students and student affairs professionals, reflecting the importance of professional and academic research and writing in higher education.
- The Editorial Board of the *Journal* will offer opportunities for students to develop editorial skills, critical thinking, and writing skills while producing a professional publication.

## Colorado State University *Journal of Student Affairs*

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Volume XXIV, 2014-2015

### Editorial Board

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Managing Editor - Technical	Tolulope A. Taiwo '15
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The 24th edition of the *Journal*  
is available online:  
[www.sahe.colostate.edu](http://www.sahe.colostate.edu)

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## Managing Editors' Perspective

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Roberto Cruze, Managing Editor – Training and Development

Henry Duong, Managing Editor – Marketing & Outreach

Ashleigh A. Renteria, Managing Editor – Coordination

Tolulope A. Taiwo, Managing Editor – Technical

The *Journal of Student Affairs* is celebrating its 24th year of annual publication in 2015. The *Journal* continues to create unique opportunities for graduate students, new professionals, and senior level administrators to contribute scholarly articles to the field of student affairs. Our intention with this year's publication of the *Journal of Student Affairs* is to provide relevant articles regarding current issues, emerging trends, innovation, and the improvement of programs and services within the field. It is our aspiration to uphold the values of student affairs through collaboration, development, and mentorship. Additionally, we aim to stimulate discourse about academic research and writing.

It has been our honor to work with our advisors, Teresa Metzger from the Office of Residence Life and Karla Perez-Velez from the Department of Health and Exercise Science on the *Journal* and have their guidance during our time of growth and professional development. One major change to the *Journal* is the addition of original research submissions, in order to include a variety of topics, and showcase the research conducted by student affairs professionals. For the second year, the Editorial Board attended the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) Conference. While at ASHE in Washington D.C., we were able to engage in dialogue with professionals at the NASPA and ACPA headquarters. The Editorial Board members are grateful to the two organizations for dedicating their time, resources, and professional wisdom pertaining to the future of the field, publication processes, and involvement in student affairs professional organizations.

The *Journal* is pleased to continue the tradition of selecting a distinguished guest author from the field of student affairs. This year, the *Journal* is proud to feature an article titled, "Forging a Future that Matters: A Career in Student Affairs at Community Colleges" by Paulette M. Dalpes, Ed.D., who serves as the Deputy to the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs for the City University of New York (CUNY) system. We admire her work in researching community colleges, and her ability to exemplify the values of the SAHE program. We believe Dr. Dalpes' accomplishments will inspire current and future SAHE students to forge similar paths.

We thank all of our contributing authors, mentors, and support personnel who have made this year's publication a success. Deserving of great appreciation are the associate editors for their diligence and superb work ethic. We are confident to be leaving the *Journal* in the hands of great leadership. Finally, we thank our readers and fellow colleagues, for whom we strive to provide a quality publication. Like past editors, we hope you find the manuscripts in the 24th edition of the *Journal* to be thought provoking, informative, and useful to the application of your practice.

## Past Leadership

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As we produce the 24th edition of the Colorado State University *Journal of Student Affairs*, we acknowledge those who have laid the foundation for our success.

### MANAGING EDITORS

2013-2014	Christopher R. Carter '14, Emma Hart '14, Maria R. Marinucci '14, Vanessa Santana '14
2012-2013	Jake N. Cohen '13, Olivia Des Chenes '13, Spencer Ellis '13, Joseph F. Kimes '13, Mallory Perkins
2011-2012	Alexis M. Hendrix '11, Anthony G. Pang '12, Marney E. Randle '12, Kristal D. Sawatzke '12
2010-2011	Tyler Cegler '11, Jennifer David '11, Helen Kang '11, Joseph Kowalczyk Jr. '11, Lisa LaPoint '11
2009-2010	Jordan Alexander '10, Kinsey Holloway '10, Joe Levy '10, Nicole Scheer '10
2008-2009	Kyle Carpenter '09, Jeff Rosenberry '09, David Vale '09
2007-2008	Travis Mears '08, Neal Oliver '08, Gretchen Streiff '08
2006-2007	Craig Beebe '07, Timothy Cherney '07, Yulisa Lin '07
2005-2006	Kristen Harrell '06, Brandon Ice '06
2004-2005	Marci Colb '05, Haley N. Richards '05
2003-2004	Ann Dawson '04
2002-2003	Lea Hanson '03
2001-2002	Jody Jessup '02
2000-2001	Chris Bryner '01
1999-2000	Greg Kish '00
1998-1999	Kirsten Peterson '99
1997-1998	Beth Yohe '98
1996-1997	Ray Gasser '97, Jocelyn Lowry '97
1995-1996	DeEtta Jones '96, Michael Karpinski '96
1994-1995	Jeremy Eaves '95, Alicia Vik '95
1993-1994	Mary Frank '94, Keith Robinder '94
1992-1993	Jodi Berman '93, Brad Lau '93
1991-1992	Marie E. Oamek '92

### FACULTY ADVISORS

2007-2013	Oscar Felix, Associate Vice President for Enrollment & Access/Diversity; Assistant Professor Faculty, Student Affairs in Higher Education, School of Education, College of Health and Human Sciences, Colorado State University Andrea Takemoto Reeve, former Director Academic Advancement Center; former Professor, Student Affairs in Higher Education, School of Education, College of Health and Human Sciences, Colorado State University
2004-2007	Jennifer Williams Molock, former Director of Black Student Services, Colorado State University

- 2003-2006 David A. McKelfresh, Executive Director of Assessment & Research; Program Chair for the SAHE Graduate Program, Colorado State University
- 2000-2003 Paul Shang, former Director of HELP/Success Center, Colorado State University
- 1996-2000 Martha Fosdick ('95), former Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs, Colorado State University
- 1991-1998 Keith M. Miser, former Vice President for Student Affairs, Colorado State University

## Advisors' Perspective

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It is with great honor that we serve as the advisors of the CSU SAHE Journal Board. We are proud of the board and congratulate them for all of their hard work and dedication in the production of the 24th year of the *Journal of Student Affairs*.

This year has been a year of reflection on past accomplishments and success of the *Journal*, but also a year of new ideas and innovation. The creative team of eight graduate students has challenged themselves to look at the journal with fresh eyes in order to improve and ignite a new era for the *Journal*. Below are some the accomplishments of the board this past academic year:

- Increase proposal submissions from both professional, scholarly, and student authors;
- The addition of the category for Original Research for article proposal submissions in this year's call for articles;
- Continued development of the proposal review process.

In addition to the above, this year's SAHE Journal Board continued the tradition of attending the annual Association for the Study of Higher Education Conference (ASHE) held in Washington D.C. in November 2014 for its 39th meeting. The ASHE conference theme was focused on *Weaving Scholarship and Policy Making*, and in line with this theme, the Journal Board was able to visit the executive offices of both NASPA and ACPA for professional development with the opportunity to see the relationship between Student Affairs, ASHE and policy. We would like to extend our appreciation and thanks to Dr. Tricia Fechter, Deputy Executive Director of ACPA; the Educational Program and Engagement Team of NASPA including Nathan Victoria, Tiki Ayiku, Lucy Fort, Daniel Anzueto; and NASPA President Dr. Kevin Kruger, who spent time with us during our visit.

We are very proud of the work the board has completed this year. As always, we thank Dr. Dave McKelfresh, Kim Okamoto and the SAHE faculty for all their support of the students on the board. Lastly, we thank the 2014-2015 SAHE Journal Board! The exchange of learning between students and advisors has been rewarding.

Teresa Metzger  
 CSU Office of Residence Life,  
 Housing and Dining Services  
 SAHE Advisor

Karla Perez-Velez  
 CSU Department of Health  
 and Exercise Science  
 SAHE Advisor



## State of the Program

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David A. McKelfresh, Ph.D.  
Program Chair

This year marks the 47th anniversary of the Student Affairs in Higher Education (SAHE) Master's Program and it has truly been a remarkable year. I am very pleased to provide an update on the "state of the program." The SAHE program has made significant strides this year with the addition of new faculty, new courses, and new international experiences.

Congratulations are due to all of the SAHE Journal editorial board members, and content and style readers responsible for continuing to produce a quality journal for the student affairs profession.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to Karla Perez-Velez and Teresa Metzger for the service they are providing as faculty advisors to the SAHE Journal Board. Karla and Teresa have initiated an annual professional development field experience for the journal board members – attending the annual conference of the Association for the Study of Higher Education. This year, board members were able to attend the conference in Washington, DC, with the added bonus of visiting the NASPA and ACPA national offices.

The SAHE program received another record number of applicants this year. For the past seven years we have had applicants from all 50 states and a number of countries. The SAHE program continues to be one of the most diverse graduate programs at CSU, in every respect.

We have an excellent group of new faculty teaching and advising in the program.

- Barb Richardson and Laura Jenson co-teach the Trends, Issues and Assessment course;
- Cori Wong has joined Oscar Felix to co-teach the Ethical Issues course;
- Laura Giles has joined Craig Chesson to co-teach the Capstone in Student Affairs course;
- Jen Johnson has joined Jody Donovan to co-teach the Student Development Theory course;
- Carmen Rivera has joined Oscar Felix to co-teach the Access and Opportunity course;
- Alexis Kanda Olmstead and John Durkin co-teach the newly developed course on Development/Advancement in Student Affairs;
- Lea Hanson teaches the newly developed course titled "Working Across Generations;"
- Pamela Graglia, Lea Hanson, and Karen Gardenier have all begun this year as SAHE faculty advisors.

This year, SAHE faculty members Oscar Felix and Jody Donovan, along with SAHE students Kristyn Emmer, Matt Anton, and Nourah Almualllem provided strong leadership for the SAHE international field experience to Hamad Bin Khalifa University in Doha, Qatar. Sixteen students and seven SAHE faculty and staff members were hosted by the Qatar Foundation for two weeks in January. One of the many highlights of the field experience for the students was participating in the Young Professionals Institute.

This past summer, two students participated in practicum or internship experiences at the Autonomous University of Yucatan in Merida, Yucatan (Beatriz Salazar), and American University in Bulgaria (Bailey Weber). I would like to express my gratitude to Keith Lopez, practicum coordinator for his work in this role.

Jody Donovan was invited by Dr. Qi Li (SAHE alum), Program Chair for the SAHE Program at Beijing Normal University (BNU) in China, to teach a Student Development Theory course in September. This is the first year for the newly developed SAHE program at BNU, and is believed to be the first time a Student Development Theory course has been taught in China.

The SAHE program welcomed the Pi chapter of Chi Sigma Alpha Honor Society International (CSA) to campus this semester under the leadership of Mariah Kohles. CSA is founded on the three pillars of research, service, and academics, and has several chapters across the U.S. led by graduate students and esteemed faculty. CSA strives to bring developmental activities and networking opportunities to graduate programs. The SAHE program is pleased to announce the new membership body of the Pi Chapter which consists of the following SAHE students: Matt Anton, Bianca Bellot, Brandon Devlin, Henry Duong, Kristyn Emmer, Whitley Hadley, Christian Harrison, Mariah Kohles, Niahm O'Shea, Jeffrey Perkins, Ashleigh Renteria, Samantha Sickbert, Tolu Taiwo and Bailey Weber.

Our online SAHE Master's program currently has more than 70 active students and our SAHE Certificate program has over 30 active students. The online Campus Crisis Management Certificate was launched this fall. Dwight Burke and Josh Alvarez are co-teaching the cornerstone course "Campus Crisis Management." Additionally, the SAHE program entered into a collaborative arrangement with the National Association of College Auxiliary Services (NACAS) to promote the online Student Affairs Business Management and Auxiliary Services certificate.

We are pleased to report that the second Sherwood Scholarship was awarded to Whitley Hadley. The Sherwood Scholar Fund was established by Dr. Grant Sherwood who provided leadership for the SAHE program for 13 years. Applicants address the importance of integrity and character in the student affairs profession, and how they integrate their values into their work.

The SAHE program maintains its long and strong relationship with the Division of Student Affairs and the CSU Graduate School. The Student Affairs Division contributes over \$1.2 million dollars through 40 graduate assistantships available for SAHE students, and the Graduate School provides considerable support for the non-resident tuition premiums for students in their first year in the program. Kacee Collard Jarnot continues to provide strong leadership in the coordination of the graduate assistantship process, and assistantship supervisors continue to provide excellent experiences for students.

The CSU SAHE program evolves to meet the needs and challenges of our profession. Our alumni continue to report that the program has prepared them very well for working in and contributing to the student affairs profession. I would like to thank our faculty, staff, assistantship supervisors, and alumni who all support a high quality experience for our students.

## Acknowledgements

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The Editorial Board wishes to thank the following individuals for their contributions toward the success of the 2014-2015 *Journal of Student Affairs*:

- Kim Okamoto, Executive Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs and to the Executive Director of Assessment & Research, for her tireless encouragement and guidance for all associated with the *Journal of Student Affairs* and the CSU SAHE program.
- Karla Perez-Velez, Health and Exercise Science Academic Support Coordinator, for pushing us to consider the future of *Journals* and *Journal* Editorial Boards to come, and her constant dedication to our professional development as *Journal* Editorial Board members.
- Teresa Metzger, Residence Life Assistant Director of Academic Initiatives, for her time dedicated to dedication to making this year's *Journal* one of the best it's ever been, and her support and guidance with the overall editing and review process
- Dr. David A. McKelfresh, Executive Director of Assessment & Research, and Program Chair for the SAHE program at Colorado State University, for being so supportive and encouraging for those who participate in the *Journal of Student Affairs*.
- SAHE Faculty, for preparing and serving as guides to several authors and Editorial Board members during this process.
- Dr. Paulette Dalpes, Deputy to the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Chief of Staff, City University of New York, for providing this edition's guest article.
- Members of the Editorial Board for dedicating a tremendous level of professionalism and passion to the success of the *Journal of Student Affairs*, and for their commitment to making the *Journal* a better and more available publication than ever before.
- Members of the Reader Board for their hard work and dedication to editing and analyzing articles.
- Those authors and contributors who chose to submit articles to the 24th Annual *Journal of Student Affairs*. Your research, dedication, and quality contributions made it possible to produce this edition.
- Justin Cox, CSU Marketing Student, for designing this year's cover of the *Journal of Student Affairs*.
- Shaun Geisert, Webmaster for the Division of Student Affairs, for his diligent efforts in updating and overseeing the *Journal of Student Affairs* website.
- Colleen Rodriguez, Communications Coordinator for Communications and Creative Services, for her commitment in printing professional quality copies of the *Journal of Student Affairs*.
- CSU Bookstore, for providing a gift card for the cover design contest winner.

- The NASPA and ACPA national offices for hosting the Journal Board when they were in Washington D.C. for the ASHE Conference.
- NASPA and ACPA graduate program directories for assisting the *Journal of Student Affairs* in reaching out to a broader audience of graduate students and new professionals who wish to submit articles for publication.



## **Forging a Future That Matters: A Career in Student Affairs at Community Colleges**

Paulette Dalpes, Ed. D  
City University of New York

### **Abstract**

*Almost half of all college students enrolled in higher education attend a community college (AACC, 2014). Yet rarely do graduate preparation programs in higher education and student affairs address the intricacies of working at a community college in depth. Not until relatively recently have graduate programs incorporated the community college experience in the curriculum. Therefore, graduate students often lack knowledge and experience about the opportunities of working in student affairs administration at community colleges unless they attended a community college or a friend or family member has experience as a community college student, faculty or staff member. Yet, community colleges are some of the most innovative of higher education institutions. The clarity of purpose, scope of impact, and diversity of students that exists within community colleges provide the community college student affairs professional with a rich and sustainable place to grow and develop while having a tremendous effect currently and in the future on the students and community with whom they work. The purpose of this article is to provide historical background and present day context of the critical role of community colleges in expanding student access and success in higher education, in hopes of educating and influencing more student affairs professionals to embark on a career in this vital higher education setting.*

Over one hundred years ago, the nation's first community college was established as Joliet Junior College in 1901 (Tull, 2015). More than a century later, the President of the United States called upon community colleges to serve in an unprecedented capacity to expand the nation's workforce (Obama, 2009). Today, community colleges serve a critical role in the revitalization and advancement of the United States economy through the increased educational attainment of its citizens, most especially those that are often marginalized and afforded limited access to higher education.

Over the course of the last century, community colleges have been described as revolutionary, essential, and transformative. Yet the role of student affairs in advancing student success in community colleges is rarely acclaimed. The time is ripe for committed and conscientious student affairs professionals to advance student engagement, leadership development, and academic success to a new level at community colleges, and to widen the space of practice and precedent that recognizes and implements the transformative impact student affairs work has on the achievements of community college students.

### **Historical and Current Context**

“Community colleges were created to revolutionize college education in the United States” (Mellow & Heelan, 2008, p. xiii). At the beginning of the 20th century, during a time when higher education was predominately for the elite, an increasing need developed for educated

workers to serve in the growing industrialized economy. This demand for a more educated workforce combined with a “drive for social equality and greater access to higher education” (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014, p. 1) resulted in the development of community colleges.

Expanding higher education access to the broader public at the turn of the 20th century through the creation of community colleges was an inimitably American innovation. At mid-century, with the return of veterans from World War II and access to the GI Bill, President Truman initiated an increase in community colleges through the President’s Commission on Higher Education. This report advocated for access to two years of education beyond secondary schooling at limited expense to the student.

In the following decades, the number of public community colleges more than doubled between 1948 and 1968, with an increase of over 450 in the 1960s alone (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2001). Most community colleges were located within a certain radius of one another to maximize the local access for residents and to limit the need for travel outside of the area. Individuals could attend school without living away from home. This, in turn, reduced the cost of a college education and maximized access for people who would not otherwise have the means to pursue a degree. The expanded development of community colleges within local communities over the last half-century resulted in broader access to higher education for women, veteran’s, people of color, low-income communities, immigrants, and people living in rural areas (Cohen, et al., 2014; Tull, 2014).

Community colleges continued to grow to almost 1,000 through the mid-1980s, and the number remains relatively steady at approximately 1,100 today. Community college enrollments comprise a microcosm of the overall demographics of the country while also reflecting the general educational preparedness of the country’s population. Likewise, most community colleges continue to be linked to the needs of the surrounding community they were initially designed to serve and are thus inherently connected to local businesses and commerce in the provision of education to the community workforce.

In 2009, President Obama embraced community colleges as an essential component in the economic recovery of the nation. His administration allocated hundreds of millions of dollars in grants to community colleges, increased the amount of Pell Grants, and provided college tuition tax credits in an effort to address two national goals determined imperative to future economic growth: By 2020, the number of U.S. citizens with a college degree (including an associate’s degree) will be the highest proportion compared to other countries around the world (currently the U.S. ranks #14), and graduates from community colleges will increase by 5 million (Department of Education, 2011; Obama, 2009). President Obama (2009) emphasized his focus on community colleges in speeches stating:

In an increasingly competitive world economy, America’s economic strength depends upon the education and skills of its workers. In the coming years, jobs requiring at least an associate degree are projected to grow twice as fast as jobs requiring no college experience. We will not fill those jobs – or even keep those jobs here in America – without the training offered by community colleges.

Not only is President Obama a leading champion for community colleges, the administration also has a resident expert in Dr. Jill Biden, Second Lady of the United States, who is a community college faculty member. Dr. Biden chaired the first-ever White House Summit on Community Colleges in October, 2010 where she stated the following:

Community colleges are a key part of our economic vision for the future. I see firsthand the power of community colleges to change lives every single day I am in the classroom. I am proud to be part of an administration that recognizes the value of a community college education and is working to make it more accessible to students across this nation.

### **Changing Needs Within the Workforce**

As industries change, innovative training and curriculum need to match the unfolding landscape of the shifting economy. Where there were once jobs for factory workers during the industrial age, the “second machine age” (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014) has and will substantially change the work people do in the world and how they are compensated for this work. A college degree will increasingly provide a greater guarantee for higher incomes as well as better career stability and flexibility.

The second machine age involves significant changes related to the influence of technology on how goods are produced and consumed. Technology speeds the rate of change. In turn, the types of work required shifts rapidly, faster than any other time in the nation’s history. This evolving nature of work also alters how people envision and engage their careers. “People will need to be more adaptable and flexible in their career aspirations, ready to move on from areas that become subject to automation, and seize new opportunities where machines complement and augment human capabilities” (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014, p. 203). Community colleges play a critical role in helping the workforce update and respond to these changes as technology remains influential in demarcating how work is accomplished. Indeed, community colleges often adapt and innovate to economic forces much more rapidly than four-year colleges and universities.

By design, community colleges are responsive to the developing influences of the local economy and societal factors that define an educated and effective workforce. For example, at one time, there was a strong emphasis on print media; yet now, digital media is increasingly predominant. Degrees in journalism, communication, computer science, marketing, graphic and web design must be able to respond to the evolutions in this medium. Much more than four-year colleges and universities, community colleges have the ability to incorporate new curriculum, degrees and certifications to quickly respond to innovative and growing job sectors.

### **The Complexities of the Community College Student**

Community colleges are places of incredible innovation and flexibility, and they comprise the largest sector of the higher education system enrolling approximately 45% of all undergraduates. Student enrollment in community colleges reflects a broader range of diversity than the vast majority of four-year schools, including the increasing racial diversity within the United States. Fifty-nine percent of Native American and 56% of Latino students attend community college and almost half of all African American and Asian American students are enrolled in community colleges. Over a third of community college students are the first in their family to pursue a college education, and 57% of all community college students are women. A majority of community college students (58%) receive financial aid and are low income. Most community college students are older than traditional age students. Fifty-six percent of students enrolled at community colleges are between the ages of 22-39, and approximately 17% of community college students are single-parents. Over 20% of full-



time community college students work full-time and over 40% of part-time students work full-time (AACC, 2014).

These student demographics represent a widely diverse, generally more financially challenged, time-limited, less college savvy, and older population of students compared to most four-year college enrollments. Additionally, community college students are often not as academically prepared for college level work compared to their four-year counterparts. While numbers can vary, on average, approximately two-thirds of community college students test below college level in math, reading or writing entrance exams and require some remediation to qualify for college level courses (Cohen, et al., 2014). Yet, community college students are an untapped resource of immense talent, with many students speaking more than one language and having life and work experiences expanding emotional maturity beyond their four-year college peers. Indeed, as a function of managing multiple challenges, community college students often acquire critical skills including the efficient use of time and resources, creative problem solving, strategic thinking, resiliency, and the ability to navigate complex systems.

At the same time, some of the potential challenges listed above, such as being the first in their family to pursue a college degree, having limited financial resources, working full-time and attending part-time, and receiving insufficient college preparation, can contribute to greater barriers for student success. Student populations with one or more of these factors, as well as adult students and students of color, “have been traditionally less likely to complete” a degree (Cohen, et al., 2014, p. 400). In fact, according to some national indicators, the percentage of community college students who graduate is very low, ranging between 14-20% after three years (Cohen, et al., 2014).

However, there is increasing question as to whether these percentages appropriately measure community college academic success. Traditionally, student success has been measured by graduation rates. However, the unique dynamics of community college students are not reflected in this measurement. Completion rates at community colleges increase when additional time is factored and certificate programs and other credentialing are considered as indicators of student success. Moreover, there are students who enroll in community college and then transfer to a four-year college prior to completing their associate’s degree, as well as many individuals who return to community college to complete a few courses to advance their career expertise with no intention of obtaining a degree. In each of these cases, students who in fact completed their academic goals would not be counted as graduates. These examples decrease the national percentage of students who finish an associate’s degree at the community college.

Recently, national standards for evaluating community college student success have more accurately broadened beyond degree completion to include a student’s completion of their academic goals through transfer, certification or other measures. At the same time, the increased visibility and emphasis on community colleges has also magnified the growing concern regarding student success, accountability, and pressure to demonstrate greater results. While community colleges are recognized to be flexible and responsive to economic changes and disparities in the workforce, community colleges must also improve student-based outcomes such as course and academic goal completion, retention, transfer, certification and graduation.

### **The Impact of Student Affairs Professionals**

Community college leaders as well as other leaders of innovation including the American Association of Community Colleges, the Lumina Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates

Foundation have shaped considerable efforts toward the improvement of community college student success. New initiatives related to learning communities, curriculum, faculty instruction, accelerated study, technology, data collection and analysis, strategic planning and improved coordination of student services are designed to increase student retention and degree completion (Cohen, et al., 2014; McPhail, 2011). Some of the efforts that have provided unprecedented results in student academic success, such as the highly acclaimed Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) at the City University of New York (CUNY), involve the work of full-time professionals in typical student affairs roles as program coordinators and case managers providing comprehensive support to students through the delivery of academic advising, career development and academic support (Scrivner & Coghlan, 2011; Scrivner, Weiss & Sommo, 2012; Scrivener & Weiss, 2014; Schmidt, 2013).

The ASAP program has demonstrated unparalleled academic success and degree completion rates for community colleges by addressing three critical gaps in the community college student experience: curricular, financial, and individual support. The program includes a tailored curriculum targeting academic areas students need to develop in order to meet college-level proficiency while focusing course schedules in cohorts and small classes. ASAP also fills financial holes by covering tuition, textbook and transportation costs. The program staff attends to critical support gaps by providing academic advising, career development, and essential one-on-one mentoring to mitigate the multitude of complex obstacles that can throw a student off course.

The results of the ASAP program include a 55% degree completion rate in three years (Schmidt, 2013) compared to a national completion rate approximating 14-20% (Cohen, et al., 2014). Likewise, an independent analysis of the first cohort enrolled in the ASAP program estimated the overall cost savings for the institution per graduate was \$6,500. Cost savings projections for future cohorts are even higher (Levin & Garcia, 2012). Studies of the ASAP program note that students in the program who succeeded utilized the student services components at a “substantially higher rate” and were more satisfied with the services they received than the comparison group in the study (Scrivener & Weiss, 2014, p. 4; Schmidt, 2013).

Despite these initial findings in what promises to be a high-impact program for community college success, the effect of the full-time professionals serving the ASAP students in a student affairs capacity has not been directly studied. This is not unusual. In fact, over the last century, little has been written specifically about the role of student affairs in community colleges and how the work of student affairs professionals advances student success within community colleges. Almost 50 years ago, a national advisory committee prepared a report for the Carnegie Corporation entitled: *Project for Appraisal and Development of Junior College Student Personnel Programs* (Collins, 1967). The findings regarding student personnel programs at community colleges were not positive and the report attributed this in part to the “lack of preparation of junior college student personnel workers” (Collins, p. 25, 1967). The report also provided several key recommendations including further research, greater political advocacy, increased funding, professional development, program self-studies, and expanded graduate training to “improve master’s degree curriculums in junior college student personnel services” (Collins, p. 46, 1967). In more recent publications about community colleges, the references to student affairs, also known as student services, are described at best as an “ancillary activity” (Cohen, et al., p. 209, 2014) and at worst, not at all (Mellow & Heelan, 2008). This year, a publication co-edited by this author aspires to bring a greater focus on the leading work of student affairs practitioners at community colleges and offers best practices and ideas for further research in the field (Tull, Kuk, & Dalpes, 2015).

While providing key curricular changes as well as financial support is instrumental to community college student success, insiders at community colleges can attest to the abiding impact of the human factor influencing a student's persistence. Time and again, student testimonies reference the influence of a counselor, a student life director, a tutor, a program leader or dean of students who provided the extra support, encouragement or push to persevere when they had decided to quit. Although these attributions are largely undocumented, the influence of one-on-one human support is arguably the single most significant factor in a student's success.

Due to the considerable risk factors for success that many community college students experience, they lack a safety net of support many traditional college students have as a function of their family history, financial means, and general access to resources. Sometimes a student simply needs someone with higher education experience and expertise to discuss and navigate the challenging choices of setting their course schedule while balancing work and child and/or elder care. When family members become ill, students often do not know how to seek guidance about taking time away from classes or how to speak to their professors about extended time for assignments. More seriously, students who lack funds to cover the cost of textbooks, or bus fare, or food, need support with identifying priorities and negotiating difficult decisions.

Student affairs professionals fit perfectly in the community college environment. They are adaptable and creative. Student affairs professionals have learned to be keenly aware of the needs of students and they know how to develop new and dynamic approaches to engaging students to meet these needs. With a background in student development, social justice and inclusion, counseling, academic support and student leadership development, student affairs practitioners are well positioned to partner with faculty to support students achieving their educational goals and to develop innovative programs that address the unique challenges community college students encounter.

Entry-level student affairs professionals at community colleges are frequently products of the community college at which they work. They often stumble upon the role without awareness that the work they are doing is part of a larger career field grounded in theory and practice (Dalpes, et al., 2015). At the same time, entry-level student affairs professionals who have attended community college and worked within the community have valuable insight into the student experience and can provide critical input in the development of programs and services.

Likewise, mid-level student affairs leaders at community colleges can influence the creation of programs, policies and services that truly support the academic success of students who attend community college. Community colleges are usually less siloed than four-year colleges, in part because they are often significantly less resourced. This allows for greater collaboration across departments. Student affairs professionals at community colleges can gain a breath of experiences through partnerships with development offices, institutional research, city and regional leaders, and legislative advocates. It is not at all unusual for mid-level student affairs professionals to serve on campus and citywide committees to maximize these partnerships in an effort to advance innovation. These connections prove to be invaluable in the burgeoning student affairs professional's career development and trajectory and help prepare community college student affairs professionals for key leadership roles in the future.

Beyond the immensely valuable delivery of support and services, senior student affairs professionals at community colleges provide a critical role in strategic leadership of student affairs divisions and in serving on the President's cabinet. Increasingly, senior student affairs professionals rise to the presidency of community colleges (and beyond) by using their finely honed skills with students and their leadership expertise to direct institutions toward increased student success. Dr. Martha Kanter is an example of this career trajectory. Dr. Kanter served as a vice president of instruction and student services at San Jose City College, a community college of approximately 10,000 students. Following this role she became president of De Anza College for ten years, after which she was appointed chancellor of the Foothill-De Anza Community College District in California, one of the largest community college districts in the nation, serving more than 45,000 students. Dr. Kanter became the first community college leader to serve as the United States Under Secretary of Education when she was appointed in 2009 where she served until 2013.

It is critical student affairs professionals at all levels of a community college institution are grounded in the fundamental and theoretical frameworks of the student affairs profession and develop the critical professional competencies and standards valued by the profession (American College Personnel Association [ACPA] & Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education [NASPA], 2010). There is much more work to be done to advance the direction of student affairs at community colleges, to study outcomes, document effectiveness and initiate greater innovation by student affairs leaders (Kanter, 2010). Professionals in student affairs who are committed to the success of students that may not otherwise succeed without strategic support and college environments attuned to their needs will find the community college landscape to be a dynamic atmosphere of unlimited potential.

### Conclusion

Recently, President Obama announced his vision to provide free tuition to community college students (Obama, 2015). While this proposal has garnered renewed interest in the role of community colleges in expanding access to post-secondary education and underscores the President's efforts to advance educational attainment in the United States, free community college education is not a new idea. In fact, President Truman's commission on higher education advocated for community colleges to be free (Cohen, et al., 2014).

One reason this idea has persisted over the last half-century is because community college graduates remain essential to the future of the nation's economic growth and the overall wellbeing of the next generation of citizens. Unquestionably, mitigating costs for a college degree greatly enhances access and success. However, community college students will continue to struggle to completion without the dedicated work of student affairs professionals who have in-depth experience working with community college students and can understand and build the necessary supports and systems that nurture student success. Achieving the highest proportion of college graduates by 2020 is a prestigious goal and one that will not be achieved without student affairs improving the work they provide on community college campuses (Kanter, 2010). This will require skilled and committed student affairs professionals to deliver the critical support, program development, and institutional leadership needed for student success.

To support the success of one individual community college student in obtaining a college degree is not only impactful for that single person, it also creates a ripple effect that pervades the

individual's family for generations. This in turn exponentially impacts the local community, and the economy. Professionals pursuing a career in student affairs might envision the long-term impact of their effort and where they want to build their legacy. The widespread influence of the work of community college student affairs professionals is immeasurable, endlessly rewarding, and definitely a future worth forging.

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## Wellness Coaching: Helping Students Thrive

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### Abstract

*The promotion of healthy behaviors has become a mandate on many college campuses. Promoting mental health among all students is emerging as a particularly salient way to encourage academic success and lifelong well-being. Wellness coaching is one innovative approach for promoting mental health and academic achievement among all students. The coaching framework encourages students to target areas of development within a holistic model of wellness, and utilizes an approach grounded in positive psychology and strengths to help students accomplish self-endorsed goals. The process of wellness coaching supports students' ability to thrive (Schreiner, 2010), academically, socially, and emotionally. Wellness coaches are graduate students from diverse disciplines, with particular emphasis placed upon recruiting students from the field of higher education and student affairs. Student coaches receive multiple forms of training, including classroom learning, live shadowing, and ongoing mentorship and consultation. Programmatic assessment outcomes demonstrate support for wellness coaching as a distinctive model that facilitates student thriving and equips future leaders in higher education with applied competencies in student development and learning.*

*Keywords:* coaching, college students, health promotion, mental health, motivational interviewing, positive psychology, strengths, wellness

Health promotion on college campuses has been identified as a critical factor for nationwide health improvement (American College Health Association [ACHA], 2012). Programs designed to enhance the health and wellness of students, faculty, and staff have subsequently become a priority at many institutions of higher education. Healthy Campus 2020 (ACHA, 2012) was developed as a guiding framework for college campuses to promote quality of life, healthy development, and positive health behaviors. The list of objectives that falls under this framework is comprehensive and contains dimensions including academic performance, mental and physical health, harm reduction, self-care, and sexual and social relationships. The diverse range of concerns articulated by Healthy Campus 2020 aligns well with holistic approaches to wellness, which typically integrate broad dimensions of functioning into a growth-oriented and preventative approach to health promotion (Granello & Witmer, 2012; Myers & Sweeney, 2005). The case for holistic health promotion is reinforced by research linking health behaviors with academic success. High levels of stress, lack of sleep, and alcohol use have all been correlated with decreased grade point averages for students (University of Minnesota, 2008). Conversely, utilization of mental health services is linked with increased retention among college students (Lee, Olson, Locke, Michelson, & Odes, 2009). Therefore, efforts to promote health and wellness behaviors on college campuses can be viewed as supporting multiple outcomes, from instilling lifelong healthy behaviors to supporting academic achievement and student success.



While there is evidence that preventative wellness-oriented interventions can impact student populations, most universities provide only minimal support for prevention-oriented programs, even as the need and demand for support services increases. In a national survey of college counseling center directors, 92% of the respondents reported that the number of students seeking help at their centers has increased in recent years (Gallagher, 2012). At the same time, data from the National College Health Assessment (ACHA, 2014) show that 54% of college students surveyed indicated overwhelming anxiety, but only 14.3% of students reported diagnosis or treatment by a health professional for anxiety in the past 12 months. The discrepancy between these statistics suggests that even as the existing support services on college campuses are taxed with increased demand, there are still vast numbers of students who are not receiving support for concerns directly impacting their success in college. This may help to explain why a survey of Chief Student Affairs Officers identified college student mental health as the most salient critical issue facing higher education within the domain of student health and wellness (Sponsler & Wesaw, 2014).

As part of the effort to address college student mental health, college counseling centers most often fulfill a specific mandate to assist students who require support for diagnosed mental health disorders. By contrast, there are few resources offered to promote mental health among the general student population. This may represent a significant gap in student services, as the majority of college students report having felt overwhelmed (86.4%), exhausted (82.1%), or very sad (62%) or lonely (59.2%) at some point during the past year of their life (ACHA, 2014). Additionally, findings from the inaugural Gallup Purdue Index report suggest that the most powerful elements linked to long-term success for college graduates are related to emotional support, but only 14% of all college students strongly agreed they had experienced each of these elements during their time in college (Busteed, 2014). In light of these findings, the office of student life at a university in the Midwest initiated a distinctive student service called *wellness coaching* through its student wellness center. The wellness coaching service is grounded in positive psychology and wellness, and has been developed with an intent to support students' ability to thrive in college by encouraging the development of healthy behaviors while promoting mental health and academic success for all students.

### **Defining Wellness Coaching**

Wellness coaching can best be described by considering the two words that comprise the title of the service both separately and together. The first word, *wellness*, refers to a multidimensional concept made up of a wide variety of components including spirituality, physical health, mental health, social relationships, and intellectual development, (Gieck & Olsen, 2007; Granello & Witmer, 2012; Myers & Sweeney, 2008). Studies of college student populations have investigated discrete elements of wellness such as spirituality (Winterowd, Harrist, Thomason, Worth, & Carozzi, 2005), mental and emotional health (Conley, Travers, & Bryant, 2013; Pritchard & Wilson, 2003; Ruthig, Marrone, Hladkyj, & Robinson-Epp, 2005), physical health (Gieck & Olsen, 2007; Waldon & Dieser, 2010), and social wellness (Pritchard & Wilson, 2003). By comparison, relatively few studies have investigated a more integrated and multidisciplinary approach to college student wellness (LaFountaine, Neisen, & Parsons, 2006).

Empirical studies employing a holistic framework for wellness most often describe overall wellness levels for particular population demographics (Myers & Sweeney, 2008). For example, Myers and Mobley (2004) distributed wellness assessments to undergraduate students (N=1567) to explore differences in wellness scores between traditional and non-traditional students. Similarly, LaFountaine, Neisen, and Parsons (2006) distributed a holistic wellness

assessment to first year college students (N=1007) to contrast the wellness of first year students with normative scores for the total undergraduate population. Findings from these studies suggested targeted wellness interventions to promote the adoption of healthy behaviors among college students. One of the most rapidly emerging paradigms on college campuses for providing this type of intervention are services focused on coaching relationships.

*Coaching*, the second word in the program title, is defined as “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential” (International Coach Federation [ICF], 2014). As coaching services have become more accepted, often as forms of individualized advising, some universities have contracted with external vendors, or used forms of coaching as a mandated intervention for targeted student populations (Dalton & Crosby, 2014; Keen, 2014). By contrast, the wellness coaching service harnesses character strengths and intrinsic motivation for change to promote students’ ability to accomplish self-selected, wellness-oriented goals. As such, it is identified as an educational intervention grounded in positive psychology (Seligman, 2007; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) that empowers students to thrive in college by promoting positive emotions, social connectedness, and academic engagement and determination (Schreiner, 2010).

By creating a unique program, rather than purchasing coaching support through a third party vendor, wellness coaching staff have been able to develop a service addressing the specific niche identified as a critical area for additional student support. Additionally, the creation and implementation of the service generated a strong collaborative partnership between academic affairs and student affairs. Faculty members from the graduate program in Higher Education and Student Affairs (HESA) contributed their expertise on student development to help shape the program while also playing a key role in recruiting students to train as coaches. Wellness coaching is provided by upper level undergraduate and graduate students, many of whom are also students in the HESA program. Their training and experience in the wellness coaching program enhances their preparation as student affairs leaders by providing transferrable skills in competencies including advising and helping, ethical professional practice, personal foundations, and student learning and development (Bresciani & Todd, 2010).

A final benefit realized by internally developing the wellness coaching service was the ability to develop customized assessments of the programmatic outcomes by retaining full access to data generated by the coaching program. The ability to tailor program assessment enables the wellness coaching staff to emphasize the institutional values that are perceived as particularly important for student development. While the purpose of the program is to support development and growth among all students participating as coaches and clients, effective outcome assessments may also begin to define a general scope of practice for coaching services to assist student affairs practitioners at many institutions in providing intentional, ethical, and responsible support to students.

### **Integrating Wellness and Positive Psychology**

Wellness coaching draws upon several theoretical foundations to support the overall validity of the program, including theories of wellness, positive psychology, motivation, and student development. Wellness refers to a multidimensional, synergistic construct oriented toward maximizing the potentiality inherent to each individual (Myers & Sweeney, 2005). Historically, the origin of the wellness philosophy is rooted in the fifth-century B.C.E. writings of Aristotle, who identified *eudaemonia* as the state of flourishing that represents the ultimate expression of each person’s ability to live well (Myers & Sweeney, 2005). The process of flourishing is often referred to as happiness, and happiness, in this sense, is meant to represent

the emotional state occurring when individuals who understand their essential nature aspire toward their desired lifestyle (Witmer, 2012). As such, the concept of eudaemonia has been formational in research agendas within wellness and positive psychology (Seligman, 2007; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) as a guiding framework for understanding optimal human functioning.

Positive psychology is referred to as “an umbrella term for theories and research about what makes life most worth living” (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004, p. 603). The emphasis upon happiness within the field has been critiqued with the suggestion that positive psychology wears “rose-colored” glasses when viewing human experience. Gable and Haidt (2005) refuted this assertion, stating that positive psychology acknowledges the struggle and suffering universal to human experience while equally emphasizing the potential for growth toward optimal functioning for each person. Positive psychology suggests we attempt to understand and resolve experiences that negatively impact human development while also studying what is good in human experience, or what makes life worth living. As such, positive psychology aligns well with the fundamental orientation of wellness theorists.

Seligman (2013) drew upon findings from positive psychology research to create a model for a life well lived. Five components were identified to constitute this model: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. Seligman (2013) used the acronym PERMA to refer to this model, and suggested that individuals who report the presence of these five components in their life are likely to be flourishing, or realizing high levels of happiness and success. The presence and ability to maintain positive emotions was foundational for the experience of flourishing, as the ways in which humans emotionally process aspects of their lives has a large impact on their overall happiness. Flourishing individuals can also identify experiences of engagement in their life. Engagement is strongly associated with the state of flow, which is described as an immersive experience where individuals participate in tasks requiring high levels of challenge and skill (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). The third element of meaningful and lasting relationships refers to the human desire for strong social connections. While the topic of relationships was not included in Seligman’s (2002) original work on authentic happiness, it was incorporated over time as studies highlighted the importance of social bonds for our overall happiness (Seligman, 2013). Flourishing also involves elements that generate a sense of meaning. Individuals who are committed to transcendent practices, ideas, and beliefs, or are engaged in purposeful pursuits, are more likely to show signs of human flourishing. The final component of PERMA is accomplishment, defined as the ability to achieve at least some valued goals viewed as important for one’s life (Seligman, 2002).

Schreiner (2010) adapted Seligman’s flourishing model for the particular developmental experience of students in settings of higher education, and referred to this new framework as the thriving model. This adaptation is intended to capture the unique dimensions comprising optimal collegiate experiences, as most positive psychology studies used findings associated with adult populations. Thriving college students are described as those who are not only “academically successful, they also experience a sense of community and a level of psychological well-being that contributes to their persistence to graduation and allows them to gain maximum benefit from being in college” (Schreiner, 2010, p. 4).

Schreiner’s (2010) model for thriving in college also contains five components: positive perspective, engaged learning, social connectedness, diverse citizenship, and academic determination. Positive perspective is described as students’ levels of optimism, especially in the face of challenges. Schreiner (2010) suggested students who possess a strong capacity for maintaining positive perspective do not have an unrealistic view of the world, but instead are

able to demonstrate resiliency and perseverance even when progress may be slow. Positive perspective is considered the foundational aspect of the thriving model, just as positive emotion is the primary element of Seligman's (2013) flourishing model.

Engaged learning refers to students who process and meaningfully connect their academic learning to their experiences outside of class. Engaged students are immersed in and energized by new knowledge, skills, and awareness. Social connectedness describes students' ability to form healthy relationships and the degree to which support networks exist for students. Diverse citizenship encompasses students' desire to make a difference in their community, as well as their openness to the diverse worldviews of others. The final element of academic determination refers to the use of time, energy, and effort towards academic goals, with the ultimate emphasis on persistence toward graduating from a degree program. Schreiner's adaptation of the flourishing model also incorporates Bean and Eaton's (2000) psychological model of retention for college students by acknowledging that the academic and social nature of college is linked to institutional fit, retention, and graduation.

The emphasis on positive psychology in wellness coaching is augmented by the integration of character strengths into the coaching process. Prior to students' first coaching session, they complete the VIA Survey of character strengths (Peterson & Park, 2009; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Character strengths refer to individual capacities for thinking, feeling, and behavior, and the results of this assessment are woven into the coaching process throughout the duration of students' engagement with the program. Strengths-based approaches to student development have shown promise on university campuses. For instance, the University of Minnesota implemented and assessed a year-long strengths-based curriculum with incoming students. The participating students completed an assessment of strengths and six hours of training on strengths during a first-year survey course. Findings indicated students developed increased confidence in identifying strengths, more accurate self-assessments of ability, integration of values in choice of major or career, more effective learning, and development of realistic expectations about the future (Stableton, Soria & Albecker, 2012).

Additional motivational theories, including Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and Motivational Interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2013) inform the stance and practice of wellness coaching. Coaches draw upon these theories to create evocative contexts for students, eliciting their own motivation for change by supporting their autonomy, competence, and relatedness. However, it is the distinctive integration of wellness and positive psychology that forms the theoretical underpinnings of the programmatic framework and provides a platform for assessing the outcomes of wellness coaching. These foundational theories complement each other and support students' ability to reframe perspectives and accomplish meaningful goals.

### **Programmatic Implementation and Staffing**

Wellness coaching uses wellness and character strengths to promote the thriving dimensions of positive perspective, social connectedness, engaged learning, and academic determination. The wellness coaching program described here utilizes a holistic model of wellness that contains nine dimensions: career, creative, emotional, environmental, financial, intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual wellness. The dimensions are conceptualized as interconnected, so stressors affecting any of these individual domains have the potential to impact wellness across multiple dimensions. As an example, challenging coursework may initially affect students' intellectual wellness as they struggle to learn and perform well academically. However, this common stressor may also impact additional wellness dimensions. For instance, this experience could affect their emotional wellness by generating negative feelings

or their physical wellness as stress can impact patterns of sleep and eating. Within the context of wellness coaching, this perspective is turned on its head. Just as stressors in any one area can diminish a student's holistic wellness, the pursuit of growth-oriented behaviors in any wellness dimension provides a means of enhancing overall wellness. Therefore, in a first session, coaches encourage students to identify focal areas of wellness for their coaching experience.

Following the selection of targeted wellness dimensions, coaches review the results of the VIA Survey (Peterson & Park, 2009; Peterson & Seligman, 2004) with clients. This is an intentional process prompting students to reframe their self-perspective from a focus on deficits to an individual who possesses strengths and inherent value. Coaches practice strength-spotting during coaching conversations to help students better perceive the role of strengths in their daily life in order to reinforce this new perception. The final component of a first session in wellness coaching is guiding students through a process of setting goals for personal wellness. At subsequent sessions, coaches facilitate open-ended conversations with students to help them make progress toward their self-identified goals while simultaneously supporting students' capacity to create the life they would prefer to be living. Coaches may augment the work occurring within the coaching sessions by providing additional resources for inter-session work (e.g. TED talks, online articles, evidence-based interventions from positive psychology). Coaches also facilitate referrals to other campus services to complement coaching in supporting students' development and accomplishment of their goals.

The wellness coaching staff is comprised of paid staff members, graduate assistants, and volunteer coaches from diverse academic disciplines. Several of the paid staff members are also licensed mental health professionals, which helps to ensure maintenance of an ethical scope of practice by all members of the coaching staff. The volunteer coaches are upper level undergraduates and graduate students who complete 12 hours of classroom learning with an extensive shadowing process where coaches-in-training co-facilitate sessions with more advanced coaching staff. Students receive training in communication skills, positive psychology, strengths facilitation, goal setting, Motivational Interviewing, referral, and self-care. All coaches meet regularly with paid members of the coaching staff for ongoing mentoring and consultation. Similar programs led by peer leaders, educators, and mentors have been shown to positively influence student engagement (Black & Voelker, 2008), feelings of support & belonging (Colvin & Ashman, 2010; Yazedjian, Purswell, Toews, & Sevin, 2007), academic performance (Astin, 1993; Landrum & Nelsen, 2002; Lewis & Lewis, 2005), and retention and persistence (Cuseo, 2010; Schwitzer & Thomas, 1998; Tinto, 2006). Therefore, coaching led by peers may be an optimal method for helping students to achieve wellness-related goals.

### **Assessment and Outcomes**

In the 2013-14 academic year, the coaching staff provided more than 650 individual coaching sessions for over 150 students. The age range for students who utilized the service was 17-43 years old. 30% of the students who attended coaching were first year undergraduates, while 25% were graduate and professional students. Demographically, wellness coaching clients closely paralleled university-wide enrollment, with 23% of clients identifying as non-white for race/ethnicity. There were two exceptions to this generalization, as the percentage of wellness coaching clients who identified as Latino/a was double the percentage of Latino/a students at the university, while the percentage of international students was about half the percentage of international students at the university. 66% of wellness coaching clients identified as female, while 34% identified as male.

The most common wellness dimensions selected as focal areas by clients were emotional (87%), social (59%), career (48%), and intellectual (46%) wellness. These findings parallel the thriving dimensions (Schreiner, 2010) as emotional wellness relates to positive perspective, social wellness with social connectedness, and career and intellectual wellness with academic determination and engaged learning. Over 80% of all participants returned for more than one coaching session, and the average duration for coaching was 3.66 sessions.

The wellness coaching service assesses programmatic outcomes based upon a survey distributed to students electronically upon completion of the coaching service. While the survey is currently administered within a short time frame (e.g. 1-2 weeks from when students complete coaching), the initial survey was delivered for the first time following the end of the 2013-14 academic year. The response rate was 20% (N=30) which indicates a reasonable sample from which to draw initial conclusions, although achieving a higher response rate is a priority for ongoing assessment.

The first set of items on the exit survey asks students to report changes in knowledge, self-awareness, and behaviors regarding wellness, strengths, and goal setting. Based upon these items, a majority of students either agreed or strongly agreed that wellness coaching had provided them with greater knowledge about, skills for, and awareness of their personal wellness (90%). In the same manner, respondents also indicated wellness coaching had enhanced their capacity for setting and achieving goals (84%), and utilizing their personal strengths (83%).

A second set of items was created to assess whether students reported greater thriving using four of the constructs identified by Schreiner (2010): positive perspective, social connectedness, academic determination, and engaged learning. Students responded to three items for each of these four areas. Examples of survey items include “Because of wellness coaching I have a greater ability to put difficult experiences in perspective” (i.e. positive perspective); “As a result of wellness coaching I feel more connected to others at the university” (i.e. social connectedness); “Because of wellness coaching, I am determined to succeed in college” (i.e. academic determination); and “I am more actively engaged with my academic work as a result of wellness coaching” (i.e. engaged learning). Overall, respondents either agreed or strongly agreed wellness coaching helped them to maintain a positive perspective (88%), enhanced their social connectedness (68%), increased their academic determination (63%), and promoted engaged learning (63%). These outcomes take on added significance in light of research that identified dispositional optimism (i.e. positive perspective), sense of belonging (i.e. social connectedness), and academic optimism (i.e. academic determination) as significant predictors of retention and persistence in college student populations (Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007; Solberg Nes, Evans, & Segerstrom, 2009).

Several open-ended items were included in the survey to elicit qualitative feedback from students. Prompts for these items included: “What was most helpful for you in the wellness coaching sessions;” “What was least helpful;” and “Are there any additional comments that you would like to share about your experience?” Three themes emerged from this set of student responses: self-discovery, navigating transitions in college, and self-acceptance.

Students described coaching as a space for self-discovery, particularly through the incorporation of strengths, which they described as transformative for their experience. For instance, one response stated, “wellness coaching aimed at helping you discover what type of person you are and how you can improve any area of your life. Instead of information being fed to you about ‘what you should do,’ the sessions lead to self-discovery and unleashed the confidence through your strengths that you didn’t know you had!” Students also reported

making use of wellness coaching to navigate transitions in their college experience. These statements were included from students in all stages of the college experience, from first year students who used coaching to adjust to college to graduate students who attended coaching to address concerns related to professional identity development. An example of navigating transitions can be seen in the response, “Wellness coaching has helped me work through very confusing situations, situations that I had heard about other people experiencing before but had no idea how to navigate in my own life. I am more self-aware and self-confident and self-empowered because of my wellness coaching experience.” The final theme that emerged from the qualitative feedback was self-acceptance. Students reported the emotional support they received through wellness coaching resulted in a radical shift in their perspective toward themselves. For instance, one student stated “discovering my strengths with a firm foundation and encouragement from the coaches was overall what helped me. It allowed me to see myself from others perspectives and gave me a lot of confidence. With this confidence and encouragement, I found my place [in college].”

### **Limitations**

The Wellness Coaching program is currently entering the second year of providing peer-based support services grounded in positive psychology, strengths, and wellness. Initial data from the first year of programmatic implementation suggest this approach has been successful in providing a meaningful service for supporting students’ ability to engage, persist, succeed, and thrive in their collegiate experience. However, there are several limitations to our programmatic assessment. The first limitation is the sample size for the first set of data. The gap between service provision and assessment resulted in a less robust response rate than desired. Also, while the demographic characteristics of the students who utilized this service is largely representative of the overall enrollment of the institution where this study was conducted, we do not assume these characteristics are equally representative of student populations at other institutions. Therefore, caution should be exercised before generalizing any findings from this study.

### **Future Directions**

At this point in time, the Wellness Coaching program has only explored four of the five aspects of Schreiner’s (2010) thriving model. This is because the initial iteration for wellness coaching was not designed to directly address the construct of diverse citizenship, and does not actively encourage students to engage their community or to accept the diverse viewpoints of others. As it stands, coaching provides students with a space for exploring the person they hope to become and the life they want to create for themselves. Future developments include integrating diverse citizenship into the coaching process. One possibility for doing so is to expand the scope of the goal setting process in coaching by asking students to consider both, “What is the life you want to live?,” and also, “What kind of world do you want to live in?” This shift in perspective may prompt students to explore their ability to thrive individually while also contributing to the movement toward thriving communities.

The outcomes associated with wellness coaching seem to suggest a close alignment between students’ descriptions of their experience and the student development theory of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Therefore, a second future direction is to explore self-authorship as a conceptual framework for understanding the experience of students in wellness coaching. Although more work is needed to explore this connections, students may utilize wellness coaching because the external formulas that have guided their lives to this point are no longer sufficient to make meaning of their current experiences (Baxter Magolda, 2009). Students at these transitional crossroads face significant challenges to their sense of

self and their hopes for the future. The relationships established in wellness coaching may facilitate self-authorship by providing holding environments where students can cultivate, nurture, and ultimately act upon their internal voices. The use of character strengths may support this process by challenging students to view themselves from a new, appreciative perspective, which can gently alter identities rooted in deficit perspectives. The coaches' use of Motivational Interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2013) to evoke the student's own motivation for making changes in their life supports their autonomy in making decisions and taking action, while building competence for facing challenges throughout life. Further exploration is needed to more fully integrate this theory into an understanding of the wellness coaching process.

One final future direction is to assess the role that training, mentoring, and provision of wellness coaching has upon the personal and professional development of the student coaches. A process is in place to conduct a qualitative inquiry to better understand the experience of students who provide wellness coaching for others, which may generate important data, particularly for rising professionals within the field of higher education and student affairs.

### Summary

Numerous organizations and research studies support the promotion of healthy behaviors on college campuses. Particular emphasis is currently directed toward promoting student mental health as a way to encourage academic success and lifelong well-being. Wellness coaching, a service grounded in positive psychology and wellness theory represents one innovative approach to address this need, while also preparing future generations of leaders with transferable skills contributing to personal and professional development. The goal of wellness coaching is to help students thrive (Schreiner, 2010), academically, socially, and emotionally. Initial findings from program assessment support wellness coaching as a distinctive model that is worthy of consideration on many university campuses as an effective and additive component of student support.

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# Measuring What Matters: A Case Study of Measurement Development Methods for Institutionally Identified Student Learning Outcomes

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## Abstract

*Divisions of student affairs are impacted by an increased demand for accountability and the assessment of student learning in the co-curricular must be addressed. This study documented the measurement development processes for a student affairs division at a large, urban research institution. The research question for this study was: What processes did departments within a division of student affairs at a large urban research university use to develop assessment measures of student learning outcomes? A case study of a student affairs division from a large metropolitan area in the mid-western United States (MMU, a four-year high research university) was conducted for academic year 2012-2013. In the year of this study, there were eight departments within the Division of Student Affairs at MMU; six of which participated. The methods employed in this study included: interviews of leadership within the Division of Student Affairs and document analysis of 34 instruments. A significant contribution of this study was the identification of the development methods used for assessment instruments across a division intended to measure institutionally defined student learning outcomes. Findings from this study include themes of resources and timing for development. The study assists in understanding implications for practice, including the resources divisions of student affairs need to address accountability to constituents.*

*Keywords:* assessment, case study, division of student affairs, measurement development, student learning outcomes (SLO)

Institutions need to know now, not only how well, but to what extent they are achieving their educational intentions (Maki, 2010). Erwin and Wise (2002) assert, “higher education is beyond the question of whether assessment should exist and is now asking how it can yield greater benefits for students and society” (p. 67). Student affairs divisions, as an explicit example area within higher education, are impacted by this increased demand for accountability. As prior trends of simple satisfaction surveys fall out of favor, there is a move towards more reliable measures of student learning, success, and achievement of institutional goals (Schuh, 2009). Effectively measuring student affairs’ contributions toward co-curricular experience outcomes has traditionally been challenging, yet shifts toward measuring learning have become more evident since the call for reform in student affairs measurement (Breciani, Zelna, & Anderson, 2004; Doyle, 2004; Green, Jones, & Alois, 2008; Keeling, 2004).

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand how an incorporation of institutional mission and learning outcomes is evident in assessment activities within a student affairs division. Specifically, this study evaluates assessment measures of one campus, through evaluating the development process of measures aligned to the institutionally defined student learning outcomes (SLOs). The aim of this study is to address the research question, “What processes

did departments within a division of student affairs at a large urban research university use to develop items assessment measures of student learning outcomes?"

### **Measurement Development and Outcomes Assessment Literature**

Today, expectations for student affairs assessment are high and have significantly changed over the past several years from satisfaction and utilization-based results to SLOs and effectiveness (American College Personnel Association, 1996; Bresciani et al., 2004; Doyle, 2004; Green, et al., 2008; Keeling, 2004). Improvements in the practices of student affairs arguably ought to consider how the division provides for student learning and how assessment data informs knowledge about the impact to student success (Bresciani, Gardner, & Hickmott, 2009b). Literature further asserts a necessity for assessment in student affairs identical to assessment for all higher education programs (ACPA, 1996; Blimling, Whitt, & Associates, 1999; CAS, 2011; Keeling, 2004; Schuh & Upcraft, 2001; Upcraft & Schuh, 1996). A rich and descriptive literature regarding assessment practices in student affairs provides focus on the necessity, types, and use of assessment as well as effective recommendations, examples of institutions' practice, and the strengths and pitfalls of assessment (Bresciani, 2006; Schuh & Associates, 2009; Schuh & Upcraft, 2001; Strayhorn, 2006; Upcraft & Schuh, 1996; Upcraft, 2003). However, the methods of instrument design from an empirical lens is not approached in this work.

Student affairs outcomes assessment literature covers how assessment should be done, but little is related to what is being done (Bresciani, Gardner, & Hickmott, 2009a; Upcraft, 2003; Upcraft & Schuh, 1996). Student affairs divisions have been shown to have planning toward assessment (Woodard, Hyman, von Destinon, & Jamison, 1991) and are dependent on local-development measures (Green et al., 2008). It is known smaller institutional practices are intentioned toward institutional mission contributions, but management and support of contributions may be low (Doyle, 2004). Literature also demonstrates perceptions and attitudes, leadership, and accreditation affect the use of assessment (Seagraves & Dean, 2010). However, the actual processes at institutional and divisional levels involved in each study reported were not provided; therefore, processes of assessment development remain unclear.

Divisions of student affairs have demonstrated they should assess and report impact on SLOs, but collaborations for development often do not exist across departments, let alone have a connection toward larger institutional outcomes (Green, 2006). Additionally, student affairs in small school contexts have broadly looked at how they are using resources toward institutional missions, yet are not measuring their contribution to the mission or student outcomes (Ashley-Pauley, 2012). Missing from this body of literature was an application of program efforts giving attention to nuanced, richer understandings of division-wide impacts toward measures and divisional contributions toward an institution's mission through measure development.

### **Research Design and Context for the Study**

This study is an inquiry of the interaction between a student affairs division and its department units' assessment processes. Case study methodology is valuable when investigating a process (Creswell, 2005; Glesne, 1999; Yin, 2003). Mid-Western Metropolitan University (MMU) was selected as the specific instrumental case (Creswell, 2005) for examination because the institution had established campus-wide SLOs adopted by the Division of Student Affairs. The university is located in a large mid-west metropolitan area and is designated as a four-year, high research activity campus with high undergraduate enrollment by Carnegie classification. For the year of the study, the student population at MMU was 71.76% undergraduate and

28.24% graduate students. The ethnic breakdown was 70.64% White, 21.68% Minority and 5.51% International students.

### **MMU Division of Student Affairs**

The Division of Student Affairs at MMU was comprised of eight departments providing an array of wide-ranging services, programs, and activities. The focus at the time of the study for the division was on community building supportive of learning and success, increased student engagement, and promoted persistence to graduation. With over 80 employees (including graduate-employees), the division oversaw residential life, student leadership and activities, and health, wellness, recreation, and counseling facilities (see Table 1). Divisional level administration included a Director of Assessment who was in the role for six years.

**Table 1.** Brief descriptions of departments in MMU's Division of Student Affairs

<b>Department*</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>
Campus Recreation	Offered recreational opportunities, fitness programs, and intramural sports; promoted fitness while developing leadership, understanding, and respect.
Counseling and Psychological Services	Offered confidential counseling and support.
Dean of Students Office	Provided student advocacy, parent/family programs, and first-year programs to enhance student transitions.
Office of Student Leadership and Engagement	Provided experiences in leadership, organizations, social justice education, civic engagement, and community service events/programs.
Student Conduct and Judicial Affairs	Promoted student rights a civil learning environment.
Student Health Center	Health care to treat common to chronic illnesses.
Student Residential Life	Provided living options, activities, and residential learning communities.
University Union	Central to campus life served as a student, faculty, and staff one-stop destination.

*Note.* \*Institution, departments, and/or division names and the description may have been changed in order to protect confidentiality

### **Data Collection**

All eight departments were solicited to participate in the study. One department never responded to requests and a second declined participation. The remaining six departments were University Union, Campus Recreation, Dean of Students Office, Student Residential Life, Office of Student Leadership and Engagement, and Student Conduct and Judicial Affairs.

The primary sample used was departmental leadership. Participating department directors answered specific questions about each measure used during academic year 2012-2013, and were bound by that year, using retrospective interview techniques (Fetterman, 1989). Interview questions were structured for comparisons across participants to uncover the selection and processes of developing measures. The telephone interviews used 12 questions piloted prior to the study. Each interview ranged from 35 minutes to one hour and were

recorded, thoroughly noted, and data was member checked (Creswell, 2005; Glense, 1999). The interview data were analyzed to articulate the process of measurement development.

### **Data Analysis**

Interview data was organized by thematic data analysis using a deductive process (Creswell, 2005) where themes and coding structure were based on literature about measurement design, assessment, and outcomes. The final analysis utilized mapping of any shared patterns, behaviors, and ways of thinking drawn on interviewees' understanding of the processes. The principal investigator performed all coding and performed a coding check to ensure reliability in charted themes.

The researcher's primary ethical consideration in this study was to preserve respect for persons involved and to protect the privacy of participants. This study was approved by an Institutional Review Board and received a letter of support from MMU. Participants interviewed received and signed informed consent documents prior to beginning interviewing. In addition, participants' privacy was protected by removing or masking items in interview responses or measurement instruments containing personal or departmental identifiable information.

## **Findings**

### **Departmental Measure Development**

Student Residential Life (SRL) used a total of five measures during academic year 2012-2013. None of the measures used by SRL had items assigned institutionally defined SLOs by the department or third-party, as the interview disclosed measures were used for program improvement. Based on the interview with leadership of SRL, none of the measures were initially created to measure institutionally defined SLOs.

The Dean of Students (DOS) used a total of two measures during the academic year 2012-2013. The process utilized included two pre-existing measures inherited when programs joined the newly formed department. The interviewee disclosed not being certain of the critical choices made during the measure development. During the interview, it was also determined surveys were distributed on paper forms. The interviewee further mentioned no measures had items aligned to institutionally defined SLOs. Leadership from DOS stated both measures were designed to measure program effectiveness from the student participant perspective.

The University Union (UU) used a total of two measures during academic year 2012-2013. According to the staff member who created one measure, the approach centered around, "the information (gained from the survey) was practical versus if there was alignment (in the measure toward [SLO]s)." It is important to note, the staff member was looking at institutional SLOs in their daily work. Therefore, even though UU did not assign items to SLOs, modifications may have been affected by the existence of them. "We definitely did modify the standard training survey that had been used [the year before], and I would say if the [SLO]s came in play, at all, they were in the background." In contrast, the second measure, Manager SLO Self-Assessment, was created with intentionality towards measuring SLOs of facility's student staff. This measure was developed in-house with UU staff resources and division assessment leadership consultation. The measure was developed the year before and modified only editorially during the year of the study. This measure was implemented as a part of manager evaluation processes and initially crafted to measure institutional SLOs.

The office of Student Leadership and Engagement (SLE) used a total of 25 measures during academic year 2012-2013. With one exception, processes of measure development for this department were rooted in institutionally defined SLOs. According to leadership in SLE, "We have been reporting for five years on outcomes from our leadership program and what we

were doing.” This length of time and commitment to measuring SLOs can be seen in processes the department used in developing measures. When discussing processes for program areas, leadership in SLE office said:

The creation of the instrument differs by program area. Most of what I work with for my programs is paper instruments created by our staff, looking at the goals and what we are trying to accomplish with the program. Then we would look at the connected [SLO]s and finding the questions that relate to that.

### Overall Division of Student Affairs Measure Development

The resources departments used to develop the measures is summarized in Figure 1.

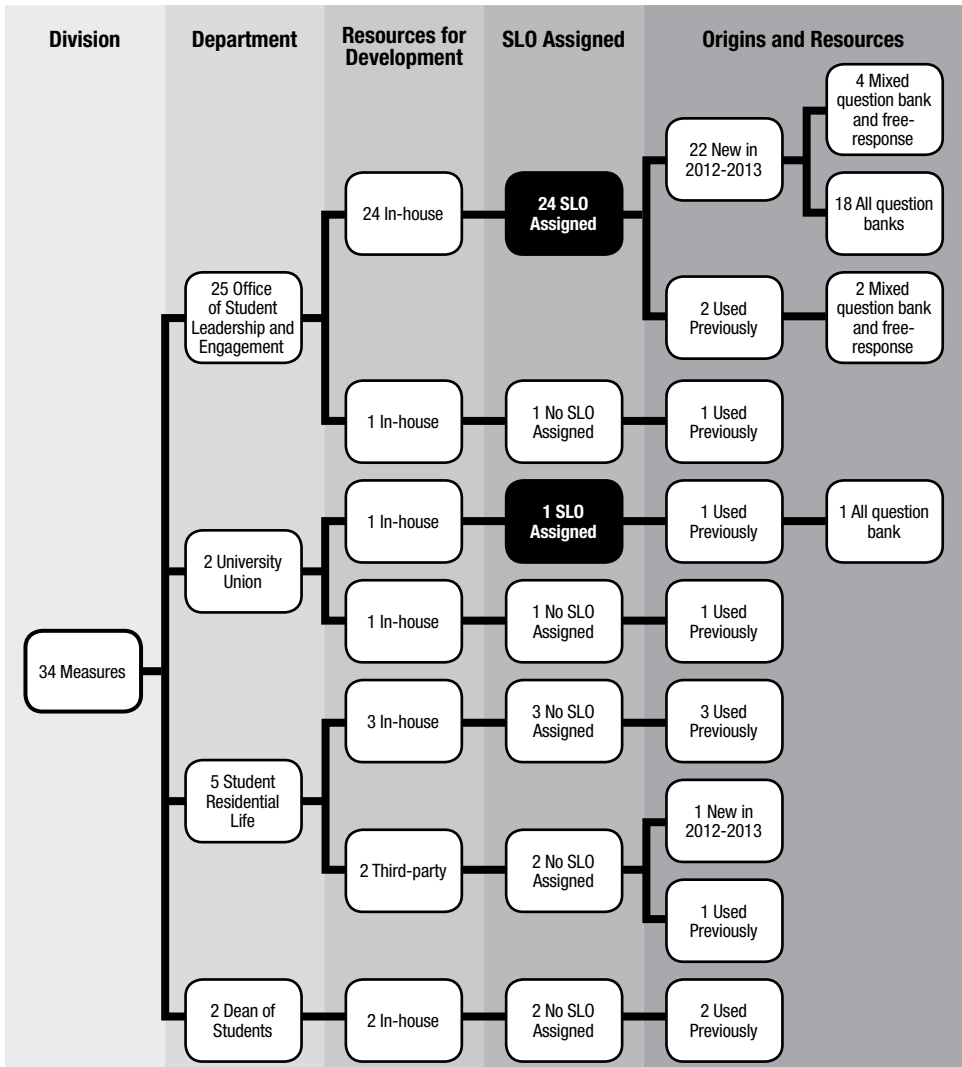


Figure 1. MMU Measure Development Themes. This charts depicts counts of measures by department, resources used, and SLO assignment.



Of the 34 measures used across departments, 94% (n=32) of the measures were created in-house (i.e. by a member of the Division of Student Affairs at MMU). Of the 32 in-house developed measures, 23 utilized the division resources (including a division developed pool of questions or the division assessment director) while nine did not. The two remaining measures were created by a third party (i.e. another division at MMU or a vendor) (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Summary of timing of measure development and resources used by department

	Timing of Development			Resources Used		
	Recycled	Altered	New	In-house	Third-party	Division
University Union (UU)	x		x	x		x
Student Leadership and Engagement (SLE)	x	x	x	x		x
Student Residential Life (SRL)	x		x	x	x	
Dean of Students (DOS)	x			x		

The pre-existing (i.e. measured used in previous years without modification) or in-house (i.e. local developed) measures constituted 20.59% (7 of 34) of total measures in the Division of Student Affairs at MMU. In all seven cases, these measures can be characterized as repeated from a previous year without regard to institutionally defined SLOs. The division utilized two measures developed by a third-party. Similarly, these items were developed without intention to measure institutionally defined SLOs; noting one of the two measures was repeated from previous years.

In looking further at the 25 measures with items assigned institutionally defined SLOs by departments, neither the DOS nor the SRL is represented. Of these 25 measures, one of the measures was from the UU and the remaining 24 were from the SLE. Both departments used the division resources for the 25 measures with alignment to the institutionally defined learning outcomes. Of these measures, seven of the measures were modified for the year of the study, and 18 were created new for the year of the study. A total measure count and the process of alignment of items were address earlier, and the total measure breakdown and items with SLOs assignments are given in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Total measure count by department with number of measures with and without items assigned to institutionally defined SLOs

	Total Measures	Total Measures	
		With items assigned	Without items assigned
University Union	2	1	1
Office of Student Leadership and Engagement	25	24	1
Student Residential Life	5	0	5
Dean of Students	2	0	2
Campus Recreation	0	0	0
Student Conduct and Judicial Affairs	0	0	0
Total	34	25	9

Of the 34 measures utilized by the division, 32 surveys were developed in-house by staff members with varying degrees of division input. Two third-party developed surveys were used to evaluate the program or department and were not validated measures intended to measure student learning. Twenty five (out of 34) measures had items for which departments assigned SLOs; the remaining nine measures had no SLO assignments. Of these 25 measures, 22 were created new in the 2012-2013 year. Three previously used measures were modified during the year. All 25 measures included some SLO developed items or mirrored the bank of questions provided by divisional assessment leadership.

### Discussion of Findings

The central themes for the processes in development of measures emerged focused on the resources departments utilized and timing of measure development. Specifically, resources departments across the Division of Student Affairs at MMU used were in-house resources, third-party developed measures, and instruments developed with input from the divisional assessment expert. The three types of timing in the measure development were to recycle, alter, or start a new measure. The sections below discuss these findings with respect to relevant literature.

#### Resources

The use and stewardship of resources toward the mission of an institution to effectively achieve institution mission and goals is critical in sustaining best practices in student affairs (ACPA & NASPA, 1997; Ashley-Pauley, 2012). The current study found resources as a primary theme in the development of the measures used. One sub-theme of resources used included survey measures developed in-house, the most prominent across departments within the Division of Student Affairs at MMU. Upcraft and Schuh (1996) maintained, “local assessment studies will have the desired impact of demonstrating the worth of student services and programs and ensuring their survival” (p. 10). Of the 34 measures presented in this study by the division, staff members developed 32 surveys with varying degrees of input at the division-level. This finding is similar to the findings of Green et al. (2008) that the most commonly reported assessment method for divisions of student affairs was locally developed surveys. However, Palomba and Banta (1999) cautioned, “locally developed instruments can take a great deal of time to construct and may provide results that are difficult to interpret” (p. 100). Further, while results from locally-developed instruments “provide us with the richest information about the efficacy of our own educational practices”, they must also be validated (Maki, 2004, p. 94). This stresses the importance of validity, which would lead to a consideration of using outsourced or third-party instruments to measure student learning. Of importance to note, all of the measures were collected via paper format and none of the measures used collected student level data. Therefore, the division was not able to get a better understanding of learning across a student as they navigate in and out of the Division of Student Affairs.

The second sub-theme, third-party developed surveys, was consistent with two instruments in use during the 2012-2013 academic year for the Division of Student Affairs at MMU. It is important to note neither instrument was intended to measure student learning. Student Residential Life was the only department reported to use this method, and it is noted measures were program assessments used solely for evaluation. *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs* (ACPA & NASPA, 1997) emphasizes systematic inquiry to improve student and institutional performance, which was not the case with these measures. The use of measures across time, as in the third-party Facility Survey, can help with a clear understanding of performance and demonstrates systemic purpose; however, this study was not able to determine the motives for this practice.

The third and final sub-theme of resources used for the development of measures was input from the divisional assessment expert. Of the 34 measures used in the Division of Student Affairs at MMU, 25 were developed with divisional guidance in some form. Divisional leadership directed the development of a bank of questions as a resource for the departments, which resulted in some of the department's assignment and measuring SLOs in all 25 of these measures. Scholars agree SLOs should be measurable, meaningful, realistic, and ongoing and in alignment with the institutional mission (Bresciani et al., 2009b; Huba & Freed, 2000; Maki, 2004). Measures aligned to the institutional mission were possible at MMU because resources focused on the overall divisional contribution to student learning. Further, this finding supports previous assertions that divisional leadership's emphasis on assessment affects the use of assessment for student affairs (Green et al., 2008; Seagraves & Dean, 2010).

Missing from this central theme and sub-themes for the division are the use of broader institutional resources or collaborations and larger validated measures for student learning in the development of measures. Collaborations between student affairs staff and colleagues across the institution to plan for and foster student learning are important (ACPA, 1996). A single department, Student Residential Life, had a collaborative assessment measure, Service with Distinction, piloted by Finance and Administration, indicating a move toward this practice. Further, Student Leadership and Engagement specified, for the year following the study, work with faculty on measuring student learning was beginning to take shape. Kuh and Banta (2000) elaborate collaborations must be drawn upon in order to create environments where student learning is pervasive. With the exception of the two mentioned examples, collaboration was absent in the findings for this study. Given the history and institutional culture of SLOs at MMU, it could be expected more collaborations would be evident in the work of the Division of Student Affairs. However, based on the findings for this current study, this lack of collaboration on the development of measures of student learning is common and remains undocumented at the department level. This finding provides an opportunity for leadership in student affairs to be aware of the nature of collaborations and impacts toward measuring student learning in ways tandem to academic partners.

### **Timing of Measure Development**

From the 34 measures used in the 2012-1013 academic year, 11 of the measures were used before the year of the study. Of these, 23 measures were new. In the remaining 11, eight were recycled and used without modifications, while three were altered and used with modifications. The eight recycled measures also were not assigned SLOs by the departments. Outcomes assessment is an active and cyclical process requiring attention to measures used (Bresciani et al., 2004; Bresciani et al., 2009; Huba & Freed, 2000; Maki, 2010). The recycled measures occurred more often in departments where staff had responsibility for the area years before the study or the measure came with the program (the former for Student Leadership and Engagement and the later was the case of the Dean of Students). This finding is similar to Seagraves and Dean (2010), who identified tenure of staff or their buy-in toward assessment of SLOs confounded the theme of previously used measures.

In both altered and new groups for the 2012-2013 academic year, the assigning of institutionally defined SLOs was connected to the measure development process (with the exception of the pilot of the Service with Distinction survey). By altering existing measures or tailoring newly created measures to align with institutional goals, the division made an explicit attempt to demonstrate how student affairs contributed to overall attainment of these goals. This finding is analogous to Doyle's (2004) conclusion that student affairs primarily engages in assessment to demonstrate contribution on an institutional level. The primary

purpose for 25 measures (22 new and 3 altered) was to assign and measure SLOs. Based on this outcome, it is recognized that measuring institutional outcomes was a priority for the Division of Student Affairs at MMU. However, this is contrary to Green's (2006) findings of a lack of use of institutional outcomes for divisions of student affairs. For the case of MMU and the pervasive culture of SLOs, there was a distinct opportunity for the Division of Student Affairs to move toward institutional contributions Doyle (2004) called for, yet Green (2006) was not able to document.

Another sub-theme to the altered and newly created measures was the use of divisional resources for these specific measures. As mentioned in the resources used in measure development, the division-wide bank of questions and working with the division assessment professional was central to identification of SLOs for 25 measures. The altered or newly developed measures are the same 25 measures, creating an interconnection between resources used and timing for measure development. This finding is related to a conclusion in Green (2006) where divisions with an assessment expert created an environment receptive to measuring SLOs. The findings in this study support having competency available for assessment and evaluation increases the measuring of the impact of student affairs toward student learning.

### **Implications for Practice**

A major contribution of this work for student affairs is in the area of data collection methods on student learning. As a field, student affairs is not moving quickly enough to capture the holistic picture of student learning occurring outside the classroom. Yet, the internal and external pressures to demonstrate student learning contributions through institutional outcomes are progressive and rapidly growing. As Schuh (2013) extols, "the extent to which [student affairs] contribute[s] to student learning will solidify their role in the university" (p. 93). This study has highlighted a need for data collection practices to include student-level data across a division as an approach to solidify student affairs' contribution to student learning. Resources must be devoted to improve business practices for student affairs to include data gathering solutions and contributions to data in a shared and collaborative form.

Another implication for practice is the need for standardization in measuring student outcomes. There must be accountability to the institution for outcomes of students' participation in the departments of student affairs; yet to date, student affairs cannot uniformly respond to that call. The addition of same or similar measures, items, or tools for measuring student outcomes must come soon. This commitment, however, cannot be done in a vacuum. The current practices within academic affairs and in the K-12 sectors of education must help inform best practices and guide the measuring of learning for student affairs as a field.

Assessment practices need to move in pace with goals and initiatives for the division and institution was also a finding in this work. Alteration of measures already in use at MMU demonstrates positive consequences of moving in partnership where departments can continue a practice while aligning to institutional priorities. Additionally, this data also demonstrate a practice, for variety of reasons (i.e. staff departures), where measures are consistently reused, irrespective of new institutional goals. In everyday practice, the work done in assessing SLOs must be in tandem with these goals. For student affairs to remain relevant to students and the institution, it is important to understand broader goals and continually realign efforts without losing sight of efforts already in place (ACPA & NASPA, 1997; Huba & Freed, 2000; Maki, 2010; Palomba & Banta, 1999).

This study highlights competency needs in assessment and instrument design, particularly given the reliance on in-house developed measures. Assessment and evaluation professional

development opportunities and curriculum for student affairs preparations were addressed by NASPA & ACPA (2010) in a joint effort to underscore this need for training on instrument development for professionals. There are implications for divisions of student affairs to regularly assess the competency of staff and provide opportunities for continual growth in areas of assessment and evaluation. Further, educational programs for future student affairs professionals should consider this need, and how their programs are addressing this issue (e.g. coursework on assessment and instrument design).

Another implication for practice this study brought to bear is the need for internal measurement development tracking. The leadership within departments and divisions of student affairs need to document major decisions made in development processes in order have accurate records. Further, as professionals navigate across institutions, predecessors and owners of measurement development should be held accountable. In other words, departments should be obligated to provide notes and clear paths of decisions made so successive leaders can continue to further the work already in progress. This might be addressed if institutions move toward electronic data collection and away from paper forms that rarely collect student level data with accuracy.

This study emphasized collaboration across an institution whether with faculty, possessing research expertise, or staff in institutional research may be an underutilized resource. Leadership within departments and divisions of student affairs must seek out resources on their respective campuses toward improvement for learning. For MMU, there was dedicated assessment expertise as a divisional resource. As this is not always the case for institutions, divisions of student affairs must find ways to be creative while continuing to further the measurement of student learning occurring outside the classroom. Further, utilization of collaborations will help in alignment of the goals of a student affairs division with institution goals.

Student affairs professionals have found themselves participating in institutional conversation as their local culture has shifted to one of assessment and evidence (Shefman, 2014). To that end, ultimately this work has opened a call to student affairs to increasingly measure SLOs in direct ways. Meaningful participation in institutional discussions demands divisions of student affairs carefully attend to the development of valid and reliable items for measuring student learning. Such efforts are likely to pay important dividends given the field's integral contribution to the larger frame of student success across an institution and in all of higher education. This current study highlights the time is now for the field of student affairs to step up to the call for accountability toward measuring student learning.

### **Limitations**

This study is intentionally limited to a specific student affairs division at a large, urban research institution. This sampling frame is appropriate for this study, however, it does not look at more than a single academic year. Therefore, there may be some limitation in longer term understanding of processes of measurement development and the implications after the study time-frame. Further, this work only provides a model to understand what the process of measure development and SLO alignment may look like and is not comprehensive as case study work is limited in generalizability (Creswell, 2005). This study is not intended to be a step-by-step guide in creating assessment practices that may, or may not align to institutional-level SLOs. More investigation taken on the processes of instrument development and outcome can inform practice and move divisions and institutions forward in how to address similar issues.

Social desirability of staff members responsible for developing the processes of their assessment measures, especially within the context of public accountability presented in the introduction to this study, is a limitation to consider. Given assessment is a controversial and impactful topic, participants may be more interested in responding in a way that may not accurately reflect their practice. Further, the researcher was an unknown party, located in the southwest having no previous interaction with the institution, to the interviewees and had no connection to staff professionally or personally. This intentionality in design may have helped reduce some of the need to appear socially desirable.

### **Future Research**

In light of these limitations, recommendations for future research is to grow the understanding of processes for incorporating institutional mission and SLOs in assessment activities within student affairs. A study of current practices that clearly documents processes as they occur would be ideal. The collection of drafts measures and meeting notes about measures will give a more fine grained understanding of the major decisions being made, at the time decisions are made. Further, learners arrive at knowing through the accumulation and construction of knowledge. Therefore, it is recommended to collect data across multiple departments within a student affairs division using standard items traceable to the student level. Longer term research collecting data across years of student engagement in learning activities outside the classroom that were beyond the scope of this project would be a next step in understanding co-curricular learning.

### **Conclusion**

The literature asserts a necessity for assessment in student affairs identical to assessment for all higher education programs (ACPA, 1996; Schuh & Upcraft, 2001; Upcraft & Schuh, 1996). It is evident, based on the findings of this study, there is more progress to be made. As a practice, student affairs needs to move away from self-reported survey data and toward multi-faceted direct measures of student learning. The current body of literature supports an understanding of how assessment in student affairs has evolved, addresses the practical application of assessment practices, and provides anecdotes as to what divisions have done to shift toward a culture of assessment. This work adds to a more fine-grained understanding of steps undertaken in the measurement of co-curricular student learning and moves the field toward understanding progress made.

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## **Partnering for a Purpose: Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, and a Common Reading Program**

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### **Abstract**

*For more than a decade, scholars and practitioners have called for collaboration in higher education between student affairs and academic affairs. Common reading programs, in which one book is selected and read by various university populations, are now standard features of the first-year experience on many campuses. With the potential for helping to engage and retain students, a common reading program is an excellent vehicle for collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs. Such a partnership is beneficial for both divisions as they bring together their expertise and talents for the increase of student learning. This article describes the creation of “Common Book/Common World,” a voluntary common reading program at “Coastal University” through a partnership between student affairs and academic affairs. The highlights and challenges experienced during the 2013-2014 inaugural year of the program are explored along with lessons learned and implications for future practice and research.*

*Keywords:* academic affairs and student affairs partnership, academic affairs and student affairs collaboration, common reading program

Researchers have been writing about the need for collaboration between academic and student affairs for over a decade (Frost, Strom, Downey, Schultze, & Holland, 2010; Kezar, Hirsch, & Burack, 2001; Schroeder, 1999, 2004; Whitt, Nesheim, Guentzel, Kellog, McDonald & Wells, 2008). Additionally, there is now a body of literature about common reading programs (Anderson, 2006; Daugherty & Hayes, 2012; Ferguson, 2006; Laufgraben, 2006; Liljequist & Stone, 2009; Straus & Daley, 2002). Collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs in initiating and maintaining a common reading program holds the promise of creating what Kuh (1996) has called “a seamless learning environment” (p. 136). Such an environment provides co-curricular experiences so that what the student learns in class is supported and enhanced by what is learned out of class and vice-versa. A common reading program in which students read and discuss a particular book, as well as participate in complementary events such as lectures, film screenings, and service activities helps make learning multi-dimensional, increasing the likelihood of student engagement and persistence.

“Coastal University” (CU), located on the Gulf Coast, enrolls over 15,000 students. This article describes the collaboration between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs at CU to create and implement a voluntary common reading program.

### **Literature Review**

Common reading programs, also referred to as summer reading programs, common book programs, or one book programs, are well-established features of the first-year experience at many universities and serve to help socialize new students and introduce them to the intellectual endeavors typical of college study (Ferguson, 2006; Laufgraben, 2006). A common

intellectual experience is among the high-impact educational practices described by Kuh (2008) which positively influence student engagement and success. Research has shown a connection between common reading programs and academic achievement which is independent of student high school achievement and aptitude (Daugherty & Hayes, 2012).

In some cases, institutions create their common reading programs for the entire university community rather than exclusively for freshmen. While a freshman common reading program is typically designed for the fall semester only, a university-wide common reading program may extend throughout the entire academic year. At its most basic, a common reading program has students read a selected book and discuss it with their peers and instructors. However, as Laufgraben (2006) has noted, some programs “have grown to include library exhibits, film series, theatrical performance, and grant-funded faculty development experiences” (p. ix).

Previous research has documented the process of selecting a common book in terms of the difficulty of coming to agreement on a title (Segal, 2011), as well as using student development theory to guide the creation of a common book selection committee (Nadelson & Nadelson, 2012). Lowery-Hart and Campbell (2008) wrote about connecting a common reading program with a study abroad experience.

The call for more extensive assessment of common reading programs is repeated in the literature (Anderson, 2006; Grenier, 2007; Liljequist & Stone, 2009). That call is answered by an increase in studies examining particular aspects of such programs in order to assess them. A 2008 study by Mallard, Lowery-Hart, Andersen, Cuevas, and Campbell found that female students responded more strongly and positively to a common reading program. In an effort to attain qualitative data from students participating in a common reading program, Lee, Jie, and Williams (2010) reported on the use of reflective journals. Additionally, Drumheller, Gerlich, and Mallard (2012) have measured changes in student ethnocentrism associated with a common reading program.

### **Book Selection and Program Background**

Coastal University’s (CU) initial book selection for its common reading program reflected current events. On October 1-2, 2012, PBS television aired a two-part documentary *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, (Chermayeff, 2012) based on the book of the same name by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn (2009). The documentary illustrated issues that plague females: maternal mortality, lack of education, gender-based violence, and lack of economic opportunity. On October 9, 2012, the Taliban boarded a school bus in Pakistan and shot a 14-year-old female student, Malala Yousafzai, in retaliation for her activism for the education of girls. The urgency of the issues facing women identified in the *Half the Sky* documentary followed by the vicious attack on Malala galvanized CU employees to “do something.”

In mid-October 2012, a small group of faculty, administrators, and Student Affairs professionals gathered to screen a portion of the *Half the Sky* documentary. In discussion afterward, the question arose of how to engage the interest of students in considering critical issues such as those raised in the film. Several individuals expressed that they were unaware of problems described in the documentary which women and girls face, such as obstetric fistulas and female genital mutilation. The challenge facing the group became how to create awareness of and thoughtful conversation about these problems among the Coastal University community. One suggestion was to host several screenings of the documentary on campus. Another was to implement a common reading program with “Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide,” as the initial book selection. This

suggestion generated enthusiasm and excitement among the group members. Several of these individuals were familiar with common reading programs, having participated in them at their previous institutions.

Out of this initial meeting a planning committee was formed of individuals across campus in support of a common reading program at CU. The establishment of common reading programs as a method to encourage student learning and engagement as well as the potential for a meaningful partnership between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs motivated the committee to propose a “Common Book/Common World” (CB/CW) program to the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Deans Council. In an effort increase support for the program, the planning committee agreed to propose the CB/CW as voluntary, rather than required.

### **Proposing the Program**

The proposal for the CB/CW program included a brief overview of the research on common reading programs and their inclusion in first-year experiences at many universities. The proposed CB/CW was characterized as a voluntary program for all Coastal University students, particularly first-year freshmen, that aimed to: (a) develop a more sophisticated understanding of values and ethics; (b) gain an understanding of how to make an impact in society; (c) engage in academic discourse and critical thinking; and (d) create a sense of community among students, faculty, staff, and the greater metropolitan area. Program goals were “to foster connections, involvement, and engaged learning through events related to the book and intentional curricular connections” (Carr, Delmas, & Harrell, 2013). The proposal also identified the ways in which the CB/CW supported the university’s strategic plan and emphasized that the program would demonstrate a partnership between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. A list of peer institutions in the state using common reading programs was provided along with information about the length of time each program had been in place. Further, the names of institutions which had selected “Half the Sky” as a common book were shared. The CB/CW planning committee acknowledged that this proposed program was different from typical common reading programs in two ways: incoming freshmen were not required to read the book as part of a first-year experience, and the book for the inaugural year of the program had already been selected.

The CB/CW program was approved by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Deans Council with two stipulations: (a) a steering committee be constituted with co-chairship representing Student Affairs and Academic Affairs; and (b) no budget would be provided.

### **Implementing the Program**

Typically, common reading programs are supported through a budget provided by the institution. However, there were instances in which funding for these programs was obtained through other sources. Straus and Daley (2002) reported securing commercial sponsorship of a Common Book Conference at Houston Community College. McIntyre (2012) reported a community member providing financial support for Shepherd University’s Common Reading program. Beacham (2009) described Wofford College’s Novel Experience and noted “since 2007 the program has been financed by an anonymous benefactor” (p. 11).

As CB/CW had no budget dedicated to funding the program, steering committee members had to be creative in securing resources. Funds for the *Half the Sky* documentary were provided by the Dean of the College of Education and the Dean of Students. The Division of Student Affairs paid for the publication of posters and postcards promoting CB/CW.

While engaging the author(s) of the book being used in a common reading program to speak on campus is a standard practice, this was not financially feasible for the CB/CW. Instead, the university's student activities board engaged two social activists to speak during the academic year on themes related to the book. One of these speakers was Tammy Tibbitts, founder of *She's the First*, an organization sponsoring girls' education in low-income countries to create first-generation graduates. The other speaker was Zach Hunter, a human rights activist who founded Loose Change to Loosen Chains, an organization aimed at ending human slavery. CU students responded enthusiastically to these two social activists. Both of these speakers were close in age to CU's traditional students, both had begun their advocacy when they were young, and both encouraged student groups to become involved in social justice issues such as those presented in "Half the Sky."

The university's archaeology museum secured a grant from the state Humanities Foundation to create a traveling "Half the Sky" exhibit. This provided CB/CW an even broader reach as over 2,000 individuals viewed the exhibit while it was on CU's campus, including dozens of school groups. One college was able to provide copies of "Half the Sky" for faculty to participate in a bi-monthly book club through a faculty development grant.

### **Promoting the Program**

As CB/CW was a voluntary program designed for the entire campus community, rather than focused solely on freshmen, the challenge was creating awareness of it among as many people as possible. CB/CW steering committee members spoke to key groups on campus, presenting the program to them in the months leading up to the start of the academic year. These groups included the faculty senate, Student Government Association, Housing and Residence Life staff, and various colleges with a particular interest in the themes presented in "Half the Sky," such as the College of Nursing and the College of Education.

As with more traditional summer reading programs, CB/CW was promoted at all freshman orientations, particularly with parents, in hopes that they would encourage students to read the book. Additionally the program was promoted at the annual campus celebration for families and new students held the weekend before fall classes started. The campus bookstore created a display featuring "Half the Sky" and sold the book beginning in the summer and continuing throughout the academic year. The book was also for sale at the archaeology museum and was displayed prominently in campus libraries.

A brochure of suggested curricular connections between specific undergraduate and graduate courses and "Half the Sky" was produced and distributed to faculty. Several brown bag lunches were held for faculty before and during the academic year for instructors interested in using the book in their classes. Additionally, a resource guide for faculty was hosted on the library's web site. Posters promoting CB/CW were distributed across campus and flyers featuring events related to the program were distributed monthly.

The public relations department promoted CB/CW through announcements in the employee newsletter, on the university's web site, and through e-mail messages about program events to faculty, staff, and students. CB/CW co-chairs made appearances on local television stations to promote program events. Student media promoted the program through the newspaper and television and radio stations while students on the steering committee maintained social media accounts for CB/CW.

### **Programming**

As Bukics and Clemence (2007) described, Lafayette College may have been among the first institutions to use a film rather than a book as the centerpiece of its 2006 common reading

program. Now, however, with numerous film adaptations of books, some universities are using this alternative medium to supplement common reading programs. The *Half the Sky* documentary helped extend the reach of CB/CW through screenings both on campus and off. The panels of experts organized to lead post-screening discussions provided opportunities for professionals and community members to share in the common reading experience and to interact with CU students, faculty, and staff. Panelists included a wealth management expert, president of the Junior League, a representative from a shelter for homeless women, founder of the Women's Business Center, a criminal justice expert, nurses, a psychologist, and a coordinator of the rape crisis center.

To connect the CB/CW locally, nationally, and internationally, events such as the U.N.'s International Day of the Girl Child and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service were promoted. Students participated in a "One Billion Rising," event and CU students and staff presented "A V-Day Benefit Reading," with proceeds of over \$300 pledged to the rape crisis center. V-Day and One Billion Rising are both global movements to end violence against women (V-Day; One Billion Rising).

### **Participation**

Book clubs organized by staff, faculty, and community members formed both on campus and off. Resident assistants led students through discussions of the book in residence halls. A local bible study group read the book and requested a university faculty come and speak with them about it. Classes presented on "Half the Sky" in the student center, providing poster displays and leaflets with information about how students could volunteer locally with organizations which served women. Faculty and staff in one college who read and discussed "Half the Sky" wanted a way to encourage students to participate in service learning. They created an annual award to recognize students with outstanding service learning achievement. One class partnered with the Junior Panhellenic Council to sell jewelry made by African women and returned a profit of \$2,000 to their organization. Members of other classes were moved by their experience of reading "Half the Sky" to contribute money through a crowd funding site to a Guatemalan woman seeking to start her own business. On Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service, members of the university community had the opportunity to work at shelters for victims of domestic violence and homeless women. In a printmaking class, students created silk-screens using imagery representing the themes of "Half the Sky." These silk-screens were hung in the university's archaeology museum as part of the traveling exhibit.

### **Program Outcomes**

#### **Highlights**

Among the positive outcomes of CB/CW was the diversity of individuals it attracted. Student groups such as Pinky Promise, a Christian women's organization; Feminists for Progress; International Justice Mission, an organization devoted to helping protect the poor from violence; Panhellenic Council; and Student Government Association worked together to help plan and host events related to the program. CB/CW helped establish a partnership between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs that allowed them to work together on a scale not previously undertaken at Coastal University. Faculty and Student Affairs professionals brought their areas of expertise to the program, while students contributed their enthusiasm and insights.

Much of the preparatory work done for the CB/CW in its inaugural year is paying off. Now in the second year of the program there are structures and processes in place that help make the program run more smoothly and save time for those involved in producing CB/CW. For

example, to assist in the book selection process, the steering committee established criteria for considering future titles (“Suggest a Book,” 2014). These include:

1. Potential to engage students and spark passionate discussion
2. Appeal to a wide range of students
3. Possibilities for classroom use among various departments, including First-Year Experience
4. Inclusion of cross-cultural education, awareness, knowledge and sensitivity
5. Possibilities for campus programming
6. Richness of themes; interdisciplinary in nature
7. Relevant to student life
8. Available in paperback
9. 400 pages or less

University web pages devoted to CB/CW provide a mechanism for interested individuals to suggest books for future programs, allowing for more participation.

In order to maintain continuity and consistency in the program the steering committee decided to structure the leadership of the program so that each year one co-chair would be a veteran of the program and one would be new to it. Thus, in the second year of the CB/CW, the co-chair representing Student Affairs serves as the veteran leader (having served previously as co-chair in the first year of the program) and the co-chair representing Academic Affairs is new to the program. In the third year of the program the Academic Affairs co-chair becomes the veteran, sharing his/her expertise with the new Student Affairs co-chair. This system allows for more individuals from both units to be involved in the CB/CW, encouraging new ideas and approaches to the program. It also prevents the possibility of burnout when the same people are tasked with the responsibility of the program year after year.

### **Challenges**

Assessment of CB/CW was not extensive. Participation in CB/CW was voluntary, so it was difficult to identify which faculty used the “Half the Sky” book in classes. The book was adopted by many of the First-Year Experience instructors; however there were no mechanisms in place to gather data about faculty experiences in teaching with the book. While attendees at each *Half the Sky* film screening were surveyed about what they learned from the documentary, there was little that could be applied to the current year’s CB/CW program. Much of the information collected on CB/CW overall was anecdotal. Steering committee members acknowledge the need for systematic assessment and that planning for future CB/CW programs must be data-driven and responsive to the feedback gathered throughout the previous year.

Lack of budget continues to hamper efforts to grow CB/CW. Various units on campus are forced to use their funds to support the program. The fact that students are not provided the book, but must purchase it themselves may decrease participation in the program. The same may hold true for faculty, though they have the opportunity to purchase the book at a discounted rate through the university bookstore. Both faculty and staff have access to the book through the university library, although copies are limited. Taking a cue from other common reading programs, the steering committee is considering working with the university’s development office to pursue private donations to fund CB/CW. Also, to increase

participation in the program, faculty may need more direction such as a guidebook on how to incorporate the CB/CW book into their courses.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Common reading programs would benefit from further studies focused on the effects of such initiatives on community building, ethics and values development, cross-cultural awareness, and academic discourse engagement. The shared experience is an inherent goal for common reading programs and one which needs to be examined in more depth – specifically creating a better definition for what constitutes a shared experience and articulating how those experiences could then be directly linked to common reading programs. Additionally, little research exists on common reading programs which are voluntary and seek to engage the entire campus. Research about common reading programs which addresses successful methods used to encourage participation of various university populations as well as ways in which interest and enthusiasm can be sustained over longer periods of time would be beneficial. Further, studies which investigate effective assessment of voluntary or long-running common reading programs are needed. Such research findings could serve as a guide to other institutions looking to expand a common reading program beyond the freshman year.

### **Conclusion**

There are many high-impact educational practices that positively influence student engagement and success; a common reading program is one such practice. The experience of a common reading program can be enormously beneficial to students in their learning process and to university divisions that often operate as though their functions are unrelated (American Association of Higher Education, American College Personnel Association, & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 1998; Kezar, 2003; Schroeder, 1999). When student affairs and academic affairs work together they can help provide a seamless learning environment so that students grow intellectually both inside and outside the classroom.

Coastal University's "Common Book/Common World" program offers one example of how a common reading program may be implemented either at institutions that prefer not to commit to a traditional mandatory freshman common reading program, or for those institutions that want to offer a shared intellectual experience more broadly among the larger campus community. The relationship between student affairs and academic affairs is made more visible when these units work together, applying their expertise to improve student learning. As Schroeder (2004) noted, "Building collaborative partnerships is not a discrete event but rather an ongoing journey" (p. 219). Institutions that experience a successful partnership between student affairs and academic affairs may be inclined to pursue other high-impact educational practices in addition to common reading programs, such as learning communities or service learning. Such a partnership answers the call for collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs which scholars have been urging for years.

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## Experiential Education as a Framework for Student Affairs' Educator Role

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this article is to provide student affairs practitioner-scholars with an applied framework/action plan for incorporating experiential education techniques into their daily practice of hosting and/or advising events, and other planned experiences. Utilizing the National Society of Experiential Education's eight principles of good practice as a praxis, student affairs educators may achieve many of the following benefits: 1) a consistent language and definitions, which will promote a common understanding and common values; 2) a learning community helping to develop skills, known to be effective in ensuring learning and creating an engaged environment; 3) a plethora of research and data into how to deliver the educational experience and appropriately utilize a proven assessment structure. Many student affairs practitioner-scholars are well-versed in theories of student development, transition and student learning, which rightfully inform many of the decisions made by these professionals. This article provides the practitioner-scholar with a complementary framework for educating students.*

*Keywords:* experiential education, student affairs, student learning

In 1970, Paulo Freire published one of his first critical essays on the state of education and what he called the banking method, where he argued faculty-centered approaches lead to “an act of depositing, in which students are depositories, and teachers are depositors. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat” (Friere & Friere, 2004, p. 72). According to Friere, the banking method has a number of deficiencies, one of them being that students do not actually comprehend the deposit.

The banking method has persisted and is often referred to as faculty-centered pedagogy. Faculty-centered pedagogy is characterized by students regurgitating passively acquired information during tests, quizzes, or other assessments. Research into this method shows it often promotes shallow learning (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000) and fails to promote motivation to learn, confidence in one's learning abilities, and enthusiasm for learning (Weimer, 2002). For years before Friere and in years since, educators, philosophers, and current policy makers advocated learning free from rote memorization and the regurgitation of fact.

Many contemporary educators continue the call for the replacement of this methodology with a learning-centered approach, which focuses on the whole learner and the best methods of teaching. McCombs and Whisler (1997) define the learning-centered approach as dual emphasis on individual learners and on what is being learned. Benefits of the learning-centered approach include the following: more efficient and effective learning (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Mills & Treagust, 2003), broader student experiences, stronger problem solving skills and data interpretation abilities (Landis et al., 1998; Fried, 2006), deeper understanding of subject matter (Bransford et al., 2000), and motivation to learn (Nor, 2008).

### **A Transitioning Culture**

Many faculty members have heeded the call for a learning-centered approach. The days of “death by PowerPoint” are gradually diminishing; techniques consistent with a more learning-centered approach are being employed. Examples include problem-based learning (Savery & Duffy, 1995), service-learning (Jacoby, 1996), and project-based learning (Adderley et al., 1975). However, expecting only faculty to make this transition limits the efficacy to student learning outcomes occurring within the classroom. Student affairs professionals and other administrators are also in a position to educate students in a variety of learning outcomes. Those student affairs professionals who embrace the idea of being educators can play major roles in engaged learning environments.

An engaged learning environment is characterized by the inclusion of all community members as supporters of the educational mission and as active participants in the education process. Potter (1999) described this characterization with this definition: “an environment where faculty, staff, and administrators are all viewed as students and all viewed as co-teachers” (p. 12). In order to create this new environment, there is a strong need for student affairs professionals to actively engage in educational processes, which could range from assisting faculty in the delivery of outcomes related to a specific field to outcomes of a less perceptible nature, such as leadership skills. Schroeder (1999) speaks to the importance of student affairs involvement in the education process by stating “[i]f undergraduate education is to be enhanced, faculty members, joined by academic and student affairs administrators, must devise ways to deliver undergraduate education that are as comprehensive and integrated as the ways that students actually learn” (p. 6). Learning must occur both in the classroom and outside the classroom. Fried (2006) argues students should be able to make meaning of their life experiences, in the classroom and in all daily interactions, including labs, plays, videogames, and employment.

### **The Educational Role of Student Affairs Professionals**

One theoretical foundation of a student affairs role is to support and advise the student in personal growth and development. To assist the students in this development and growth many student affairs practitioners have become experts in a variety of student development theories such as the theory of moral development (Gilligan, 1977); leadership identity development (Komives, Owen, Lognerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006); communities of practice (Hara, 2009), and situated learning (McLellan, 1996). These and other development theories rightfully inform many decisions made by student affairs professionals and strengthen a professional’s ability to utilize an adaptive unconscious decision making process or what Blimling (2011) calls professional judgments. This article is written to provide the scholar-practitioner with a practical framework (action plan) for educating students.

The role of student affairs practitioners as educators is as fundamental to the profession as student development (Magolda & Quaye, 2011). One of the longest held beliefs of the profession, the “Student Personnel Point-of-View” document (American Council on Education, 1937), spells out the following eight domains for which student affairs is keenly poised to provide instruction: 1) Intellectual capacity and achievement, 2) emotional make up, 3) physical condition, 4) social relationships, 5) vocational aptitudes and skills, 6) moral and religious values, 7) economic resources, and 8) aesthetic appreciations. Student affairs practitioners can educate students around the eight domains of the 1937 document through planned experiences. An example is direct department programs geared toward student audiences and those who employ students or engage student volunteers, (e.g. career fairs, religious services, and homecoming events). Another is an advisor to students hosting their own experience, like a retreat or philanthropic program. Regardless of the type of activity,

experiences are part of many student affairs professionals' tool kits. Next, this article examines how these experiences can be planned as an educational opportunity.

### **Education through Experiences**

Student Affairs Practitioners can ensure experiences are instructive by adopting a pedagogically sound educational framework. While other tactics could be adopted, this article espouses experiential education. Experiential education is already used in university settings through co-ops and internships, study abroad, undergraduate research, and service learning. Experiential education, derived from the earlier works of Dewey (1938), Lewin (1951), Kolb (1984) and others, is "learning possibilities of events in daily life ... different domains of human enquiry-personal or interpersonal formal or informal, systematic or unstructured" (Beard & Wilson, 2006, p. 2).

A philosophy which provides for a strong theoretical background is Lewin (1946). Kurt Lewin, an experiential learning forerunner, appears in vast numbers of experiential learning studies (Kolb, 1984; Gentry, 1990; Beard & Wilson, 2006). Lewin suggests the following four conditions are necessary for an experience to be educative:

1) there must be a concrete experience, 2) observation and reflection must occur, 3) the learner must form abstract concepts and generalizations, 4) testing of implications of concepts must be done in new situations.

### **Principles for Experiential Learning Activities**

Utilizing these four conditions and work from other experiential forerunners, a list of eight principles of good practice has been adopted by the National Society for Experiential Education (2013). Upon implementation, these practices provide student affairs professionals with procedures that can enrich learning and ensure an experience is educational. Chapman, McPhee, and Proudman, (1995) further this argument and share the importance of adopting such practices:

Simple participation in a prescribed set of learning experiences does not make something experiential. The experiential methodology is not linear, cyclical, or even patterned. It is a series of working principles, all of which are equally important or must be present to varying degrees at some time during experiential learning. These principles are required no matter what activity the student is engaged in or where the learning takes place (p. 243).

The National Society for Experiential Education (2013) principles include:

#### **Intention**

The understanding of why experience is an appropriate way to learn proposed outcomes. In addition students, facilitators, and other participants must have purposeful approaches to how the learning will take place.

#### **Preparedness and Planning**

This principle requires that student affairs educators, students, and other parties strategize how the experience will occur and adopt goals and objectives from the outset. The goals and objectives must be intentionally mapped to the activities taking place as part of the experience.

#### **Authenticity**

Being connected to a real world "authentic" context is essential to students' experience being educational. Lombardi (2007) argues authentic learning promotes judgment, patience, ability to recognize patterns in unfamiliar contexts, and flexibility to work across cultural

and disciplinary boundaries. Schoïn (1983) advanced the argument; with teacher-centered instruction, the content only goes as far as the teacher proposes and is limited to the ideas and concepts the professor proposes. In addition, the content is usually limited in its scope, often bent towards faculty members' prescribed ideologies and can often be "mastered" by memorization rather than knowing how and when to utilize the information in real life scenarios.

### **Reflection**

In its simplest terms, experiential learning can be compared to children's blocks. Some experiences serve as a foundation; each subsequent experience is stacked upon the last to make a complete structure. Without reflection, the student is unable to utilize the "block" within the structure because the lesson is not fully formed; they must reflect on more than what they learned. Students should reflect on the experience in four different ways. Grossman (2009) provides structure for these types of reflection, which are necessary for comprehension and utilization in future learning: (a) content-based reflection, (b) metacognitive reflection, (c) self-author reflection, and (d) transformative reflection.

### **Orientation and Training**

Within an overall experience, there may be numerous activities requiring orientation and training. For example, a student activities professional utilizing a music festival as an experiential learning opportunity will likely have to orient and train students on how to appropriately setup a stage, hang lighting, read and complete a performer's contract, and handle cash during the ticket sales. These and numerous other activities, which make up the experience of hosting a music festival, must each be introduced, practiced, and assessed for proficiency.

### **Monitoring and Continuous Improvement**

When utilizing events as an educative tool, as with any event, the unforeseen can occur. Without the educator taking responsibility for monitoring students' activities and events, these typical changes in schedule, setbacks, and challenges can derail the learning environment even if the experience moves forward. In the event an unexpected occurrence impedes learning from occurring, new sets of plans should be considered. When adjustments occur, the facilitator should learn from these issues and work to improve future activities and experiences.

### **Assessment and Evaluation**

Assessment and evaluation helps the facilitator to understand if students have retained student learning outcomes in where they excelled, where there is room for improvement, and how improvements could be made by all participants. "Proponents of assessment believe that higher education should examine what students have learned, not just what the institution or department did that supposedly resulted in learning" (Walvoord, 2010, p. 3). Examples of assessment tools that work well with experiential education include reflective journals and portfolios (Woodward, 1998), jury assessment (Jensen, Brach, & Zeytinci, 2007) and poster presentations (Billington, 1997).

### **Acknowledgment**

Students should be encouraged to acknowledge and share the learning, new skills, and changes in attitudes, which have occurred in the planned experience through activities such as reflection, presentation, and documentation. The National Society for Experiential Educators (2013) calls for all parties to be recognized for the achievement of learning and any other accomplishments that have transpired.

## Conclusion

Numerous educators have begun the migration from faculty-centered pedagogy to a learning-centered approach. One associated method is the use of experience as a source of learning. Student affairs professionals who host and advise events and activities are often in the position to utilize these educative experiences to teach a variety of student learning outcomes. In adopting the belief of Dewey (1938) that not all experiences are educative, student affairs professionals are encouraged to ensure that these experiences conform to a proven educational philosophy. Professionals who adopt the eight principles of good practice espoused by the National Society for Experiential Education should find that they are promoting a more fully formed educational experience.

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## The Observation and Response to Violent Situations among Students at Secular and Faith-Based Campuses

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### Abstract

*Secular and faith-based Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) experience violence on various levels. Alcohol-related violence, including excessive hazing and sexual violence are reported at IHE across the United States. However, this study's purpose was to discover whether a relationship exists between the type of institute students attend – faith-based versus secular – and the occurrence and intervention of violence. A survey was administered including eight IHE in a Midwestern state. Five of these IHE were secular and three were faith-based. A total of 7,507 participants responded to the survey. A series of chi-square tests for independence were conducted to answer the research questions. Five of the six analyses rendered non-significant results, indicating that campus type does not impact whether students witness violent situations and subsequently intervene in those situations. Results provide implications for student affairs professionals to promote a comprehensive approach to violence prevention through various types of education and prevention programming.*

*Keywords:* bystander intervention, campus violence, faith-based, primary prevention programming

As part of the Jeanne Clery Act (2014), Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) must report violent offenses that occur on their respective campuses each year. The most recent reports indicate 652 violent offenses were reported in 2009, 739 in 2010, and 639 in 2011 at campuses across the United States (Campus Safety, 2013). Examples of violence include bullying, harassment, intimate-partner violence, rape, cyberstalking, and robbery (Paludi, 2008). These acts of violence often require action from campus officials including student health centers, law enforcement, and student affairs administrators, who engage in strategic planning to prevent campus violence (Jablonski, McClellan, & Zdziarski, 2009). The current study focused on potential relationships between (a) campus type, including secular versus faith-based, and risky situations students witness on campus, including sexual violence, hazing, and excessive alcohol consumption, and (b) campus type and students' intervention behaviors when they observe these risky situations.

### Literature Review

As partial fulfillment of a grant from a State Department of Health, in cooperation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), campus health practitioners were tasked to provide assistance to both secular and faith-based IHE to help prevent incidents of sexual violence and in many instances, other forms of violence that accompanied sexual assault. Technical assistance provided through this grant revealed resistance among several institutions grounded in faith to acknowledge violent occurrences happening on campus, in part because several faith-based IHE have abstinence-related rules students must follow (Maylath & Haas, 2010). As a result, dialogue around violence-related instances on campus seemed more uncommon than communication around similar issues on secular campuses.

While searching for ways to better communicate with and offer resources to these campuses, an examination of the literature in databases such as PsychInfo and ProQuest returned no research that specifically assessed and responded to violence on faith-based campuses. In addition, the same literature search returned no results regarding whether any differences exist between the occurrence and intervention of violence and campus type.

Because both domestic and international research (DeHaven, Hunter, Wilder, Walton & Berry, 2004; Flood, 2011) has suggested the importance of churches and other faith-based institutions as allies in efforts to promote positive health behaviors, it is surprising that virtually no research exists surrounding this issue. After this specific topic returned no results in the academic literature, examining this research gap seemed imperative to help promote more dialogue around violence-related behaviors and improve prevention efforts at both secular and faith-based IHE. This research study focused on three common types of violence that occur on IHE: sexual assault, hazing, and violent occurrences precipitated by higher alcohol consumption. These three types of violence often occur on campus and occur simultaneously in many cases (Allan, 2005). These three incidents of violence are briefly discussed prior to the justification, methods, and results of the study.

### **Sexual Violence, Hazing, and Alcohol-Related Violence**

Sexual violence, hazing, and excessive alcohol consumption are all risky and potentially violent situations that often are encountered among college-aged students. A description of each behavior is briefly discussed.

**Sexual violence.** Sexual violence encompasses those offenses committed against someone's will including a completed, nonconsensual sex act; an attempted nonconsensual sex act; and an abusive sexual contact (Basile & Saltzman, 2002). Acts of sexual violence are considered one of the most pervasive problems at IHE (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000). Some research suggests college women may be at a higher risk for sexual violence than non-college females of a similar age (Karjane, Fisher, & Cullen, 2005). These same researchers suggest 3% of college women are raped during an academic year and 20% to 25% of women experience a completed or attempted rape in college (Karjane et al., 2005). A recent study (Black et al., 2011) estimated one in five women have been victims of rape at some point in their lives and 80% of these victims experienced their first rape before the age of 25.

Although some acts of sexual violence may be planned, most incidents are unintentional. This nonverbal ambiguity has even created the "yes means yes" movement that has been termed the "future of campus sexual assault prevention" (Valenti, 2014). Besides writing and enforcing stricter policies, prevention efforts also need to occur on behalf of the student population. For example, a national campaign recently launched called "It's on us," which specifically focuses on the role of active student bystanders on campuses to prevent sexual assault (It's on us, 2014). These campaign efforts have already occurred at over 130 IHE in an effort to encourage students to pledge to stop sexual violence (Schulman, 2014). Specifically, intervening in ambiguous situations where consent may have not been given has the ability to prevent some potential assaults from occurring or escalating. The proactivity of peers in preventing these situations is critical because victims of sexual assault often experience post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep difficulties, drug addictions, and depression (Ullman, Relyea, Peter-Hagene, & Vasquez, 2013; Sarkar & Sarkar, 2005).

**Hazing.** Hazing involves types of harassment or peer pressure in group activities, including social clubs, athletic teams, and Greek life. Hazing is a part of group cohesion and perpetuated over time within these same groups (Campo, Poulos, & Sipple, 2005). For example, O'Brien et al. (2012) found while controlling for alcohol consumption, members of Greek organizations

were significantly more likely to be injured and cause injury to other people than those individuals not involved in an organized group, such as Greek organizations or other groups that may subject to group hazing. In addition, a national study (Allan & Madden, 2008) conducted with 53 IHE found that 55% of students involved in clubs, teams, and organizations experienced hazing. In another study, 36% of students at one university reported engaging in hazing as a part of their group's common practices (Campo et al., 2005). These statistics continue to show hazing is a prevalent problem on IHE and can precipitate injury and other forms of violence. For instance, outcomes of hazing may include head injuries, burns, alcohol poisoning, post-traumatic stress, and death (Finkel, 2002).

**Excessive alcohol consumption.** Finally, excessive alcohol consumption can lead to several forms of violence. Research shows that four out of five college students drink, and half participate in heavy, binge drinking behaviors (Wechsler et al., 2002). In addition, according to an American College Health Association (ACHA) survey (2011), approximately 59.8% of student respondents had alcohol in the last 30 days and 32.7% of respondents had consumed five or more alcoholic beverages in one sitting at least once in the past 14 days. Rates of heavy episodic drinking have remained relatively stable for decades (O'Malley & Johnston, 2002). However, more recent estimates suggest an increase in the proportion of students engaging in this behavior (Hingson, Zha, & Weitzman, 2009), indicating more potential for negative consequences.

The Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) recognized the link between alcohol and violence in their statement, "any consideration about best practices for managing campus violence must also address the issue of alcohol use" (Jablonski et al., 2009, p. 7). For example, research shows hazing at IHE often involve binge drinking (Drout & Corsoro, 2003) while sexual violence is also associated with high-risk drinking (Abbey, 2002). In addition, excessive alcohol consumption can negatively influence students and contribute to a decline in academic performance, engaging in unplanned or unprotected sex, and operating a vehicle while intoxicated (Wechsler & Nelson, 2008). Other students may also be affected by intoxicated students' behaviors, which include verbal or physical disputes, property damage, and noise disturbances (Wechsler & Nelson, 2008).

### **Violence at Faith-Based Campuses**

As indicated earlier, research focusing on student violence within faith-based IHE is absent in the college health literature. Although not extensively studied, it seems that a Good Samaritan mentality on faith-based institutions, emphasizing moral behavior, may foster an environment where students feel inclined to help others and prevent initial violent occurrences. Although studies have not examined the specific prevalence of and response to violence on faith-based campuses, some research has uncovered violence often is not addressed, and in some cases, denied among faith-based organizations, such as churches. For example, Gillum and Nash (2011) found that the Good Samaritan mentality may actually contribute to faith-based institutions denying the occurrence of violence at their respective locations. In addition, Flood and Pease (2006) found churches and clergy more likely to be complicit with violence-related reports and deny occurrences. To further illustrate, although church leaders at faith-based IHE were not included, Adams and Fortune (1995) found in a sample of church leaders that these individuals did not consider violence a problem within their organization because no one discussed it.

It could seem trivial to the reader that faith-based IHE may not acknowledge violence as much as secular IHE or other organizations. However, it is crucial for all IHE, including those that are faith-based, to have an accurate picture of violence on their campus. For example,

according to Flood (2011), “Religious institutions and leaders have a potentially powerful role to play in encouraging an ethic of nonviolence” (p. 368). Although secular campuses often convene community coalitions to address issues like alcohol consumption and sexual violence (Haas, Mattson, & Wilkinson, 2011), faith-based organizations do not mobilize community members as much to address prevention efforts (Flood, 2011). It is important within organizations, such as IHE, to engage all sectors’ involvement in primary prevention efforts, including sports teams, student-run organizations, and faith members to improve the communication and support around violence-related issues (Davis, Parks, & Cohen, 2006).

Faith-based IHE may collect data around these issues on their respective campuses. Because studies about hazing, sexual violence, and violence induced by alcohol consumption are easily found in peer-reviewed journals pertaining to secular campuses, and coalitions to address these issues are common on secular campuses, this study asserts that data is needed to specifically inform the scope of violence on faith-based IHE, in comparison to secular IHE, to encourage cooperation from respective groups to more heavily address these issues on their campus. In response, this study examined whether a relationship exists between the occurrence and intervention of violence at secular or faith-based IHE. To better understand this relationship, a college student relationships survey was conducted in a Midwestern state in which both secular and faith-based campus types were included in the sample to reveal any notable differences between the two samples.

### **Research Questions**

**Research question 1:** What is the relationship between campus type and witnessing violent situations and excessive alcohol consumption?

**1a:** What is the relationship between campus type and witnessing sexual violence?

**1b:** What is the relationship between campus type and witnessing of hazing?

**1c:** What is the relationship between campus type and witnessing excessive alcohol consumption?

**Research question 2:** What is the relationship between campus type and intervening in violent situations and those involving excessive alcohol consumption?

**2a:** What is the relationship between campus type and intervening in a situation involving sexual violence?

**2b:** What is the relationship between campus type and intervening in a situation involving hazing?

**2c:** What is the relationship between campus type and intervening in a situation involving excessive alcohol consumption?

### **Method**

Incidents of sexual violence, hazing, and excessive alcohol consumption were assessed in one study among the same participants. A quantitative analysis of relevant survey data was conducted with eight IHE within one Midwestern state during the fall 2009 semester. Research was conducted in compliance with the Institutional Review Board and recruitment did not occur until this approval was received on each campus.

### **Survey Instrument, Procedure, and Sample**

An anonymous online survey was administered to every undergraduate student age 18 and above at each of the eight IHE. Students received the survey link between August and October of 2009. Survey items were designed to assess experiences witnessing a potentially dangerous situation and, if so, to determine whether the individual intervened in that situation. The

statements were as follows: I have witnessed a situation, at least once while attending this school, in which: (a) someone was being taken advantage of sexually; (b) someone was being hazed; and (c) someone was drinking too much. Participants were prompted to answer if they witnessed the situation described. Participants answering “yes” were asked if they intervened (i.e., “I intervened” or “I did not intervene”). These statements were adapted from previous Step Up! bystander intervention training materials (Step up!, 2008).

Each student received an e-mail containing a link to participate in the survey. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from each participant before beginning the survey, and there was no compensation for participation. The sample ( $n = 7,507$ ) consists of students at eight IHE. Five IHE are secular and three are faith-based. Students were not given an incentive for their participation in the online survey. The aggregate response rate for the eight campuses was 18.3%. The response rate for each individual campus is listed in Table 1, demonstrating a typical response rate for the majority of participating campuses (Nulty, 2008).

**Table 1.** Response rate for each campus

Campus	Response Rate
Secular 1	20.86%
Secular 2	16.39%
Secular 3	14.27%
Secular 4	18.61%
Secular 5	12.07%
Faith 1	30.40%
Faith 2	35.56%
Faith 3	29.94%

Of the 7,507 participants, 5,437 (72.4%) are from secular and 2,070 (27.6%) are from faith-based IHE. The sample consists of 2,194 men (30.5%) and 5,000 women (69.5%). Almost 38% are first-year students, 21.1% sophomores, 19.1% juniors, 17.5% seniors, 5.2% fifth year, and 5.4% are more than fifth-year students. In terms of housing, 47.7% live in university housing, 15.4% off-campus housing, 1.2% fraternity housing, 1.9% sorority housing, 15.2% parent’s home, 12.9% in their own home, and 1.9% in other housing.

## Results

Chi-square tests for independence were completed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (2010). Each chi-square test was conducted using campus type and another categorical variable, including witnessing or intervening in situations involving excessive alcohol consumption, hazing, or sexual violence. Yates’ Correction for Continuity was used to compensate for the overestimate of the chi-square value when used with a two by two table (Pallant, 2010). Each chi-square test was checked to make sure the minimum expected cell frequency was not violated. This assumption was not violated for any of the six chi-square tests.

### Research Question 1: Witnessing Violent Situations

In response to research question 1a, a chi-square test for independence was conducted using campus type and witnessing sexual violence. The chi-square test, with Yates Continuity Correction, indicates no significant relationship,  $\chi^2(1, n = 6712) = .487, p = .485, \phi = -.009$ .



The results for research question 1b show no significant relationship between campus type and witnessing hazing,  $\chi^2 (1, n = 6,693) = .133, p = .715, \phi = -.005$ . The results for research question 1c render a significant relationship between campus type and witnessing excessive alcohol consumption,  $\chi^2 (1, n = 6,639) = 26.86, p = .000$ . The effect size,  $\phi = .06$ , according to Cohen's (1988) criteria is small. The cross tabulation for campus type and witnessing is depicted in Table 2.

**Table 2.** *Campus type \* witnessed violent situations*

Campus	Witnessed Alcohol		Witnessed Sexual Violence		Witnessed Hazing	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Secular	2,167	45.3%	293	6.1%	341	7.1%
Faith	711	38.3%	124	6.6%	138	7.4%

A review of Table 2 indicates that, although the sample sizes differed between secular and faith-based IHE, the percentage of participants from each group reported almost identical experiences in witnessing sexual violence and hazing on campus. In terms of witnessing alcohol consumption, the results show a significant relationship between the campus types, indicating that high-risk drinking is more likely to take place at secular IHE than faith-based IHE. Typically, it is common practice for faith-based IHE to be completely dry campuses (i.e. no alcohol is allowed) whereas, some secular IHE have areas of campus that are not dry, such as a student union. This practice is to encourage on-campus rather than off-campus drinking for those students who are at least 21 years old. Taking this information into account, these results are not particularly surprising.

### Research Question 2: Intervening in Violent Situations

In response to research question 2a, a chi-square test for independence, with Yates Continuity Correction, was conducted using campus type and whether participants intervened when they witnessed sexual violence. The results indicate a non-significant relationship,  $\chi^2 (1, n = 417) = .002, p = .961, \phi = .008$ . The results for research question 2b also indicate a non-significant relationship between campus type and intervening when hazing is witnessed,  $\chi^2 (1, n = 479) = 2.24, p = .135, \phi = .07$ . The results for research question 2c show a non-significant relationship between campus type and intervening when excessive alcohol consumption is witnessed,  $\chi^2 (1, n = 2878) = .222, p = .637, \phi = .01$ . The cross tabulation for campus type and intervening is depicted in Table 3.

**Table 3.** *Campus type \* intervened in violent situations*

Campus	Intervened Alcohol		Intervened Sexual Violence		Intervened Hazing	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Secular	981	45.3%	182	62.1%	96	28.2%
Faith	314	44.2%	76	61.3%	29	21.0%

The results for research question 2 indicate a relationship between campus type and willingness to intervene does not exist. Table 3 shows similar percentages among students between both campus types, albeit the overall percentages of students' reported interventions are low. However, the faith-based population percentages were slightly lower than the secular samples. Although this relationship is not significant, the consistently lower averages of

bystander intervention among faith-based participants indicate that more attention can be given to this issue on these campuses, in particular, as well as secular IHE.

### Discussion

The results demonstrate sexual violence, hazing, and excessive alcohol consumption exist at both secular and faith-based IHE. Only one significant but weak relationship between campus type and excessive alcohol consumption existed, suggesting violence is a widespread problem on all types of campuses. Implications from the results are discussed below, starting with recommendations for faith-based IHE.

#### Recommendations for Faith-Based IHE

First, the results of this study show that faith-based IHE must acknowledge the existence of violence on campus if they do not already. Although not significant, a higher percentage of students at faith-based campuses reported witnessing hazing and sexual violence than students at secular campuses. Faith-based IHE employ what is often termed a community values contract (2014) or student contract (2014), in which students commit to remaining abstinent from alcohol, other drugs, and/or sexual activities. Results indicate some students who attend faith-based IHE choose to engage in risky health behaviors, despite the contract signed upon entering college. Taking into account that faith-based students sign such contracts whereas students at secular IHE more likely do not, the results suggest immediate attention toward these potentially risky behaviors at faith-based IHE.

In acknowledging violence, faith-based IHE should provide specific resources for students in an effort to help them make safer decisions and understand how to prevent and respond to potentially violent situations. For example, one study revealed faith-based IHE are more likely to lack a sexual assault policy than secular IHE (Haas, Maylath, Harber, & Beavis, 2010). Accessible policies providing definitions of violence and services can aid both the prevention and response to violence (Gonzales, Schofield, & Schmidt, 2005; CDC, 2004). Policy development and promotion is just one aspect of violence prevention faith-based IHE may be lacking. Below are recommendations for additional primary prevention programming that any student affairs office on campus may find helpful, based on the results of this study.

#### Recommendations to Encourage Preventative and Proactive Behavior

The results suggest that both faith-based and secular IHE need to utilize primary prevention efforts aimed to stop first-time perpetration and victimization. By disseminating primary prevention initiatives on campus, students may be more likely to adopt proactive responses to violence, which could enhance the number of students that notice and choose to intervene in a potentially risky situation (Littleton, 2014). Specific forms of primary prevention programming that could enhance proactive responses among students include the development and implementation of bystander intervention training programs and social marketing campaigns.

**Bystander intervention programs.** First, bystander intervention programs are intended to increase students' prosocial behaviors in situations where students may be at risk (McMahon & Banyard, 2012). An active bystander is an individual who witnesses an intervention-appropriate situation and then takes prosocial action to intervene to prevent or stop a situation from occurring. These trainings debrief five steps that increase prosocial behaviors and efficacy to intervene: (1) notice the situation; (2) identify the situation as high risk; (3) take responsibility; (4) intervene due to skills deficit; and (5) intervene due to audience inhibition (Latané & Daley, 1970).

Related to bystander intervention, the current study's results indicate that many students do not intervene in violent situations. The situation in which the most people intervened was to prevent sexual violence ( $M = 61.7\%$ ), followed by excessive alcohol consumption ( $M = 44.8\%$ ), and finally hazing ( $M = 24.6\%$ ). In response, bystander programming needs to be more prominent. However these programs cannot only be focused on awareness. As the results of this study show, a much larger sample of students notice these potentially violent situations but fewer actually intervene. Therefore, programs and trainings should focus on building students' self-efficacy to intervene and emphasize their potential role to prevent campus violence (Exner & Cummings, 2011; Banyard, Plante, & Moynihan, 2005; 2004). Research shows that these trainings can increase students' prosocial behaviors to intervene and help a fellow classmate.

For example, a meta-analysis of the effectiveness of bystander intervention programs revealed these programs tend to improve at least one of several outcomes including rape attitudes, sexual assault knowledge, and intent to engage in risky behaviors (Viaduti, Martin, & Macy, 2011). Bachar and Koss (2001) suggested the importance of combining bystander programming to include health areas such as sexual assault and alcohol consumption to increase awareness and response surrounding a variety of health issues. Similarly, the results of this study suggest pairing all three health issues during a bystander intervention program. Specifically, when under the influence of alcohol and other drugs, situations of hazing and sexual assault are more likely to occur (Wechsler & Nelson, 2008; Abbey, 2002). Utilizing training scenarios involving a variety of problematic situations may allow students to develop a more keen sense of awareness and efficacy to actively intervene on campus. For example, one bystander intervention program titled Step Up (2014) utilizes a scenario that involves alcohol consumption and sexual consent, which facilitates a conversation about sexual violence and sober, verbal consent. This same program also involves hazing with other health issues including alcohol and other drug consumption, acknowledging that riskier behaviors are more likely to occur while under the influence of alcohol and other drugs. By discussing these two issues together, students may begin to reassess potential sexual encounters they witness between two people that are seemingly intoxicated and feel compelled to intervene.

**Social marketing campaigns.** Social marketing campaigns can increase awareness and skills around the issue of bystander intervention, as demonstrated in other studies (Potter & Stapleton, 2011; Potter, Stapleton, & Moynihan, 2008). For instance, the University of New Hampshire developed a social marketing campaign, "Know Your Power," encouraging students to step in, speak up, and help make campus safer (Potter et al., 2008). In addition, Men Can Stop Rape (2012), a non-profit organization, launched a social marketing campaign titled, "Where do You Stand?" focusing on encouraging and empowering men to speak up and prevent violence on campus. Finally, several IHE are launching social marketing campaigns that focus on educating students about what consent is and is not as a form of education and empowerment for students (e.g., Haas et al., 2011). These social marketing campaign requested feedback from students to more accurately inform health messages. This feedback was used to address barriers students perceive when deciding whether or not to intervene in a potentially risky situation. Bystander intervention programs and social marketing campaigns are viable options available for student affairs administrators to help educate and persuade students to become more active bystanders on their respective campuses, especially if students are involved in developing and disseminating these prevention efforts along the way.

## Limitations

This study has limitations that need to be considered when applying the results. First, the data was self-reported, so it is possible that participants experienced social desirability bias when responding to questions, meaning participants could have responded in a way they perceived to be more favorable to others. Also, because the data is self-reported, student perceptions regarding whether they thought someone was drinking excessively, being taken advantage of sexually, or being hazed, could vary. In addition, this sample did not include IHE outside of one Midwestern state. However, the sample included IHE that are geographically dispersed across one state, creating a broad, representative range. It would be useful to explore beyond one state and observe if findings are similar.

## Future Directions

Results indicate that student participants witness violence on both secular and faith-based IHE, supporting a dialogue about violence on all campuses, and the importance of primary prevention programming. The rates of intervening may increase through the development and implementation of social marketing campaigns and bystander intervention programs that focus on skill-building activities to increase self-efficacy among students. Several efforts may help promote more consistent prevention programming on IHE. Specifically, proactive leadership from student affairs administration involving policy development, integration of bystander intervention programs at campus events, and involving students in the development of targeted messages to support education and intervention efforts can create a safer and healthier student environment.

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## **Socioeconomic Need for Student Parent Success within a University Environment**

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of student affairs at post-secondary institutions is to enhance students' growth, development, and support their educational endeavors. This takes place in many forms with the ultimate goal being to meet students' needs and requirements. Traditional and international students' needs are well-known and recognized. However, one group with little available information is student parents. Limited research is being done, especially in Canada, on what their needs are and what kinds of barriers they encounter while attempting to obtain a degree. This study examines the barriers, stereotypes, personal experiences, and the resulting emotional toil student parents at one university in the Atlantic Provinces of Canada are experiencing. The findings detail the difficulties encountered in locating student parents on campus, as well as various student services that need to change in order to allow student parents to complete their degree.*

*Keywords:* Canada, institutional barriers, parents, post-secondary, single parents, students.

Every year, universities undertake the job of addressing students' issues and providing them with the best learning experience. With the ever-changing student population, modern technology, and limited funding, meeting students' needs may be a challenge for student services. Traditionally student services in Canada will comprise a suite of services that include but are not limited to: health, counseling, disability, career development, experiential learning, cooperative education, housing, orientation, student leadership, aboriginal, athletics, student union liaison, and volunteer services. To ascertain student needs and meet student requirements student service practitioners must be able to understand the complexity of students' challenges. However, a concern arises when student groups are difficult to identify or located. This makes these groups invisible minorities on our campuses. One such invisible minority is student parents. This group does not appear to be tracked by university statistics, and unless they self-identify, it is impossible to tell them apart from any other student.

Canadian research on this group is extremely limited. Within the last twenty-five years, the majority of research on this group has come from the United States of America and the United Kingdom. During the process of locating research on post-secondary barriers and student parents, a significant amount of research focusing on the children of student parents was located. Particularly, the focus was on how having a parent (single or married) that is a student affects the child. There had been very little research done specifically looking at the parents themselves and barriers they experienced.

Looking at the limited research focused on student parents and the barriers they experience on campus, these students have additional needs and challenges facing them in their pursuit



of a post-secondary education many traditional students do not. Some of the main barriers commonly referenced are the lack of understanding of their situation, conflict with policies, and stereotyping by professors, staff, and students (Buteau, 2007; Bowl, 2001; Vann-Johnson, 2004). Student parents report being unprepared for university and for the time required to succeed in their classes (Huff & Thorpe, 1997; Samuels, 2005). In relation to this stress, student parents indicate the need for better counseling and more opportunities for tutoring, advising, mentoring, and support services specific to their particular situation and needs (Schobert, 2007; White Thunder, 2007). While many of these services are already available at universities, some student parents have mentioned they do not know about them or find they are not adequate for their situation (Huff & Thorpe, 1997; Schobert, 2007; White Thunder, 2007). Additional barriers student parents experience are the need for more childcare positions on campus, programs specific to their needs, extensions for application deadlines, qualifications for scholarships, bursaries, and healthcare coverage (Huff & Thorpe, 1997; Kirkup & Von Prummer, 1990; Osborne, Marks, & Turner, 2004; Samuels, 2005).

Finances are an amplified concern for student parents, in comparison to their non-parent peers, and finances alone can determine if a student parent persists or leaves higher education. The financial pressures of rental or mortgages, childcare costs, the child's school and travel costs, and more increase when student parents take on the extra costs of tuition and other university related fees. For many parents, they are required to work full time and may experience inadequate funding from student loans (Bowl, 2001; Osborne et al., 2004). Student parents are often required to choose where they spend their limited funds, and although they are required to pay program and event fees at universities, student parents typically do not get to participate due to having limited time, childcare conflicts, or the events not being family friendly.

Emotional issues experienced on campus, such as feeling isolated from other students, alienation due to parent status, lack of self-belief and self-esteem, and decreasing motivation impact whether student parents continue with their education or not (Conway, 1996; Osborne et al, 2004; Kirkup & Von Prummer, 1990). Isolation can play a large part in how connected students are to the university (Conway, 1996; Osborne et al, 2004). Because of their responsibilities to their children and time constraints, most do not have spare time to stay on campus to make connections, participate in campus life, have social interactions with fellow students, access student services, and make new friends.

The literature shows there are many ways student services and universities can assist student parents to complete their degree. The research also shows 10 characteristics common to student parents who are successful in their education (Buteau, 2007; Conway, 1996; Vann-Johnson, 2004; White-Thunder, 2007). They are:

- Feeling supported by their university
- Believing that obtaining a post-secondary education will end with great rewards
- Willing to sacrifice in the short term in order to obtain future goals
- Receiving support from faculty and staff at the university
- Maintaining high self-esteem
- Showing determination and motivation
- Being goal oriented, organized, and have relearned time management skills
- Having family and friends support their education

- Receiving assistance with childcare and transportation
- Receiving adequate social programs on and off campus

The following research examined the needs and barriers student parents experience at a Canadian university located in the Atlantic Provinces. We report on the services student affairs practitioners would be able to address.

## Methods

### Participants

Participants in this study were 13 (F=11, M=2) student parents attending one university located in the Atlantic provinces in Canada. The majority were Canadian, with two being international students. Sixty-one percent were single parents and 39% were married. The age ranged from 23 to 42 years with the average age being 32. The number of children ranged from one to three with the slight majority (53.8%) having only one child.

For student status, 61.5% enrolled as full time status with 38.5% being part time. Participants were enrolled in various degree programs with the majority (76%) being a Bachelor degree (See Table 1).

**Table 1.** Degree Programs of Participants

Degree Programs	
Bachelor of arts	BBA
Bachelor of arts/comm	Business Co-op
Bachelor of Social Work	Masters
Bachelor of Education	Masters of Arts
Bachelor of Nursing	Ph.D.

### Research Design

This study used a mixed method design incorporating survey and personal interviews. The survey took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete and contained three sections: university specific barriers, situational and personal barriers, and demographics. Interviews ranged from 20 minutes to two hours and contained eight open ended questions.

### Procedure

Since the university does not keep track of student parents, participants were located through three methods. The first was an email list of students who participated in the Student Work and Service Program (SWASP). SWASP enables student parents who are studying at the university to receive funding for tuition and, in certain cases, a cash stipend for completing relevant work experience. The second method utilized the email list of the Student Parent Resources Center and a poster at their office. The third method used posters placed in the lobby of the campus childcare center located on campus. Both the posters and emails provided information about the research project and contact information. Once they agreed to participate, students received a copy of the survey through either mail or email. Upon completion, they returned them via campus internal mail or through email. On the back of the survey was a form to indicate their willingness to participate in interviews. For those students who selected the interview, the researchers worked around students schedule to find a day, time, and location for the interview that worked best for them. Students received a \$20

gift certificate to Empire Theaters for participating in the interviews. In total, 12 of 13 students participated in the interviews.

The study's original timeline was six months. However, due to the difficulty in locating and making contact with student parents on campus, as well as working around their time schedules, the study took two years to complete. A third-party company specializing in transcription transcribed the auto recordings. The researchers then coded the files for themes. Survey data was run through the statistical program SPSS.

### Results

Participants reported experiencing positive support and positive responses by faculty and staff towards their needs when related to childcare responsibility and problems. However, a large percentage of students indicated they also received negative (unsatisfactory, unhelpful) support and negative attitudes from faculty and staff because of their student parent status (see Table 2). The majority, 67%, of students indicated receiving positive support from faculty and staff assisted them in wanting to complete their studies. Only 25% said 'No', while 8% said 'Somewhat'

**Table 2.** *Student Experiences from University Faculty and Staff*

	Percentage
Negative attitude because of parental status	23%
Positive support	61%
Negative support	46%
Positive response towards needs when related to childcare responsibilities/problems	46%

Regarding stereotyping, 54% percent of student parents in the study reported typecasting by students, 23% by faculty, 15% by staff at the university, and 8% did not know if they were stereotyped. For students who have experienced being stereotyped, 56% indicated that it did not hinder their studies in any way. However, 33% believe it did hinder their studies, and 11% are undecided on its impact.

Seventy-seven percent were aware of counseling and tutoring services available at the university. However, of this group, only 60% had used these services, 30% did not use it but considered it, and 10% had never used any. The reasons provided for not using the services are broken down in Table 3 with the largest contributor being that they had no spare time for counseling or tutoring.

**Table 3.** *Reasons for Not Using Counseling and Tutoring Services*

	Percentage
Did not know of them	15%
Not interested/no need	8%
Hours of operation not available during my free time	8%
Have no spare time for counseling or tutoring	23%
Do not know where to access such programs	8%

Only one participant had a mentor on campus, and the student made this contact. However, 73% of participants said they would be interested in having a mentor on campus. Sixty-seven percent of participants believed that mentoring programs would be beneficial to continuing their education and 33% were undecided. Similarly, 92% believed counseling and tutoring services would be beneficial to continuing their education, while only 8% were undecided.

When it comes to feeling like they are part of the university, 54% said yes; 34% felt they were not included, and 7% were undecided. Participants' level of satisfaction with various areas around campus varied greatly. Amount of time spent on campus was the only area that had a large positive consensus for our group. Table 4 shows the satisfaction splits.

**Table 4.** *Students' Level of Satisfaction*

	<b>Completely Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>Completely Satisfied</b>
Amount of time spent on campus		15.4%	15.4%	61.5%	7.7%
Amount of social interaction on campus	15.4%	30.8%	15.4%	30.8%	7.7%
Level of networking with fellow students	7.7%	53.8%	15.4%	15.4%	7.7%
Level of networking with faculty	8.3%	16.7%	33.3%	33.3%	8.3%
Number of campus groups/societies joined or member of	8.3%	41.7%	25%	16.7%	8.3%

Financial results for this group of student parents are of particular interest. There is a 50/50 split for participants who knew where to go to find information regarding scholarships and bursaries at the university and those who did not know. Fifty-four percent have received either a scholarship or bursary from the university, and 62% have received a government student loan. For the 38% who did not receive a government student loan, 80% did not apply for one. All participants agreed that receiving financial assistance from the university would increase the likelihood of completing their degree. For our group, 46% encountered problems between their parental student status and funding restrictions for various financial sources. Thirty-nine percent had no problems, and 15% said this was not applicable to them.

None of the participants lived in campus housing or residences. Table 5 provides a breakdown of the reasons for why they decided not to live on campus. Even though none of the participants lived on campus, 31% would like to live on campus while studying and 8% were undecided. Fifty-four percent of our group do not think living on campus would be beneficial to achieving their education, 31% agree that it is, and 15% are undecided.

**Table 5.** *Reasons Stated for Not Living on Campus*

	<b>Percentage</b>
No family units available	15%
Not required	39%
Living units not adequate to meet my family and child's needs	39%
Other	8%
Financial cost of living on campus	31%
Childcare not available	8%

Childcare is very important to student parents. Ninety-three percent stated having affordable, adequate, and easy to access childcare would contribute to completing their education. Student parents mainly used a combination of five services for childcare (See Table 6).

**Table 6.** *Child Care Services Used by Parents*

	<b>Percentage</b>
Private care	31%
University care	23%
Family member	54%
Friends	23%
Other	15%

Student parents gave 11 areas that have created hindrances to their education (See Table 7). The only area our participants said did not create a hindrance was a lack of qualified care for their child's needs.

**Table 7.** *Childcare Hindrances to Education*

	<b>Percentage</b>
Lack of childcare availability off campus	23%
Lack of childcare that is adequate for child's needs (special care, special equipment)	8%
Location of childcare center not reasonable or easily accessible	15%
Childcare hours of operation (on campus)	8%
Childcare hours of operation (off campus)	23%
High cost of private child care	46%
Inaccessible child care location	23%
Confliction between child care hours and class times	46%
Lack of available spots in private care	15%
Other	8%

When it comes to university support, only 22% agreed that the policies at the university support their needs; 38% were undecided and 39% said the policies do not support them.

When asked to rate the level of agreement towards programs available to them, the opinions were split with few having majority views. Students were also asked to rate the level of agreement of how they feel about the university. There is no significant agreement when it came to students believing that the university cares about the needs of student parents. There was more positive agreement by student parents that the university should adjust policies to meet their needs (See Table 8).

**Table 8.** *Students Agreement with Programs and University*

	<b>Completely Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Completely Agree</b>
Programs for student parents are very important to me			15.4%	15.4%	69.2%
Programs for student parents are necessary for the successful completion of our education	7.7%		15.4%	15.4%	61.5%
The current number of programs for student parents is satisfactory	53.8%	7.7%	30.8%	7.7%	
The types of programs available to student parents are satisfactory	41.7%	16.7%	33.3%	8.3%	
I feel that the university does not care about my needs as a student parent		33.3%	33.3%	8.3%	25%
I believe that the university should adjust its rules to students needs			33.3%	25%	41.7%

For the students, childcare issues and financial reasons were the top reasons for dropping enrollment (See Table 9). No one delayed enrollment due to class scheduling conflicts.

**Table 9.** *Reasons for Dropping Enrollment at University*

	<b>Percentage</b>
Child care issues	46%
Other	23%
Financial reasons	46%
Class time schedule conflicts	31%

Participants were asked to rate their agreement with a series of questions about sacrifices. The majority acknowledge sacrifices are necessary for their education, their family supports their sacrifices, and the family agrees with their choice to obtain a university degree (See Table 10).

**Table 10.** *Student Agreement with Sacrifices*

	<b>Completely Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Completely Agree</b>
I am willing to make sacrifices to achieve my education			7.7%	30.8%	61.5%
It is important to make sacrifices to achieve my education	7.7%		23.1%	38.5%	30.8%
Making sacrifices is important for the successful completion of my education			15.4%	30.8%	53.8%
My family supports me with the sacrifices I choose to make			38.5%	23.1%	38.5%

Participants rated their level of agreement to nine questions about various personal and emotional topics, and indicated how they have affected them. The findings show feelings of guilt and isolation are prevalent with this student group (See Table 11).

**Table 11.** *Emotional Toil on Students*

	<b>Completely Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Completely Agree</b>
I feel guilty at times for not spending more time with my children				38.5%	61.5%
I feel guilty at times for having to rely on others	7.7%		7.7%	46.2%	38.5%
My feelings of guilt have impacted my desire to continue my studies		15.4%	15.4%	46.4%	23.1%
I feel isolated from fellow students at university		15.4%	7.7%	15.4%	61.5%
I feel isolated at home from family members	23.1%	23.1%	7.7%	23.1%	23.1%
I feel isolated from my friends		30.8%	7.7%	30.8%	30.8%
My feelings of isolation have impacted my desire to continue my education		33.3%	25%	16.7%	25%

## Discussion

### Stereotyping and Support

While it is encouraging news that the majority of students reported receiving positive support and responses from both faculty and staff, almost half of the participants simultaneously experienced negative support and attitudes because of their parental status. Just over half of our participants experienced what they perceived to be stereotyping by fellow students. For those who have experienced stereotyping, the good news is a large portion of this group appears to be resilient against it and does not let it affect their studies. While the number of participants experiencing stereotyping appears to be low, this result is not necessarily positive. Students still believe the stereotypes of student parents are out there and so change their actions so to avoid the labeling. While it may not have affected student parents' studies, it is possible their own beliefs about stereotypes can affect their behavior and decision making as reflected by one student:

I don't tell them because of the stereotypes which are automatically applied to me upon telling them. I know it is up to people like me to challenge stereotypes, but ultimately they are there for a reason. I believe in them too because usually they have some basis. I know I'm an exception, so I withhold my young mother status so it won't negatively impact me. I also wouldn't want any professors or others to think I'm playing the parent pity card. (Anonymous Student Participant)

For others, their own fears of being stereotyped or the expectation that doing so would be disadvantageous to them in the end has kept them from informing professors and staff of their parental status. This is present in another student's statement: "...I feel it was to my disadvantage to tell my professors as I realized that although I did receive some flexibility in response, I was not taken seriously as a student as a result" (Anonymous Student Participant).

### University Services

**Counseling, tutoring, mentors.** Student parents in this study were aware of counseling and tutoring services offered at the university, and a large percentage of them have used the services or have at least thought about using them. The main reason given for not using the services is a lack of spare time. Besides lack of time, the other reason given for not using the services is they did not know about the services or if they did, they did not know where to go to access the programs. While counseling and tutoring are available on campuses, only one student had a mentor on campus, who she found by herself. Yet, when asked, the majority of our participants indicated they would like to have a mentor on campus. Being the majority wants these services and they all see it as beneficial to completing their education, having a mentor program in place is something universities can do to help alleviate some pressure from student parents.

**Campus housing.** None of our participants lived in campus housing. With all the advantages living on campus can offer to student parents, only 33% indicated they would like to live on campus. The largest contributors to students not living on campus are living units not being adequate for child or family needs, the financial cost of living on campus, and the lack of availability of family units. It was surprising to learn some student parents believed it costs significantly more to live on campus than it does to live off campus. Some also believed getting campus housing was difficult, as shown in this student's comment: "I think there's a few units. It is not like one of the big buildings type things. It's a few apartments that they have, but I'm not so sure how readily available they are, so I don't apply." The city where the university is located has a vacancy rate of .8% and limited low-income housing; therefore, it



would be to parents' interest to get valid comparison of living costs of on and off campus. Living on campus can give student parents access to more resources, availability to network and interaction with other students, and decrease their travel time to get from childcare to classes. Despite all these benefits, it is apparent being able to access childcare on campus is a factor that would keep any parent from living on campus even if units were available, met their child's needs, and was affordable.

**Childcare.** Childcare is a key factor for everything a parent does, and having adequate support and funding for this is one factor that will assist student parents in completing their education. University childcare however, does not rate high for usage amongst student parents. It actually rates third, below family and private care, and also ties for the same usage as friends. The largest reason for not using on campus childcare was the inability to get a position for their child. The child care centre at the university in this study houses four separate Childcare Centres – the Toddler Centre (ages 2-3 years), Pre-School 1 (3-6 years), Pre-School 2 (3-6 years), and the Activity Centre (5-12 years). There are 30 Toddler spaces, 106 School spaces and 54 after-school spaces for a total of 190 spaces. There is no specific number or restricted number of spaces allotted to student-parents. Available spaces are first offered to undergraduate students, secondly to graduate students, and thirdly to faculty and staff. This appears to contradict students' impressions that faculty's children come first.

Students also mentioned in interviews that there were long waiting lists to get their children in on campus care. There are wait lists and wait times at the center which vary for the different programs offered. As there are numerous variables that impact this, we cannot speculate as to the average wait time for student parents. Outside of this, the biggest barrier to student parents is the high costs of private childcare, and the time conflict between childcare hours and class times. The campus childcare center is open from 7:45 a.m.-6 p.m., which has been a problem for students who have an 8 a.m. or evening class.

**Student engagement: connection to the university.** Not many student parents feel connected to the university. In addition, while the majority appears to be fine with the amount of time spent on campus, there is no real consensus on satisfaction with the amount of social interaction and level of networking with Faculty. Student parents in this study seem to be dissatisfied with their level of networking with fellow students and the number of clubs/organizations they are members.

**Funding and finances.** Few student parents know where to go to locate information on scholarships and bursaries at the university. For those who do know, only half have received some sort of financial assistance. Even with funding support from the university, a large percentage of students rely on government loans or other sources of funding. For those students who manage to get government funding, the process is full of red tape, headaches, and conflict between their student parent status and loan qualifications. Many of our student parents have had trouble with funding restrictions with student aid:

I have already received the maximum amount allowable from student aid, which is part of the reason I have become a part-time student. In addition, my parental status has not excused me from repayment of my student loans (I have to make payments because I am only a part-time student). Not only can I not get funding, I have to make repayments on past funding, not to mention the high costs of childcare for a toddler. (Anonymous Student Participant)

Others find that they do not qualify for financial support due to loop holes or necessities not included.

It is much more expensive for me to go to school and funding does not take daycare into account. Daycare represents an extra \$10,000 cost for me to go to school but there is no funding to help with the cost. I am married and my husband works so we do not qualify for daycare subsidies, but there is not an extra \$800 per month in our budget for daycare, so if I attend school I have to find money for daycare or make complicated alternative arrangements. (Anonymous Student Participant)

Other students take up extra employment or have to get loans from their parents, family, or banks and incur high interest rates:

I am a single parent with a mortgage, car payment, etc. Student loan didn't cover everything to allow me to go back to school, so I have to rely on help (loan) from my mother in order to make it work. As well, I am working with the SWASP program in order to get credit toward tuition and help with finances. (Anonymous Student Participant)

For some students, marriage makes accessing funding more difficult. Having additional difficulties combined with their perception of lack of support can breed resentment towards other groups who are receiving support. This is evident in one student's comments:

My husband works offshore and I have to do distance courses because can't afford childcare. Tried to get subsidies but so much red tape. Had to go on social assistance for a while. Hard situation. Will be so glad to be done at least one degree and be able to work. The government is the worse culprit. They have no support of student parents. I only go what little support I did because I also am a person with a physical disability. Native people get tons of support but Caucasians are left behind. This is a provincial problem, at least more so than a university one. University changes will help with the issues but only provincial programs and funding will truly make a difference. I have no idea how I will pay back my student loans and afford childcare when I get work. (Anonymous Student Participant)

**University policies and programs.** Student parents do not believe the university's policies support their needs. Their opinions vary on whether the university cares about their needs as student parents. This is unsettling since student parents indicate strongly that programs for student parents are very important to them and are necessary for the successful completion of their education. Their views are reflective of their dissatisfaction with the availability and variety of existing programs for student parents at the university. Currently the university has only two programs designed specifically for student parents: the Student Parent Resources Center and the SWASP program.

The majority of our participants have encountered problems with the university's policy for dropping classes, with a similar percentage delaying their enrollment in classes due to childcare issues and financing.

### **Sacrifices and Support**

Student parents are willing to make a large number of sacrifices in order to complete their education. The most common sacrifices made is giving up time with their children, limited sleep, giving up personal time, and putting off hobbies and personal interests. However,

students acknowledge these sacrifices are important and are required in order to achieve their goals. “It’s not that I am unwilling but I have to make sacrifices. I have no choice if I want a better life” (Anonymous Student Participant). Some students forwent going home to visit family for years because of sacrifices they made to achieve their education. “I understand but I shouldn’t have to make as many sacrifices as I do to achieve my education.” (Anonymous Student Participant).

### **Conclusion**

What this research and the literature review are saying is the lives of student parents are anything but easy. They encounter similar challenges and barriers traditional students experience, but for them, these barriers are compounded by having to raise one or more children, sometimes on their own, with limited funding, and with additional restrictions placed upon them. It is also apparent the barriers and challenges faced are not going to be a simple fix. For student parents these barriers are often interconnected and play off each other. Yet, if universities take it upon themselves to fix even a few problem areas, then it will help in the end. Removing at least one stressor, barrier, or challenge can make all the difference between a student parent earning their degree or dropping out and living with the emotional trauma of having failed in their education.

The largest barrier these students encounter on campus appears to be perceived stereotyping from fellow students and their own personal beliefs and perceptions about being stereotyped. This poses the question; does stereotyping happen this much on university campuses? If not, how do we get this group of students to understand what they perceive is not actually there? Many minority groups on campus have advocators, supports, and groups that work to overcome stereotypes and provide accurate information to the general public; however, for this group, their supporters are silent.

Campus housing also needs to be addressed to determine why student parents do not see it as beneficial to their education. Housing issues for student parents and their families have already been raised in the Nouse, the University of York’s student newspaper (Ellis-Peterson, 2011). Reasons such as not enough or inadequate housing units can be only one of the factors. Once all the probable barriers have been determined, universities can design an information program to help educate student parents. Living on campus could alleviate some of the barriers student parents face, but any negative views towards campus living will have to be overcome first.

Interacting with all the challenges student parents are facing-both on campus and off- are their experiences with guilt and isolation, stress, and lack of support. Counseling can only go so far in addressing these issues, which can only be fully addressed as barriers are removed.

### **Recommendations**

The following are recommendations for things universities and student services can work on which will benefit student parents:

- Examine their policies, deadlines, and procedures to see how they could be adapted to ease the burden on this group.
- Work with the student parent societies to help increase students feelings of connectedness to the university, improve their view that the university does care for them and their needs, and host family friendly events they can attend with their children.

- Look at how to increase the number of childcare positions on campus and lower the cost associated with childcare for student parents, as well as consider having a few spots allocated only to student parents on campus.
- Set up a mentoring program specifically for student parents with faculty and staff on campus.
- Start keeping statistics on the number of student parents attending the university
- Provide some kind of introductory or welcome package for student parents. This could include pamphlets on services and where to find them, where to go on campus for assistance, and other beneficial information.
- Provide more scholarships and bursaries specifically for student parents. Particularly do not put too many financial restrictions on the bursaries so more parents can qualify for them.
- Create an information booklet which provides staff with valid information on the challenges and barriers student parents face, stereotypes of student parents, tips on how to interact and assist student parents, and places they can go to find out more information about being a student parent.

This research has just touched the surface of the interconnected and complicated world of being a student parent. Our recommendations may assist more student parents in completing their education and providing a better future for themselves and their children. Further research should be conducted to ascertain the growing dimensions of this field of student support and development.

### **Limitations**

Because of the small number of participants and having been conducted at only one university, the results may not be generalizable to the entire population of student parents in Canada. The possibility remains that the university has unique characteristics that contributed to our findings. We recommended additional research be done at other Canadian universities to determine commonalities.

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## The First-Year Experience: Impacts and Implications of Adopting First-Year Seminars

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### Abstract

*An increase of research exploring the rates of first-year students to drop out has led many institutions to implement a first-year experience designed to increase first-year retention and persistence to graduation. First-year seminars are a crucial component of many first-year experience initiatives as they address student retention and encourage the development of successful graduates. Today, 70% of institutions nation-wide offer first-year seminars. Student affairs professionals must consider how first-year seminars can help increase student retention and improve the first-year experience. A review of existing literature reveals that first-year seminars benefit students in developing student-to-student relationships, faculty-to-student relationships, and promoting student engagement during college. In addition, an examination of existing seminars provides a foundation for recognizing the practical ways in which seminars promote student learning and collaboration between campus partners. The opportunity for first-year seminars to create meaningful campus partnerships and purposeful student transitions is also examined.*

*Keywords:* first-year experience, first-year seminars, retention, transition

The persistence of first-year students at institutions of higher education has been an area of increased interest for student affairs professionals in the past decade. While the attrition of students at colleges and universities can be attributed to many factors, research has indicated that first-year students are at particularly high risk of dropping out (Porter & Swing, 2006). Porter and Swing (2006) articulated the importance of persistence for both students and institutions. In order for institutions to fulfill their mission of developing successful college graduates, it is essential to address the importance of student retention (Porter & Swing, 2006).

One such method of increasing retention among first-year students is the implementation of first-year seminars, or freshmen seminars. Today, 70% of institutions offer first-year seminars, according to the National Resource Center for First-Year Experience and Students in Transition (Jessup-Anger, 2011). Since the introduction of these seminars to the United States of America in the early 1900s, research articulating the benefits of seminars for first-year students has been of increasing interest (Goodman & Parcarella, 2006; Jessup-Anger, 2011; Porter & Swing, 2006; Thelin & Gasman, 2011). The implementation of these seminars has benefited students in their first year of college and their engagement throughout their collegiate experience. In addition, seminars have supported the partnership between academic affairs and student affairs, enhancing the overall development of students and student learning. This paper explores first-year seminars through a historical and practical lens in examining how they have contributed to the persistence of students at various institutions. It also examines how first-year seminars can be aligned with the mission of student affairs in increasing diversity, retention, and engagement among students.

### History of First-Year Programs

While first-year programs are primarily a 20th century concept (Barefoot, 2000) the roots of such initiatives can be traced back to the early diversification of college students. Throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s, a series of significant shifts in the United States' higher education system allowed for more diverse student populations to enter a larger variety of institutional types throughout the country (Thelin & Gasman, 2011). The most significant of these shifts resulted from the 1862 Morrill Land-Grant Act and the 1890 Second Land-Grant Act, which provided greater opportunity for colleges dedicated to serving underrepresented populations such as Women and African-Americans (Thelin & Gasman, 2011).

As students began entering college with more diverse backgrounds, campus personnel were charged with the task of accommodating each student's personal and professional needs through resources and opportunities across campus. Several programs were designed to help students adjust to the transition of college life including orientation, learning communities, and student mentoring programs (Thelin & Gasman, 2011). For many large universities, a desire to create smaller communities among students led to the implementation for first-year seminars (Thelin & Gasman, 2011). First-year seminars aided in creating a sense of community through small class sizes of around 20 students or less (Goodman & Parcarella, 2006). In the early 1900s, Boston University became the first institution in the United States to implement a first-year seminar curriculum (Clark & Cundiff, 2009). Today, 95% of four-year institutions within the United States host some form of seminar for first-year students (Clark & Cundiff, 2009). While these seminars differ in format and delivery, the common goals prevail. According to Clark and Cundiff (2009) first-year seminars "focus on teaching basic study skills, academic planning, and time management" (p. 619). Although these messages may be conveyed through various means (self-reflection, research projects, career exploration, common readings, etc.), the objective of helping students acclimatize to the college atmosphere is a common theme.

### Effectiveness of First-Year Seminars

Barefoot (2000) identified six research-based objectives that should be considered in all first-year seminars: "increasing student-to-student interaction, increasing faculty-to-student interaction, increasing student involvement and time on campus, linking the curriculum and the curriculum, increasing academic expectations and levels of academic engagement, and assisting students who have insufficient academic preparation for college" (p. 14-18).

Barefoot (2000) suggested student-to-student relationships and faculty-to-student relationships are especially critical for student development. These relationships are formed in many ways, and student affairs professionals have created a variety of resources to foster these relationships. First-year seminars have contributed to the student-to-student interaction by addressing the social integration of students in addition to academic integration (Barefoot, 2000). According to Tinto (1975), social integration considered the levels of congruency between an individual and his or her social environment. Tinto (1975) asserted that this type of integration is most likely to occur "through informal peer group associations, semi-formal [co]curricular activities, and interactions with faculty and administrative personnel within the college" (p. 107). This aspect of student development is especially important, as many first-year students focus their attention on academics and disregard additional challenges involved in their transition to college. Small class size is one form of addressing this discrepancy, as well as curriculum that requires personal reflection and social engagement. Many seminar sections focus on an academic topic pertaining to students' interest, while incorporating underlying themes, which subtly address social integration (Porter & Swing, 2006).

Faculty-to-student interactions are another key ingredient in creating successful first-year seminars. Faculty, staff, and administrators often facilitate different sections of these seminars, with upper-level undergraduate students as peer facilitators (Clark & Cundiff, 2009). Barefoot (2000) noted that while faculty at research institutions are often exempt from involvement with these programs as contact time with students is thought to detract from their personal research, many universities have begun to value the importance of faculty-to-student relationships and have integrated their most senior professors into the first-year student experience. Formal and informal relationships with faculty assist students as they adjust to a new approach to learning necessary in college (Jessup-Anger, 2011).

### **Implementation of First-Year Seminars**

Examining the effectiveness of first-year seminars warrants an exploration of specific cases in which these seminars were successfully implemented and sustained. Dooris and Blood (2001) provide an account of Penn State's ambitious attempt to implement these seminars for all first-year students over a two-year period. In 1997, Penn State adopted a general education package that, according to Dooris and Blood, "aimed to enhance curricular flexibility, emphasize high quality, foster opportunities for experimentation, and build assessment into the curricular process" (p. 1). The utilization of first-year seminars was critical in helping Penn State achieve many of the goals outlined in the education package. Sections for the seminars were restricted to less than 20 students and ranged in topics from university orientation and skill development to major specific themes. Prior to the implementation of this program, only 12% of first-year students were enrolled in the university's optional seminar program. One year after the implementation of the new first-year seminars, 10,484 students had fulfilled the new seminar requirement (Dooris & Blood, 2001). There were a total of 764 different sections within the 234 different courses. Through student assessments, Penn State determined the most salient themes in these seminars included time management skills, academic content, career knowledge, and internet skills (Dooris & Blood, 2001).

Another example of the successful implementation of a first-year seminar series occurred during the fall of 2008 at Georgia Southern University (GSU). GSU was dedicated to the revitalization of their first-year seminars through the utilization of information literacy as a structure for course content (Chambers, Smith, Orvis & Caplinger, 2013). These new seminars focused more on academics than university culture and campus orientation, as in the past. According to Chambers et al. (2010), information literacy referred to the finding of information with the intent of "understanding it, evaluating it, and using it appropriately" (p. 53). Faculty members were free to choose a topic of their choice as a means to inform their students' understanding of information literacy. In the end, a total of 127 sections were created and fulfilled during the fall 2008 semester with themes including a history of Rock-n-Roll, education around the world, and Star Wars (Chambers et al., 2010). Chambers et al. (2010) highlighted the collaborative nature of the first-year seminars, which involved faculty from around campus, librarians, and other student affairs personnel in their design. Faculty-to-student relationships were facilitated through the small class sections and the opportunity for faculty to utilize undergraduate student aids in assisting with the course structure. GSU developed student-to-student relationships by incorporating undergraduate students as mentors for the first-year seminar participants (Chambers et al., 2010). In addition to the integration of information literacy, self-reflection skills, time management, motivations, and personal learning style were incorporated into the curricula.

Overall, the implementation of this first-year experience was successful (Chambers et al., 2010). Both schools faced enormous logistical challenges in finding faculty to teach each



section and space to house the increase of classes. Penn State found their retention rate for first-year students rose to ninety-three percent during the first year of the program (Dooris & Blood, 2001). GSU emphasized the process as a truly collaborative effort, which utilized the knowledge and skills of a variety of departments on campus (Chambers et al., 2010). While Penn State and GSU described different experiences in the implementation of their first-year seminars, both emphasized an appreciation for the campus partnerships and student learning that emerged as a result of their efforts to stimulate the first-year seminars.

### **Implications for Student Affairs**

The existence of first-year seminars is important for student affairs professionals today for various reasons. First-year seminars increase opportunities for students to engage with a diverse group of their peers. According to Goodman & Pascarella (2006), “both males and females; both minority and majority students; students of various ages; students from various majors” have benefited from first-year seminars (p. 27).

In their 1996 study of students’ openness to diversity, Pascarella, Hagedorn, & Terenzini found that first-year students who engaged with diverse peers were more likely to have meaningful interactions which incorporated values and personal opinions. Pascarella et al. (1996) also concluded that students’ engagement and involvement in college is an important determinant in his or her openness to diversity. Opportunities to experience diversity must remain a priority for student affairs if they are to exist in congruence with their purpose of promoting informed global citizens.

First-year seminars also increase retention rates among first-year students, ultimately leading to greater levels of persistence throughout college (Goodman & Pascarella, 2006). Students are more likely to withdraw from a university in their first year of college than any other time during their college education (Porter & Swing, 2006). Student affairs professionals can easily overlook the adjustments needed to be made in order for students to experience academic success. Seminars like those at USG provide students with the ability to learn the elements of academic success in college while connecting with faculty and peers, discussing themes pertaining to their area of study, and navigating the complexities of college while being supported (Chambers et al., 2013). It is essential first-year students realize they are not alone in this transition and that their institution cares about their success and eventual graduation.

Finally, first-year seminars promote student engagement and provide an opportunity for students to engage outside of their academics. It is important for student affairs and academic affairs to recognize the connection that exists between student engagement and retention in higher education (Schroeder, 2005). Schroeder (2005) states while student affairs and academic affairs may be equally concerned in the retention of students, “programs and services are usually implemented in isolation from one another” (p. 204). Providing a for-credit academic experience that promotes concepts like co-curricular engagement can help students understand how their classroom learning relates to their personal lives (Schroeder, 2005). According to Goodman and Parcarella (2006), first-year students “who participate in first-year seminars, become more involved in co-curricular activities” (p. 27). It is not uncommon for first-year seminars to incorporate some elements of service learning and community engagement into their curriculum in an effort to increase student engagement (Hunter & Linder, 2005). Doing so can help articulate the importance of engagement in enhancing students’ education and informing their values.

### Conclusion

The implementation and success of a first-year seminar series is highly dependent on the commitment of the institution to support student retention, relationship development, and academic success. The importance of first-year seminars has been informed by the needs of first-year students and their expectations of higher education. Barriers that will likely emerge through the process of implementing first-year seminars include reluctance to curriculum change, lack of resources, and conflicting interests among student affairs professionals and faculty (Hunter & Linder, 2005). What must be agreed upon is the advantage that first-year seminars provide in increasing student retention, academic success, and campus partnerships. Hunter & Linder (2005) indicated the power of first-year seminars to both challenge and support students as they learn to navigate the complex system of higher education. First-year seminars serve as an opportunity to increase retention, enhance relationships, and encourage diversity among students.

An examination of previous efforts to implement such programs, such as Penn State and GSU, provide a framework for the costs and benefits of adopting seminars as part of the first-year curricula. The future of first-year seminars is unknown, but a foundation of extensive research and experience has been developed to meet the demands of the next generation of college students. According to Hunter & Linder (2005), “first-year seminars have the potential to be one of the most dynamic and enduring curricular initiatives of the future” (p. 291).

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## Positive Masculinities within Male Athletic Teams and Fraternities

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### Abstract

*The state of today's collegiate male is viewed in a negative light, and masculinity is often synonymous with destructive and damaging characteristics and behaviors. Research on men and masculinities often focuses on negative characteristics, and little has been published on positive aspects of masculinity. Furthermore, information on masculinities within groups of men is scarce. Given the gaps in research, this manuscript highlights positive, inclusive, and productive masculinities within groups of men, specifically within the context of athletics and fraternities. Understanding the many ways today's college men demonstrate masculinities is imperative in order to best serve and support them, expanding on the often narrow perceptions of masculinities provides a more holistic lens through which to understand college men. Further, understanding positive masculinities, particularly within groups of men, can help inform the development of such masculinities on college campuses. Implications for student affairs are discussed, including recognizing diverse masculinities, developing and fostering inclusive and productive masculinities, and examining perceptions of college men.*

*Keywords:* athletics, college men, fraternities, masculinity

Current research on men and masculinities focuses heavily on issues college men face in society; much of the research presents masculinity in a negative light. Certainly there are negative implications of some forms of masculinity for the campus community and for people of all genders (Harper & Harris, 2010). There are, however, positive masculinities that exist and warrant further exploration. The research and literature on positive masculinities is limited, and insight into these masculinities can help inform the development of such masculinities as well as provide insight into college environments that facilitate and support healthy masculinities. In this manuscript, the literature on college men and masculinities, limited research on positive and healthy masculinities within the context of men within same-sex organizations (specifically athletic teams and fraternities), and implications for practice are discussed.

### Men and Masculinities on College Campuses

In his 2008 book, *Guyland*, Kimmel included a collection of interviews that provide insight on manhood among young men in America. He addresses how men come to understand themselves and how constructs of masculinity help shape their identity as men. An overwhelming theme is men are constantly seeking to be “positively evaluated by other men” (Kimmel, 2008, p. 47). In his previous research, Kimmel (2000) explained, “Other men watch us, rank us, grant our acceptance into the realm of manhood. Manhood is demonstrated for other men’s approval” (p. 214). Further, men are the “gender police,” constantly on the lookout for their same-sex peer to make a mistake (Kimmel, 2008), the worst of which being perceived as feminine (Davis, 2002). A fear of being perceived feminine is a common expression among collegiate males, leading them to restrict particular behaviors in order to avoid certain labels

(Davis, 2002). Additionally, these fears lead to wishing to prove he is not gay (Kimmel, 2008). Homophobia is more than the fear of the LGBT community; “homophobia is the fear that we might be perceived as gay... that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men” (Kimmel, 2000, p. 214).

The socialization of college men has deep roots in the idea of hegemonic masculinity and the traditional masculine norms college men are expected to exhibit (Tillapaugh, 2015). Hegemonic masculinity is “the process of influence where we learn to earnestly embrace a system of beliefs and practices that essentially harm us, while working to uphold the interests of others who have power over us” (Kimmel & Davis, 2011, p. 9); it influences every outlet of our society, and college men are engulfed in a society that perpetuates these strict gender norms (Kimmel & Davis, 2011).

Demonstrations of masculinity on college campuses are diverse and have implications for the campus culture and affects students of all genders. One research study identified masculinity as diverse, patriarchal, and competitive on a college campus (Harris & Struve, 2009); further, a hierarchy of masculinity was uncovered. More specifically, fraternity men and male student-athletes who embodied masculine stereotypes were at the top of this hierarchy, were more visible, and benefitted from the campus culture. The process in which men develop an understanding of ‘what it means to be a man’ is often subconscious due to the strong messages and socialization in society on what it means to be a man (Kimmel, 2008). Upon reflection of what it means to be a man, participants in Davis’ (2002) study were at a loss of words, and even stated masculinity “was something with which they did not want to identify” (p. 516). Men often do not think about what it means to be a man and the implications of this.

With women increasingly becoming the majority gender on college campuses, there is a growing focus on the need to ‘fix’ college men (Harris & Lester, 2009). Some argue society should create ways to “curb [college men’s] destructive behaviors” instead of focusing on gender identity (Harper & Harris, 2010, p. 1). This perpetuating idea that something is inherently wrong with college men negatively impacts their ability to develop a healthy identity. It is important to recognize not all men are failing and not all masculinities are negative; it is the hegemonic masculinities played out in today’s society that are damaging the development and presence of healthy masculinities and identities that do and can exist (Tillapaugh, 2015).

### **Positive and Healthy Masculinities**

Positive and healthy masculinities do exist among college men, yet are rarely a focus in the literature or popular press (Tillapaugh, 2015). Although society continues to believe men are creatures of hegemonic masculine cycles, Berkowitz (2011) argues there are college men who want to be involved and exhibit productive masculinities. Although stereotypical male behaviors exist on campuses, diverse, and more positive, forms of masculinity can also be found (Harris & Struve, 2009). There are also men on college campuses who “proactively reject...notions of hegemonic masculinity and tap into healthy masculinities...[they] are becoming engaged as allies in developmental work such as sexual assault prevention, bystander intervention training, or taking active roles in social justice education on their campus” (Tillapaugh, 2015, p. 137). Rather than focus solely on hegemonic masculinities among men, it is important to recognize and learn from positive and inclusive masculinities. Below, research is presented on positive and inclusive masculinities, specifically within communities of men often perceived to have negative masculinities – male athletes and fraternity men.

## Masculinities in Male Athletics

Participation in athletics is crucial in garnering the 'All-American male' title. Much of American identity is found in sports; teams and individuals who demonstrate success and winning are often more respected and considered more ideal and masculine (Schrack-Walters, O'Donnell, & Wardlow, 2009). Boys are encouraged to be active in athletics at an early age, and athletics is seen as a way to establish and develop masculinity (Schrack-Walters et al., 2009). Athletics has a reputation of socializing its boys into the adult world of men, including values and attitudes deemed important (Drummond, 2002). Of course, not all sports are considered masculine. Sports such as ice skating, gymnastics, and diving are subject to more scrutiny because they typically do not embody the tough, physical, masculine characteristics of other sports such as football or basketball (Schrack-Walters et al., 2009).

**Inclusive masculinities.** Within the limited research on how members of male athletic teams approach the constructs of masculinity, there is a theme of *inclusive masculinities*. Inclusive masculinities exist when teammates accept one another with little to no conditions because they have created a special bond. A study on a college soccer team at a liberal college in the Northeast region of the United States resulted in the themes of decreased homophobia, emotional bonding, and physical tactility within the team (Adams, 2011). The athletes who identified as heterosexual were accepting and supportive of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community and were open to having gay teammates or roommates. The players "displayed physical tactility and emotional bonding in the form of hugging and talking about emotional issues" (Adams, 2011, p. 590). The team members displayed inclusive masculinities through respecting their teammates' varying expressions of masculinity.

A second study examined masculinity within a soccer team. In researching a men's soccer team at a small, Catholic university, the researcher identified four main themes relating to inclusive masculinity: supporting homosexuality, eschewing violence, emotional bonding, and homosocial tactility (Anderson, 2011). These men were not afraid to engage in once-taboo behaviors of emotionality and physical tactility, and the acts were not homosexualized to them. Additionally, they valued and displayed a larger range of gendered behaviors than are typically demonstrated and expected of traditional athletes (Anderson, 2011). These findings reflect the themes from Adams' research on college men on a soccer team. In both cases, the studies identified themes that challenge stereotypical perceptions of masculinity in men's athletics.

Although these two studies are narrow in focus (i.e., institutional type, same sport, small studies), the findings suggest inclusive masculinities can and do exist within men's athletic teams. There is a need for additional research on masculinities within men's athletics. Further research across institutional type, sport, and region can provide valuable insight.

**Relationships and responsibility.** Additional research on college men and athletics identifies findings on relationships and bonds among teammates. A qualitative study on men's soccer and basketball teams at a Division II university resulted in findings that student-athletes regarded relationships they made with their teammates as most important to their lives (Schrack-Walters et al., 2009). Using words like "bonding," "trust," "closeness," and "connected," the men established and developed these deep relationships through their athletic team involvement; the researchers found "sports provided an opportunity to develop a positive self-concept and identity from which they mastered developmental tasks of adolescence and young adulthood, such as competence in academics and social relationships" (Schrack-Walters et al., 2009, p. 94).

Another study on masculinity in college sports resulted in similar findings, whereby teammates developed deep relationships (Steinfelt et al., 2011). The study examined perspectives of college football assistant head coaches in intercollegiate athletics (Steinfelt et al., 2011). The coaches felt football teaches young men what it means to be a man, which was about being responsible and accountable (Steinfelt et al., 2011). The coaches fully valued the psychosocial development in their players, and they expressed lessons learned on the field help student-athletes become responsible, accountable men on and off the field (Steinfelt et al., 2011).

Certainly there are limitations in the scope of these studies and their generalizability to other teams, sports, or institutions. These studies do, though, suggest athletic teams have the capacity to facilitate deep and meaningful relationships among men, which is discussed in the broader literature as being difficult, and in some cases absent, for many college-aged men (Davis, 2002).

### **Masculinities within Fraternities**

The Greek system has fallen under extreme scrutiny in past decades with media outlets calling attention to hazing, raping, and excessive drinking (Wilkie, 2010). The Greek system has been blamed as reproducing hegemonic masculinity through a gender-segregated, racist, sexist, and hyper-masculine culture (Sanday, 1990). Although it is true some fraternal men engage in destructive behaviors, not all Greek males behave this way, and most of the research disproportionately focuses on predominately White fraternities at residential institutions of higher education (Harris & Harper, 2014).

**Fraternal bonding.** Similar to the theme of team bonding in the research on men's athletics, research on fraternities suggest fraternal bonding in facilitating healthy masculinities. Results from a study of participant observation of a nationally-recognized fraternity suggest the once-seen monolithic Greek male exhibiting hegemonic masculine characteristics is shifting to a new type of masculinity (Anderson, 2008). The men in the chapter valued the "social inclusivity of various types of men" (Anderson, 2008, p. 616) and spoke highly of the bonds they made with one another. The members greatly valued the emotional intimacy the brotherhood shared. Being inclusive rather than marginalizing others added to their perceived healthy definitions of masculinity (Anderson, 2008).

**Productive masculinities.** In recognizing multiple types of masculinities exist, Harris and Harper (2014) introduce the idea of *productive masculinity*, much like *inclusive masculinity*. In their study on productive performances of masculinities of fifty Interfraternity Council men at a national leadership conference, four significant themes emerged: (a) bringing out the best in men, (b) 'a brother is a brother', (c) disrupting sexism, homophobia, and racism, and (d) conditions that enable guys to be good (Harris & Harper, 2014). Along with maintaining their fraternity's values and principles, the men were driven by an authentic care for their brothers and desire to see them mature as men. The participants felt "they were responsible for being the type of fraternity men they wished others to see and that they themselves desired their brothers to be" (Harris & Harper, 2014, p. 713). Although the research on healthy masculinities within fraternity men is limited, this study provides evidence that fraternities can help support and develop healthy and productive masculinities.

### **Discussion and Implications**

There are significant gaps within the literature on positive masculinities. The limited research suggests diverse masculinities exist among college men, even among men who appear to exist at the top of hierarchy of hegemonic masculinities due to their involvement in athletics or fraternities (Harris & Struve, 2009). Positive findings including inclusive and productive

masculinities emerge from the research in addition to the presence of bonding within all-male groups. Further, themes that suggest some men challenge hegemonic masculinity through disrupting sexism, homophobia, and racism also emerged.

It is important that student affairs professionals recognize diverse forms of masculinity exist. College men should not be stereotyped as having hegemonic masculinities, even within all-male groups. Whether due to being on a team or a more inclusive generation and environment, research suggests some men demonstrate behaviors and attitudes that challenge hegemonic masculinity stereotypes. To create, develop, and foster inclusive and productive masculinities, student affairs professionals must create environments that facilitate growth and leadership for college men. Being a leader on a team or in a fraternity gives students the opportunity to experience how to effectively work with and influence others (Harris & Harper, 2014). Male-specific programming such as leadership retreats for male athletes and fraternity men can facilitate self-awareness and discovery, relationship building, and skills to influence change within their organizations.

Further, student affairs professionals must examine their own perceptions of college men. Negative masculinities are rampant, and we are all undoubtedly influenced by society's depiction of "a real man." Thus, educators must examine their expectations of and interactions with men. This is particularly important for student affairs professionals who identify as men, as men often look to other men for validation. Educators should strive to exhibit a healthy definition of masculinity and "be intentional about providing spaces and opportunities for these men to think critically about their identities as men and the consequences of hegemonic masculinity" (Harris & Harper, 2014, p. 719). Training, education, and professional development on healthy, positive masculinities can benefit student affairs professionals, advisors, and coaches working with college men.

### Conclusion

Challenging pre-conceived notions of what it means to "be a man" by opening up the conversation to recognize a diverse array of masculinities exists creates an environment that can facilitate the development of positive, healthy masculinities. The literature reviewed in this manuscript demonstrates even among all-male collegiate groups, positive masculinities can be held and developed. There are opportunities to expand the current research base on positive masculinities through a number of realms. As is evidenced by this synthesis of literature, the examination of positive masculinities within all-male collegiate groups is limited; further research is needed across institutional type, athletic team, and geographic regions in the United States to expand understanding of positive masculinities among all-male groups. Additional research is warranted on the existence and development of positive masculinities among diverse populations of men, such as gay and bisexual men who may also be men of color. There is much to learn about college men and masculinities, and future research should continue to explore the topic for a more comprehensive understanding.

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### ***Purpose:***

Manuscripts should be written for the Student Affairs generalist who has broad responsibility for educational leadership, policy, staff development, and management. Articles with specialized topics, such as harassment, should be written to provide the generalist with an understanding of the importance of the topic to Student Affairs. Such an article should not take the form of one program specialist writing to another program specialist.

The Editorial Board invites submissions of the following types of articles:

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- Student Development and Learning
- International and Global Perspectives
- Assessment and Research
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- Law, Governance, and Ethics

*Research articles for the Journal should stress the underlying issues or problem that stimulated the research. Explain the methodology in a concise manner, and offer a full discussion of the results, implications, and conclusions.*

### ***Procedure***

Literature Review manuscripts should not exceed 3,000 words (approximately 12 pages of double-spaced, typewritten copy, including references, tables, and figures) and should not be fewer than 1,000 words (approximately four pages). Exceptions should be discussed with the editors at the time of submission.

Original Research manuscripts should not exceed 6,000 words (approximately 24 pages of double-spaced, typewritten copy, including references, tables, and figures) and should not be fewer than 3,000 words (approximately 12 pages). Exceptions should be discussed with the editors at the time of submission.

### ***Guidelines for Writing***

1. Prepare the manuscript, including title page and reference page, in accordance with the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition.
2. Include an article abstract and brief description of the author, including professional title and institutional affiliation. The abstract should clearly state the purpose of the article and be concise and specific, ranging from 150-250 words; refer to page 25 of the Publication Manual for assistance.
3. Double-space all portions of the manuscript, including references, tables, and figures.
4. Avoid bias in language; refer to page 70 of the Publication Manual for assistance.
5. Do not use footnotes; incorporate the information into the text.
6. Use the active voice as much as possible.
7. Check subject/verb agreement.

8. Use verb tense appropriately: past tense for the literature review and description of procedures and present tense for the results and discussion.
9. Proofread and double-check all references and citations before submitting your draft.
10. Use Microsoft Word (2000) or higher so that editors may utilize the “insert comment” function.
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