

ELEVEN UPDATE



"Killer App"

-or-

"Close. . .But No Cigar"

The Student Learning Imperative: Implications for Student Affairs Professionals

- What is the **Student Learning Imperative** and what does it mean to student affairs professionals in community colleges? This issue of *Eleven Update* focuses the Commission XI spotlight on the challenging questions raised by this call to arms. Inside you will find:
 - An abridged statement of the Student Learning Imperative. Based on his own experience, your *Eleven Update* editor would never assume you can lay your hand on the copy you picked up in Baltimore. (Page 3)
 - The full text of the Student Learning Imperative is available on the ACPA website at <http://www.acpa.nche.edu/>.
 - Gateway's Wilson Luna calls for greater integration of students' academic and social needs. The Student Learning Imperative, he contends, provides a basis for partnerships and proactive linkages that will enhance our students' learning experience. (Page 5)
 - Steve Helfgot brings a welcome dose of "community college" perspective to this discussion. Steve's assessment - The Student Learning Imperative is, at best, uninspiring. At worst, it is completely out of touch with our students' reality. It gets a thorough and refreshing critique from a savvy Commission XI veteran. (Page 7)
 - Linda Reisser urges us to use the Student Learning Imperative as a tool to share with our colleagues a truth student affairs professionals have always known - that "human development is the unifying purpose of higher education." (Page 9)
 - Some words on the direction of Commission XI work from our esteemed leader. Commission Chair Jennifer Wimbish details the directorate's response to members suggestions and concerns. (Page 2)

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Student Development in Two-Year Colleges
American College Personnel Association

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Commission XI Directorate Sets Course In Response to Members' Concerns



Over the last few months, members of the Directorate Body of Commission XI have been involved in several key initiatives which we believe will begin to address issues you, the reader presented to us, in a 1996 survey. You may recall, that in the Winter 1996 edition of *Eleven Update* we asked readers to identify the key areas they would like to have the Commission address in the upcoming year.

One hundred and twenty-two readers responded to the survey. More than seventy five percent of the individuals responding to the survey indicated that they felt the key areas the commission should address were:

- ♦ Preparing Professionals for Careers in Student Development
- ♦ Developing a Quality Leadership Force for the Future
- ♦ Future Directions for Student Development in Two-Year Colleges.

The Directorate has heard your voice and is actively pursuing several initiatives in response.

Joint Pre-conference Institute with NASPA and NSCD

At the upcoming jointly sponsored Chicago National Conference of ACPA and NASPA, Commission XI will join the community college sectors NASPA and NCSD to present a pre-conference institute for potential, new, and current student affairs professionals interested in moving up and on. The three-hour session will present information on theories and practices guiding student affairs in the past and present. It will also include information on professional organization and resources available to student affairs professionals.

Additionally, a review of the mission of student affairs professionals in two-year colleges will be discussed and future challenges facing the profession will be presented. The session will include a video presentation with comments from students and will engage participants in interactive small group learning activities. A panel, including members from all three of the organizations, will facilitate the session. Participants will receive a resource a guide that will include information critical for student affairs professionals in two-year colleges.

Continued Dialogue with NASPA and NCSD

Leaders from NASPA and NCSD met in Atlanta to discuss joint initiatives and discussed ways to develop a written document focused on future directions for student affairs professionals in two year colleges. A monogram from the Dallas Interassociation Conference will be forthcoming that will present written information on this topic. Watch future issues of *Eleven Update* for more information about this work.

Future Directions

Discussion also is occurring on an initiative that will bring together former and current Student Affairs Professionals in Two Year Colleges for a discussion that will result in a written document on the topic "Future Directions for Student Development in Two- Year Colleges."

Members of the Commission XI Directorate have also been busy developing a new research project. The project will partner community colleges with students from various graduate programs in universities across the country. The purpose of this partnership will be for community colleges to identify potential research problems and engage graduate students in researching the identified issues as a part of their program of study. If you would like to have your community college participate in this program, please contact Susan Salvador at (716)292-2124.

Mark March 18-23, 1997 on your calendars for the upcoming ACPA and NASPA convention. ACPA and NASPA hold a joint national convention only once every ten years. Do not wait another ten years for this unique opportunity. Join us in Chicago!

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The Student Learning Imperative: Implications For Student Affairs

Preamble

- ❑ The interval between the decay of the old and the formation and the establishment of the new, constitutes a period of transition which must always necessarily be one of uncertainty, confusion, error, and wild and fierce fanaticism. - John C. Calhoun
- ❑ The key to enhancing learning and personal development is not simply for faculty to teach more and better, but also to create conditions that motivate and inspire students to devote time and energy to educationally-purposeful activities, both in and outside the classroom.

Purpose

- ❑ The Student Learning Imperative is intended to stimulate discussion and debate on how student affairs professionals can intentionally create the conditions that enhance student learning and personal development. It is based on the following assumptions about higher education, student affairs, and student development:

- ♦ Hallmarks of a college-educated person include: (a) complex cognitive skills (b) an ability to apply knowledge to practical problems (c) an understanding and appreciation of human differences (d) practical competence skills and (e) a coherent integrated sense of identity, self-esteem, confidence, integrity, aesthetic sensibilities, and civic responsibility.
- ♦ The concepts of "learning," "personal development," and "student development" are inextricably intertwined and inseparable. The dichotomy separating "academic affairs" from "student affairs" has little relevance to post-college life, where the quality of one's job performance, family life, and community activities are all highly dependent on cognitive and affective skills.
- ♦ Experiences in various in-class and out-of-class settings, both on and off the campus, contribute to learning and personal development.
- ♦ Learning and personal development occur through transactions between students and their environments broadly defined to include other people (faculty, student affairs staff, peers), physical spaces, and cultural milieus.
- ♦ Knowledge and understanding are critical, not only to student success, but also to institutional improvement.
- ♦ Student affairs professionals are educators who share responsibility with faculty, academic administrators, other staff, and students themselves for creating the conditions under which students are likely to expend time and energy in educationally-purposeful activities.

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"personal development," and
"student development" are
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inseparable.

The Learning-Oriented Student Affairs Division

- ❑ A student affairs division committed to student learning and personal development exhibits the following characteristics:

1. The student affairs division mission complements the institution's mission, with the enhancement of student learning and personal development being the primary goal of student affairs programs and services.

- ❑ Student affairs professionals take seriously their responsibilities for fostering learning and personal development. Their efforts are guided by a holistic philosophy of learning that is congruent to their institution's mission and clearly distinguishes between the institution's commitment to process values (e.g. ethnic diversity, gender balance, equity, and justice) and desired outcome (e.g., student learning personal development).

- ❑ If learning is the primary measure of institutional productivity by which the quality of undergraduate education is determined, who at and how much students learn also must be the criteria by which the value of student affairs is judged (as contracted with numbers of programs offered or clients served).

2. Resources are allocated to encourage student learning and personal development.

- ❑ The division reward structure values those processes and conditions that are associated with desired student outcomes.



Student Learning Imperative, cont.

☐ The orientation of many student affairs professionals, and the activities in which they engage, emphasize certain aspects of learning and personal development (e.g., psycho-social) over others (e.g., knowledge application or intellectual development). For this reason, student affairs divisions must attract and reward people who design programs, services, and settings that encourage student involvement in activities that have the potential to foster a wide range of learning and personal development outcomes.

3. Student affairs professional collaborate with other institutional agents and agencies to promote student learning and personal development.

☐ The learning-oriented student affairs division recognized that students benefit from many and varied experiences during

college and that learning and personal development are cumulative, mutually shaping processes that occur over an extended period of time in many different settings.

☐ Student affairs professionals attempt to make "seamless" what are often perceived by students to be disjointed, unconnected experiences by bridging organizational boundaries and forging collaborative partnerships with faculty and others to enhance student learning.

4. The division of student affairs includes staff who are experts on students, their environments, and teaching and learning processes.

☐ Student affairs staff should know how students spend their time and whether students are using the institution's re-

sources to educational advantage. They share responsibility for initiating conversations with students and other institutional agents about how students could make more effective use of their time and institutional resources. They monitor whether institutional policies and practices enhance or detract from learning and personal development. Moreover, they integrate data about student performance from faculty and others with their own observations of students' experiences and disseminate their information to stakeholders.

5. Student affairs policies and programs are based on promising practices from the research on student learning and institution-specific assessment data.

☐ Certain conditions promote learning more than others. For example, learning and personal development are enhanced when students participate in groups organized around common intellectual, curricular, or career interests. Student affairs professionals should adapt to their institutional setting promising practices from those fields that contribute to the body of knowledge about student learning and personal development.

WANTED: STUDENT LEARNING INNOVATIONS

Are you aware of a particularly innovative and successful program or practice that enhances student learning?

➔ The editors of *About Campus: Enriching the Student Learning Experience* would like to hear about it. In each issue of *About Campus*, the "In Practice" section of the magazine features a short, informative report on exemplary practices and innovative efforts undertaken by specific campuses to improve student growth and learning. Your help in identifying model programs is needed.

Please forward your recommendations to:

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- OR - e-mail Terry at tpiper@ccmail.nevada.edu

- OR - FAX (702) 895-0149.

➔ Please include the name of the institution, contact person and phone number, a brief description of the practice, how you consider the program to be an innovation, your name and phone number. If you would like more information please contact Terry Piper at (702) 895-0131.

CONCLUSION

☐ As with individuals, colleges and universities rely on experience to guide behavior. But when external forces (budget constraints, shifting demographics, accountability) produce radical changes, familiar, comfortable practices may no longer work. Change brings uncertainty as well as opportunity. Student affairs professionals must seize the present moment by affirming student learning and personal development as the primary goals of undergraduate education.

☐ Student affairs must model what we wish for our students: an ever increasing capacity for learning and self-reflection. By redesigning its work with these aims in mind, student affairs with significantly contribute to realizing the institution's mission and students' educational and personal aspirations.

"THE STUDENT LEARNING IMPERATIVE: IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS"

ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

❑ Higher education is in the throes of a major transformation.

❑ *Student Learning Imperative: Implications for Student Affairs*, addresses this fact, pointing to economic conditions, eroding public confidence, demographic changes, and accountability issues. Student affairs professionals have been asked to promote and enhance the learning process for all students at a time when the participation rate in higher education has increased and resources to support this increase have not been adequate.

❑ These complex issues present a challenge for student affairs professionals in the community college setting. Current conditions are forcing community college policy makers to concentrate on retaining more students. Researchers and administrators have long noted that two-year institutions have the lowest retention rates of all postsecondary institutions (Brooks & Leonard, 1991; Gates & Creamer, 1984; Rowe & Smith, 1992; & Tinto 1987). The open door admissions policies further contribute to the challenge because of the wide range of student abilities, aspirations, and personal characteristics.

❑ Student affairs professionals can enhance the learning process by encouraging their institutions to develop programs and services to increase the students' academic and social integration. Academic and social integration are two areas upon which an institution can have a positive impact.

❑ Several researchers (Bean 1990, Boyd 1992, Thomas 1990, & Tinto 1987) claim that a well-developed student orientation program may be the beginning of such integration. According to these researchers, an orientation program that includes academic and social issues, faculty involvement, and recreational activities provides an opportunity for the beginning of interaction between the student and the institution at several levels. These initial interactions promote future student

involvement with the academic and social systems of the college.

❑ Upcraft, Gardner, and Associates (1990) argue that academic and social integration of first year students into a college or university are crucial for success. They claim that there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that student success is largely determined by experiences during the freshman year. For community college students, success may be determined by experiences during the first semester.

Student affairs professionals can enhance the learning process by encouraging their institutions to develop programs and services to increase the students' academic and social integration.

❑ Student affairs professionals at community colleges can contribute to the learning process by forming partnerships with academic deans, deans of students, faculty, and academic support staff to make sure that the necessary policies, procedures and programs are in place to foster academic integration. Justiz and Rendon (1990) recommend the following:

- A. A diagnostic assessment for all incoming students.
- B. Restricting students needing developmental education to no more than four credits. One of these courses should be a human development course taught by a professional counselor.
- C. Minimum entry and exit competencies for developmental classes.
- D. Training and professional development activities for faculty teaching developmental courses.
- E. Share exemplary teaching styles and techniques with other faculty.

❑ The student affairs staff can enhance the learning process by identifying required courses that are known to have high failure rate or drop out rate. Smith, Kippitt, Noel, and Sprandel (1980) suggest that information about reading, writing, test taking strategies, and time management may identify problem areas. Furthermore, old exams may identify course emphasis and answer format which students can use for practice.

❑ They further suggest that teachers and students can provide hints regarding problem areas in courses by identifying course content that is difficult to teach and learn. Teachers and students can identify assignments, questions, and concepts which may present significant difficulties. Such information should be shared with the faculty and students in the institution. It has the potential to increase student success rates in those specified courses and contribute to the overall teaching and learning process.

❑ Other activities to promote academic integration should include course feedback, tutorial assistance, contact with students missing classes, involvement of students in departmental projects, and the provision of work-study opportunities in the student's academic department.

❑ Adjustment to campus life is also crucial to academic and social integration. According to Tinto (1987), social integration consists of faculty interaction, peer relations, and involvement in extracurricular activities. Austin (1978) claims that community college students who have less involvement in school are more likely to leave school. Austin believes the lack of on-campus housing contributes to the lack of involvement.

❑ Plascak-Craig, Stage, MacLean, and Bean (1990) recommend that in the social area, the focus should be on increasing the number of opportunities for curricular and co-curricular activities, and increasing faculty/student contact outside the classroom.

Academic and Social Interaction, cont.

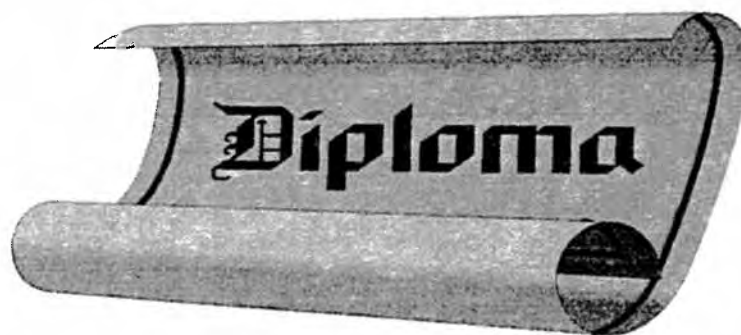
□ Since community college students tend not to remain on campus except to attend classes, Boyd (1992) contends that they are less likely to interact with other students, faculty, and staff. As a result, he claims that these students are less likely to take advantage of support services available. Austin (1978) claims that when compared to any other involvement variable, the faculty/student relationship has the strongest impact on student satisfaction with the college experience.

□ Tinto (1987) suggests when students are well integrated into the academic and social system of their institution, it leads to heightened intentions and commitments that result in persistence. The opposite point is also true; if students are not well integrated into the academic and social system, they may leave.

□ Institutions of higher education and their students will benefit if colleges and universities move in a proactive manner to encourage and promote academic and social integration. Increased academic and personal growth and increased student persistence will be the outcome of any initiative to increase such cohesion. Indeed, both the students and the institution will be the direct beneficiaries of any strategy to increase integration.

□ Student affairs professionals should develop partnerships with the academic side of the house. These partnerships will promote and facilitate the development and implementation of appropriate student services and encourage meaningful interaction between faculty, students, and staff enhancing the learning process. This effort will be a challenge for student affairs professionals as we move toward the year 2000. These partnerships address the challenge in *The Student Learning Imperative: Implications for Student Affairs* that calls for faculty, staff, academic administrators, and others to help all students attain high levels of learning and personal development.

Wilson Luna, Ed.D.
Acting Director of Counseling



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The Student Learning Imperative

— Let's Get Real!

❑ I've now read *The Student Learning Imperative: Implications for Student Affairs*, not just once...but four times. I know that its all the rage and that it is supposed to define the newest direction for our profession, and that I'm supposed to love it. And I want to love it, like it seems that everyone else does—but I just can't. My reactions vary.

❑ When they are most positive, I find nothing in the document that I really have an argument with; its sentiments are noble, its goals worthwhile. My neutral reaction is that it just doesn't resonate for me; there is nothing in it that starts my blood boiling, my heart pounding, and gets me excited. When I react most negatively, I get angry...really angry, because the document seems to me to be out of touch, profoundly out of touch, with the professional reality I know. That reality is the community college and community college students.

❑ Statistics suggest that some forty percent of all the college students in the United States attend community colleges, a substantial *minority*. When those who are attending urban commuter institutions (which have student bodies very similar to those of community colleges) are added, the total becomes something in the neighborhood of seventy percent, a substantial *majority*. One must ask: Does *The Student Learning Imperative* make sense for students in these institutions, and should it guide the work of student affairs professionals who work with these students in these institutional settings? It is the answers to these questions that most evoke the reactions described above.

❑ On the positive side, we in community college student affairs have been involved in the integration of learning and personal development for well more than a quarter of a century. Our professional staff have *always* had faculty status and rank, they have always taught both non credit seminars and workshops and (more importantly) credit courses in the curriculum. And these courses were more than mere electives; they were often courses that met both degree and transfer requirements.

❑ Veterans will remember Human Potential Seminars and similar courses from the late sixties and early seventies (If you're over 45 see if there is still a copy of O'Banion's The Shared Journey on your bookshelf) as well as their numerous successors that persist to this day. More than that, we have for decades been involved with integrating the affective and cognitive domains...both inside the classroom and out. (While you are hunting around on your bookshelf see if you can find another golden oldie," George Isaac Brown's 1971 work *Human Teaching or Human Learning: An Introduction to Confluent Education*).

❑ Integrated, teamed, paired or tandem courses linking a student affairs faculty member with a faculty member from another discipline (and their two courses) has long been a staple of our work. So I applaud the things in *The Student Learning Imperative* that encourage this kind of activity on the college and university campus.

❑ In the end, though, I don't get excited and, in fact, get angry because the body of the document seems to contradict its preamble which acknowledges that "...increased numbers of people from historically underrepresented groups (are) going to college" (Journal of College Student Development, 1996, p.118). The contradiction arises because the things suggested to help these students learn and develop seem to be based on the assumption

that these underrepresented students are in fact full-time undergraduates on residential campuses and not (as is in fact the case for the majority of them) part-time commuting students at community colleges and urban universities.

What we need is not a *Student Learning Imperative* but a *Student Success Imperative*. . .

❑ The document suggests that we, in student affairs, should be involved in creating "conditions that motivate and inspire students to devote time and energy to educationally-purposeful activities both in and outside the classroom." (Journal of College Student Development, 1996, p. 118). This goal is surely worthwhile; it is without doubt an ideal for which we should strive. Every community college student affairs professional knows, however, that it cannot be the focus of our work with our "typical" student: a 27 year old single mother who (barely) fits school into a life more than filled with child care and a full or part-time job, but who is, at the same time, absolutely tenacious in her commitment to get through school (however long it takes) and create a better life for herself and her family.

❑ Nor is it a workable approach for another of our "typical" students: the eighteen year old child of new (and often unskilled) immigrants, who with a high school diploma in hand, is seen as having both the opportunity and responsibility to contribute *significantly* to the family income and support. Many times, in the eyes of this student's family, every year spent in school is another year in which the benefits of that student being a full time worker and wage earner are lost. Arguments about future income that comes with an education are not well received. The need is real



The Student Learning Imperative – Let's Get Real!, cont.

and it is current. The price that this student must pay to stay in school is often to work at the same time. The demands are great and the pressure is enormous.

❑ So for those of us who work with non-traditional students (though they have been a part of our world for so long, they don't seem the least bit non-traditional anymore) I would like to suggest that what we need is not a *Student Learning Imperative* but a *Student Success Imperative*. For our students its success that is the goal, success often expressed in clear, concrete practical terms:

- ♦ I want to pass all my classes this semester.
- ♦ I don't want to have to drop any classes this semester.
- ♦ How do I get financial aid?
- ♦ Will these classes get me a job?
- ♦ How can I transfer to the university when I have to work 40 hours a week?
- ♦ How can I convince my parents to let me stay in school?
- ♦ How do I dress and what do I say in a job interview?
- ♦ I don't have the money to buy books and need to find a way to keep up until I have it.
- ♦ I know the final is tomorrow, but my baby is sick and I don't have anyone to help me.

❑ For students asking these questions and making these statements success is important, and learning is seen—for better or for worse—as a utility, as a means to that sometimes very narrow and very necessary definition of success.



❑ For these students, a *Student Success Imperative* might contain the following about a student affairs division committed to student success. Compare these ideas to those in the *The Student Learning Imperative* summarized on pages 3 and 4 of this issue of *ElevenUpdate*.

STUDENT SUCCESS IMPERATIVE

1. The student affairs division mission complements the institution's mission with the encouragement, development, and facilitation of activities to promote and insure student success being the primary goal of student affairs programs and services.
2. Resources are allocated to those things which provide added opportunities for students to successfully reach both their immediate and long term goals.
3. Student affairs professionals work in partnership with those inside the institution (including students, faculty, administrators, and service providers) and those outside (including families, employers, local government, social service agencies, civic groups, high schools, and other colleges and universities) to help remove obstacles to, and provide greater opportunities for student success.
4. The division of student affairs includes staff who are experts on students, their communities and cultures, on teaching and learning, on advocacy and on the resources available, both in the college and in the community, to help students to be successful.
5. Student affairs policies and programs are based primarily on accurate information about the institution's students and community, on practices shown to contribute to student success, and on an assessment of what is needed by current students to successfully reach their goals, consistent with the college's educational mission.
6. The student affairs division, whenever possible and appropriate to the student's situation, encourages and provides opportunities for students to engage in activities that enhance learning and promote personal development.

❑ A *Student Success Imperative* may not be as sophisticated, nor as intellectually rich, nor as professionally uplifting as *The Student Learning Imperative*. It is, however, more in keeping with the real lives and real needs of the majority of "new" students who enter higher education via community colleges and urban universities, and a more real and realistic imperative for those student affairs professionals whose careers are spent in working with these students.

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"The Student Learning Imperative" — A Wake-up Call for Our Profession

❑ "The Student Learning Imperative" seems to reaffirm our traditional commitment to holistic student development. It says, "the concepts of learning, personal development, and student development are inextricably intertwined and inseparable," and that these terms are used interchangeably throughout the document (ACPA, 1994, pp. 1-2).

❑ Still, it puzzles me that a dichotomy is made between "learning" and "personal development." For example, it says that "Student affairs professionals must seize the present moment by affirming student learning and personal development as the primary goal of undergraduate education" (ACPA, 1994, p. 4). Why split the two concepts? All personal development involves learning. Human development is the unifying purpose of higher education. Those of us steeped in theory know this. Our colleagues, however, may not.

❑ We can use the Student Learning Imperative as a wake-up call to translate student development theory into language understandable to faculty and administrators who may see us primarily as service-providers or facilitators of fun times and good feelings. In these days of shrinking budgets and evolving institutional priorities, we need to use every opportunity to define our purpose, and to embrace "learning" as what we support and produce. But it's important not to perpetuate the false dichotomy that "learning" refers to the cognitive domain, and "personal development" refers to "less cognitive" (e.g. interpersonal, emotional, ethical, and other psychosocial variables).

❑ In our revision of *Education and Identity*, Arthur W. Chickering and I retained and revised the seven vectors as guiding frameworks for practice (Chickering and Reisser, 1993). The first vector, developing competence, includes intellectual competence, physical and manual competence, interpersonal competence, and an overall sense of competence.

❑ Yet when most academics talk about "learning," they are referring only to intellectual competence (acquisition of subject matter knowledge and academic skills, intellectual, cultural, and aesthetic sophistication, thinking and reasoning skills, developing new frames of reference, etc.). When they underscore this as the mission of the institution, they grant second-class citizenship to other forms of lifelong learning—interpersonal, emotional, ethical, physical, etc.

❑ The authors of "The Student Learning Imperative" seem to reinforce this kind of demarcation when they say, "The student affairs division mission complements the institution's mission..." If we are all involved in facilitating learning, then we do not "complement" it. We implement it.

❑ We promote competence in all its forms, and we foster the increasing ability to manage emotions, move through autonomy toward interdependence, develop mature interpersonal relationships, and develop identity, purpose, and integrity. One of our ongoing problems is that we don't articulate our role or our know-how in turning theory into practice.

❑ It has always been a challenge to keep these developmental dimensions in the foreground. It seems more difficult to stay on top of the workload, let alone implement the precepts of "The Student Learning Imperative." The colleagues I talk with are busier than ever, stretched and stressed by increasing demands placed on them by students and supervisors. Resources tend to be allocated based on current budgets, with small percentages of more or fewer dollars, not to initiatives that encourage student learning.

❑ Student affairs professionals may try to initiate collaborative efforts with academic affairs, but without an equal partnership mandated from the top or forged by the experience of true collaboration, we can still be seen as ancillary.

While some of us may have expertise on student learning, we find few avenues for sharing it, and little time to pursue research and scholarship. While some institutions have engaged in strategic planning, rarely are resources allocated to produce specific outcomes. Instead, we tend to organize services and activities as we have in the past, and if we produce annual reports, count up the numbers rather than articulate how we have engaged in fostering learning.

❑ The services we provide to bring students into the institution, and to move them through it and beyond it are critical. If we were successful in meeting the institution's recruitment and retention goals, many of our campus leaders would say we had served our purpose. We are indeed accountable for providing services to students and to the institution.

❑ But *The Student Learning Imperative* reminds us that we need to be explicit about what students are learning when they receive our services and participate in our programs. We need to refocus on and articulate ways to put student development theory into practice. What are some ways we can do this?

1. *Set aside time to review theory and research, and how it can inform practice.*

My experience is that if we don't set aside time to review and discuss theory and research, it happens . . . individually and sporadically. We need to organize staff meetings, in-house seminars, and retreats in order to work through the application of theory to practice. Many of our colleagues have not had the benefit of a master's program in student development. Even



A Wake Up Call for the Profession, cont.

if they have, we need to set aside blocks of time to reflect on our practice, to share ideas about how to improve it, and to discuss the implications of articles, conference workshops, or new books.

2. *Identify learning outcomes.*

A novel approach to goal-setting is to ask professionals to identify what they assume students are learning as they go through admissions, advising and registration, apply for financial aid, have skills assessed, participate in student activities or athletics, go to the counseling center or health services office, live on campus or commute, go to a cafeteria or adult student center, etc. What would we like them to be learning? The learning outcomes can range from the mundane (e.g., where the buildings are or how to add or drop classes) to the profound (e.g., how to take a leadership role or how to mediate a conflict).

3. *Gather data.*

Once we have identified learning outcomes, we need to validate our assumptions that learning is occurring. We can do this by checking on students' retention of information, increasing competence or knowledge, or improving performance. We can ask students to give us feedback on particular programs, or report on the overall impact of the college at the exit point.

At Suffolk County Community College, we designed a Graduate Follow-up Survey to ask alumni about their satisfaction with programs and services, where they went after

leaving our college, and how they would rate the impact of the college on their development. To do this, we developed a series of questions based on the seven vectors. We asked them to "indicate the extent to which your experiences at Suffolk Community College, both in and out of class, contributed to your growth" (options were "a great deal," "a moderate amount," "little or nothing," or "not applicable"). Items based on the seven vectors are as follows:

Developing Competence

1. Becoming more academically competent.
2. Expanding interests in artistic, cultural, and intellectual activities.
3. Developing thinking and reasoning skills.
4. Improving oral and written communication skills.
5. Developing physical fitness and a healthier lifestyle.
6. Learning to work effectively as part of a team or group.
7. Developing leadership skills.

Managing Emotions

8. Becoming more fully aware of both positive and negative feelings.
9. Learning to accept my feelings as valid sources of information.
10. Learning to express or channel my feelings more appropriately.
11. Developing better ways to cope with negative feelings that can disrupt my life.

Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence

12. Learning to need less approval and reassurance from others.

13. Becoming more independent and self-sufficient.
14. Learning to balance my needs for independence with the needs of others.
15. Recognizing my rights, responsibilities, and privileges as a member of society.

Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships

16. Understanding and appreciating people from different cultures or backgrounds.
17. Developing social and interpersonal skills.
18. Developing positive, close, lasting personal relationships.

Establishing Integrity

19. Becoming more comfortable with myself as a male or female.
20. Increasing self-confidence and self-esteem.
21. Clarifying and accepting who I am as a person.

Developing Purpose

22. Clarifying educational and career goals.
23. Developing a sense of purpose, value, and meaning for my life.
24. Strengthening my interpersonal and family commitments.

Developing Integrity

25. Clarifying my own values, beliefs, and ethical standards.
26. Becoming more willing to consider different points of view.



A Wake Up Call for the Profession, cont.

27. Acting in a manner that is consistent with socially responsible, personal values.

4. *Incorporate student development principles into action plans and annual reports.*

Student affairs administrators can reinforce intentionality and accountability by asking professionals to develop action plans at the beginning of each year. These should address how they are planning to implement the goals of the institution and the division, and also how they can meet the standards of the profession by fostering student development. At Suffolk Community College, we use the kinds of questions or outcomes listed above as a framework for planning workshops, activities, and retention initiatives. A mid-year report and an end-of-the-year report not only foster reflection but also provide the data for communicating about our contributions.

5. *Find opportunities to articulate our goals and accomplishments.*

Student affairs administrators need to look for large and small opportunities to make our contributions explicit. Whenever we find ourselves at a podium or in a committee meeting, we have an opportunity to reiterate theory and related practice. For example, at orientation sessions, faculty meetings, student recognition ceremonies and planning task forces, we can emphasize the ways we build skills, broaden intellectual horizons, increase teamwork, enhance self-confidence, help students clarify goals and act on values. We need to underscore that these benefits are not accidental byproducts, but are outcomes of personal and environmental factors that we create.

Linda Reisser, Ed.D.
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Our Colleagues In Commission XVII Want To Make You Famous!

□ ACPA's Commission XVII provides assistance and support to professionals in higher education who either work with, or are interested in gaining knowledge about, **adult learners and commuter students**. Each year the Commission rewards excellence in our field by granting awards for outstanding programs, services, ideas, and contributions whose target audience is **commuter students/adult learners**.

We may not be able to give you a pile of gold for your efforts, but we can offer RESPECT and RECOGNITION!

Commission XVII is seeking nominations for the following awards:

Outstanding Programmatic Contribution for:

Public Relations Strategy
Commuter Event/Activity
Innovative Fundraising
Adult Learner Event/Activity
Campus-Wide Collaboration
Faculty/Student Interaction

Outstanding Individual Contributions to Commuter/Adult Learner Perspective:

In Literature
By a Student Development Professional
By a Student
To Commission XVII

□ The awards are presented at a Commission sponsored reception at the upcoming ACPA/NASPA Convention in Chicago, March 19 - 23. Commission XVII will also recognize award recipients in its post-convention newsletter.

For award criteria, nomination forms, and deadlines contact:

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- Oscar Wilde

