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## Introduction

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## **Introduction**

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Collaborative efforts have long been viewed as an important activity for student affairs functional units. Reaching out to the campus community is valued by our profession, yet frequently there has been a perceived lack of reciprocity that can make the process feel one sided. Challenges and opportunities are inherent within collaborative work between academic and student affairs. The literature shares high impact opportunities (Kuh, 2008), and this volume seeks to extend those by sharing the powerful impact collaborations have on shifting campus cultures and building collectives around special populations.

### **Collaboration in Student Affairs**

Collaboration is a hallmark of the student affairs profession. Even as early as the *Student Personnel Point of View* in 1937 (American Council on Education), the profession recognized that in order to pursue the development of the whole student, institutional actors must collaborate. This was affirmed again through *Powerful Partnerships* (American Association for Higher Education [AAHE], American College Personnel Association [ACPA], & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators [NASPA], 1998). As the profession has matured, these collaborations have increased and broadened (Kezar, Hirsch, & Burack, 2001; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Schuh & Whitt, 1999). They occur through partnerships such as living-learning communities, service-learning experiences, diversity and global learning, community-based learning, first-year seminars and experiences, and planning teams to name a few. Furthermore, while these connections between academic affairs and student affairs have always been valued and even documented as high impact educational practices (Kuh, 2008), there always seems to be some difficulty in creating and sustaining them.

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Hancock and Boyd (2013) suggested that this challenge is a derivative of intercultural sensitivity (or lack thereof) in campus collaborations. If we view academic and student affairs as two distinct sub-cultures within academia, then the extent to which partners' perceptions and understandings of those differences can have significant impact on the success of collaborations between the two sub-cultures (Hancock & Boyd). The key, then, is to concern ourselves with building capacities for shared goals (e.g., student learning, institutional accountability and quality, etc.) and, subsequently, a movement from a denial of difference to an integration of those differences in a way that produces synergistic approaches to this work.

Beyond the proven nature of high impact practices (Kuh, 2008), the changing landscape of assessment, external accountability and return on investment for higher education underscores the necessity of partnerships and collaborations between academic and student affairs. No longer can or should we go about our everyday work in silos without acknowledging the importance that each group plays in student learning, growth, development, and ultimately, student retention, progression, and graduation. No institution, public or private, is exempt from this conversation. For example, in the state of Georgia, the governor-appointed Higher Education Funding Commission recently released a report listing measures that would reward student achievement and results in higher education (e.g., graduation rates, credit hour thresholds), rather than mere enrollment (Higher Education Funding Commission, 2012). This shift in the funding model for the University System of Georgia is a key indicator that, more than ever, a collaborative approach between academic and student affairs is essential. Both student and academic affairs should develop collaborative approaches to student learning and engagement that have transformative impacts across campus.

### **Outcomes of Leveraging Collaboration**

Dr. Joe Cuseo, a professor of psychology at Marymount College in Palos Verde, CA, proposed five areas where collaboration can bring about significant changes on a college campus

resulting in bringing everyone together for the shared goal of improving the college experience for students (n.d.). First, he noted that all areas of campus should be working together to ensure everything possible is done to increase the *retention of students*. He pointed to the writing of Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) whose review of 2500+ research studies showed that collaboration creates opportunities for students to engage with the campus through a variety of processes, which in turn, keep students enrolled in classes through to graduation. More recently, *Inside Higher Education* noted that some institutions are even asking faculty and student affairs staff to call individual students to increase retention rates (Rivard, 2014).

Collaborations to *maximize student learning* was the second concern Cuseo (n.d) noted. He discussed the role college attendance has on the overall growth and development of college students emphasizing the importance of student affairs and academic affairs working together. His third point, *advancing institutional assessment, accountability, and quality* showed the importance of being able to measure the outcomes of collaboration to show stakeholders the impact of the efforts. According to Cuseo, “unification of the professional forces of academic and student affairs is necessary in order to ensure the quality of undergraduate education because the total effect or impact of college encompasses both curricular and co-curricular programming, and comprehensive outcomes assessment embraces both in-class and out-of-class student experiences” (p. 3).

*Development of the whole person* is often a stated goal of student affairs programs and services. Cuseo (n.d) made the distinction that *general education* serves a parallel process in the academic community of educating the individual to broad and far-reaching pieces of knowledge. Many overarching collaborations could be achieved through merging our approaches to fully educate students.

Finally, Cuseo (n.d.) said “the recurrent theme in these scholarly works is that there is a *schism between the curriculum and co-curriculum*, marked by compartmentalization of professional

responsibilities and divisive political territoriality, which has resulted in a splintering of holistic student development and liberal education into disjointed parts. These fragmented components need to be reassembled if collegiate institutions intend to promote productive partnerships and build campus community” (p. 5). We need to *build community* to fully achieve a seamless learning and living environment for our students (Boyer, 1990). Collaborative methods should be employed and embraced to meet this goal.

### **Innovative Approaches to Academic and Student Affairs Collaborations**

The articles included in this special edition highlight both the opportunities and challenges inherent in this work and emphasized why the approach we take is just as important as the collaboration itself. The authors of the articles explore the aforementioned tenets examined by Cuseo (n.d.) as a means for engaging in the complexities inherent in student and academic affairs collaborations. As highlighted by articles included in the journal, the authors share innovative approaches to building collectives around special populations and collaborations that focus on shifting campus culture.

### **Building Collectives for Special Populations**

As mentioned earlier, collaborations are driven by a variety of reasons; one of those reasons is providing intentional approaches to serving special populations. The first article, authored by Zoe Johnson, explores contextual factors that influence the recruitment, retention, and graduation rates for African-American males in higher education through the establishment of an African American Male initiative (AAMI). Outlined in the next article by Carrie Smith is a suggested model for postsecondary institutions to address the growing problem of summer melt among students from low-income backgrounds inclusive of student affairs, admissions, counselor education graduate programs, K-12 counselors, and financial aid as partners in the process. The model is an example of collaborating for the purpose of addressing retention of this

special population. Lastly, for this section, an article by Douglas Bell that incorporates a focus on student learning and retention through assessment and accountability examines collaborations for distressed students. Campus behavioral intervention teams vary greatly from campus to campus; they provide a unique opportunity for collaboration with various stakeholders in the campus community. The articles in this section provide helpful insight and direction for building collectives for special populations.

### **Shifting Campus Culture**

Inherent in collaborations are the impacts on the campus community. The collection of articles in this section of the special issue focuses on engaging in collaborations as a catalyst for shifting campus culture. In this section of the journal, the first article by Andrew Wells examines the potential for student and academic affairs collaborations to enhance students' learning concerning environmental justice through liberal arts education. This article directly relates to the importance of maximizing student learning and building community concepts outlined by Cueso (n.d). Next, Tiffany J. Davis explores the utility of collaborations to inform implications of general education through undergraduate research experiences. As mentioned earlier, collaborative efforts that promote the general education core of the institution advance student engagement and learning in the academic community. Moreover, the next article by J. Matthew Garrett and Alex C. Lange includes research and implications for creating academic and student affairs collaborations that support the development of students' integrity and values clarification. The authors of this piece view collaborations as an opportunity to influence the campus using an environmental lens. Next, Shannon R. Dean authors a presents a need to shift language around multicultural competence to multicultural consciousness, and identifies the importance of collaboration between academic and student affairs around multicultural

consciousness to enrich student learning and development. The special issue concludes with an article authored by Jillian A. Martin that includes a collaborative approach to professional development between academic and student affairs personnel. Related to the foundational underpinnings of the student affairs profession, this article illuminates the collective investment of student and academic affairs in the overall learning and engagement of students. Each article in this section serves to advance the narrative on using collaborations as a means for shifting campus culture.

This special issue of the *Georgia Journal* goes beyond the surface discussion on academic and student affairs collaborations and instead, provides insightful positions on the topic. Moreover, the articles included provide innovative approaches to collaborations, the associated nuances, and implications for academic and student affairs practice.



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