

Public Abstract

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Title:Understanding the Process of Organizational Change: A Student Affairs Case Study

The purpose of this case study is to describe the process of organizational restructuring and redesign within the division of student affairs at an institution of higher education. The study featured the process that occurred when the new Chief Student Affairs Officer (CSAO) arrived in the summer of 2011 at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis and the subsequent redesign of the student affairs division. This study is important to the practice of student affairs because it provides insight into the redesign process that can typically only be obtained through experiencing it. The literature review I conducted includes a review of structural organizational theory, a breakdown of the various types of organizational structures, and an outline of the strengths and weaknesses of the current organizational forms currently used in higher education. This dissertation augments the existing literature through a case study approach to examine the process of organizational redesign.

I used a qualitative within-site case study approach of the organizational change that occurred in the summer of 2011 with the arrival of a new Vice Chancellor for Student Life at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis. I interviewed nine student affairs administrators present at the time of the change and reviewed documents concerning the change to come to my conclusions. This includes a detailed description of the chronology of the change process and a thematic analysis of the change that occurred.

The primary implication garnered from this case study is that student demographics and needs should determine how a student affairs organization is designed. As an institution, IUPUI's student demographic has transitioned over the years to be younger and more traditionally aged, thus, the division of student life needed to be restructured to best support its changing students demographics. It is imperative that the design of student affairs organization match the needs of a campus student population.

The secondary implication is the balance between input and decision-making when it comes to organizational change. Dr. Davenport used his limited time and influence between his hire and start date to build trust and gather input from numerous stakeholders. His actions were deliberate and sincere, but upon collection and analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data, a decision was made to make a change in structure. That decision occurred nine days into Dr. Davenport's tenure and set the tone for the upcoming year in the reconfigured division. CSAOs should be cognizant of the division and campus culture before taking the executive decision approach.