

Evaluating the impact of partnerships on the campus climate and culture is an important step in developing partnerships between academic and student affairs.

Guiding Principles for Evaluating Student and Academic Affairs Partnerships

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Once partnerships have been formed between academic and student affairs, mechanisms need to be put in place to evaluate the extent to which these partnerships have been successful. Although other partnerships may be developed to improve institutional functioning and efficiency, or for other reasons, student learning would be the primary purpose of academic and student affairs partnerships. Garland and Grace (1993, citing Seldin and Associates, 1990), describe the situation this way: The failure of colleges to establish links between students' out-of-classroom experiences and their academic endeavors has impeded not only students' overall personal development but also the quality of their academic experience. Terenzini (1993) adds that if academic and student affairs units work together, students are likely to benefit from such collaboration. Looking to the future, Murphy (1989) recommends that "the distance that exists between student and academic affairs should best be viewed as past history" (p. 377).

Previous chapters in this sourcebook have described various methods of evaluating the outcomes of partnerships between academic and student affairs. It is clear that a wide variety of approaches is available to academic and student affairs administrators who wish to evaluate the success of their joint activities. Space limitations preclude the authors from providing detailed descriptions of techniques and approaches to evaluation and assessment, but useful sources of such information include Banta and Associates, 1993; Banta, Lund, Black, and Oblander, 1996; Blimling, Whitt, and Associates, 1999; Kuh, 1993; Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, and Associates, 1991; Stage, 1992; and Upcraft and Schuh, 1996.

This chapter shifts our focus on evaluation from student outcomes to the general impact academic and student affairs partnerships have on the climate and culture of the institutions in which they occur. A series of principles that illustrate successful partnerships is provided. The list can be used to do a quick check of the landscape of your institution. The more evidence of these principles on a given campus, the greater the likelihood that effective partnerships have been formed between academic and student affairs. Of course the extent to which these principles are perceived as permeating the fabric of a campus is a matter of judgment, and two individuals on the same campus might view the same situation in substantially different ways. Even if that is the case, these principles can be used to stimulate discussion about partnerships: To what extent do they exist on your campus and how do they influence the institution? Which partnerships are most effective and why? How are effective partnerships formed? What obstacles exist to forming effective partnerships? How can they improve institutional effectiveness? How can existing partnerships be enhanced?

Clearly the list of principles is incomplete. In specific situations, other items could be added to the list, or some could be deleted from it. The way that institutions develop partnerships depends very much on their students and their circumstances (Chickering and Gamson, 1987; Schroeder, 1999). But the important point is that conversations need to occur about partnerships on the individual campus, before they are formed, while they are in the process of being developed, and after the fact as well.

Principles that Demonstrate Effective Partnerships

1. Student learning is an essential part of the institution's mission. All members of the institution are deeply committed to student learning and use that commitment to guide their work. And the commitment to learning is manifested in the life of the campus: "Both mission statements and goals must be used to be useful, and evidence suggests in all too many cases we are not using them (Gardiner, 1994, p. 108).

Lyons (1993) points out that institutional mission shapes student affairs work. The consequence of this observation for student learning is clear: "The greater priority that the faculty or administration assign to student learning and development as an institution goal, the greater the respect and support accorded to student affairs" (Astin, 1996, p. 132).

2. Student learning is the organizing principle of the student experience. What this principle means is that as programs are considered for addition or deletion, the first question asked is, "How will this change affect student learning?" Although financial or organizational reasons will not be discounted entirely, student learning will be the focus of the institution's leaders. Kuh, Douglas, Lund, and Ramin-Gyurnek (1994) point out that "Institutions with an ethos of learning are blessed with more than a few boundary spanners, peo-

ple who move among the functional silos, articulating the institution's mission and vision with language that acknowledges and respects both classroom and out-of-class learning" (p. 64).

Institutional messages to prospective students emphasize the importance of student learning, whether by the institution's view book, catalog, or other information to new students. Orientation activities emphasize the importance of student learning, and student learning will be evaluated continuously throughout their experiences. Faculty members use a learning-centered approach to instruction. A wide variety of instructional technologies is employed in the classroom, but the traditional lecture is used sparingly. Students' out-of-class learning experiences are recognized and rewarded. Through convocations, institutional ceremonies, scholarship awards, and other institutional activities, student learning is celebrated.

3. The learning process for students is seamless. "The word seamless suggests that what was once believed to be separate, distinct parts (e.g., in-class and out-of-class, academic and nonacademic, curricular and cocurricular, or on-campus and off-campus experiences) are now of one piece, bound together so as to appear whole or continuous" (Kuh, 1996, p. 136). This suggests that student learning should occur in virtually all corners of the campus at all times. Indeed, learning occurs in the classroom, on the intramural field, in the residence hall, the library, sites of student work, and other places on the campus. "The intellectual, social, and emotional elements of learning can be integrated in and out of the classroom" (Love and Love, 1995, p. 78). The institution recognizes that student learning could occur anywhere on campus, and in other, purposeful, experiences that would occur off campus, such as volunteer activities, student work and so on.

4. Credit experiences require out-of-class activities. This evaluation criterion means that the application of learning experiences occurs outside the classroom. In practical terms this means that internships and cooperative education experiences are highly valued, as they should be, because there is strong evidence to suggest that such experiences are powerful sources of desired learning outcomes (Astin and Sax, 1998). It also means that service learning is an essential element in the curriculum so that students must complete certain activities outside of the classroom before earning credit. To be sure, not all disciplines lend themselves to such experiences, but as out-of-class learning experiences complement the nature of the curriculum, these experiences should be integrated into student learning experiences. Faculty consider integrating out-of-class learning experiences into the curriculum a priority rather than as an afterthought. "Courses employing service-learning encourage students to ask the larger questions of life beyond the bounds of most traditional courses. Not only does service-learning have the potential to help students learn the content in a particular discipline, it also asks students to consider the context of a discipline and how its knowledge base is used in practice" (Enos and Troppe, 1996, p. 156).

5. Student affairs staff to teach courses with faculty. Suggesting that student affairs practitioners can coteach any course is patently ludicrous, but a substantial number of courses can be offered by student affairs officers with faculty. Heading the list are first-year seminars for entering students. Upcraft, Gardner, and Associates (1989) indicate that faculty, administrators, or professional staff can teach such courses. Much of the content of these courses is mastered by student affairs staff who have been offering workshops and other learning experiences for students on time management, stress reduction, and organizational skills for years. These seminars provide a natural match for student affairs practitioners and faculty.

A second area where collaboration in offering courses has great potential is diversity education. Astin (1996) pointed out that diversity education has a positive effect on students. This form of activity is a sure-fire winner for everyone involved—for students in terms of their learning, for faculty who will form a valuable partnership with student affairs practitioners in developing curriculum, and for student affairs staff in playing an increasingly central role in the life of the university. Other areas of course content where partnerships are possible include leadership development, an important outcome of the higher education experience, and career planning and development.

In some situations, campus alliances (see Sagaria and Johnsrud, 1989) can be developed and student affairs staff can coordinate an entire program, such as a freshman year experience. Similar approaches are being taken toward other initiatives, such as the establishment of learning communities.

Finally, student affairs practitioners consult routinely with faculty in the delivery of instruction. As is mentioned above, certain forms of learning are more effective than others (for example, see Love and Love, 1995, p. 48), and student affairs practitioners commonly are familiar with these forms of learning. In an institution where partnerships are formed easily and effectively, student affairs practitioners work regularly with faculty in sharing their ideas about the delivery of instruction.

6. Students describe learning as continuous. One of the best ways to learn about how students learn is to ask them (Kuh, 1993). Students are very perceptive and refreshing in describing their experiences. In a college where student and academic affairs partnerships are formed easily and effectively, one consequence is that students describe their learning experiences as occurring at all times and in all places. "Effective learning environments elicit the convergence of all the student's learning experiences" (Schroeder and Hurst, 1996, p. 175). For example, students report that they have been immersed in a rich learning environment during the course of their college career. Cross (1996, p. 9) raises an interesting question: "I wonder what responses would be forthcoming if at the conclusion of a spirited student council debate, council members were asked to write about what they had learned about themselves, about cooperation, or about leadership from the meeting?" They may not be able to pinpoint exactly where or how they developed a certain skill, but they will report that what occurred in and out of the classroom was complementary.

They will also report that faculty members recognize and affirm the value of the learning that occurs outside the classroom.

7. Faculty interact regularly with students outside the classroom. "Student-faculty contact and student learning are positively related, and it would seem that finding ways to promote such contact is in the best educational interests of both students and institutions" (Terenzini, Pascarella, and Blimling, 1996, p. 155). This means that faculty serve as fellows in the residence halls, advise student organizations, attend student events, and by their presence affirm the value of the out-of-class experience. Clearly, this principle has implications for the promotion and tenure process. Faculty time is precious, and every hour spent interacting with students outside the classroom is one less hour that faculty have for research and creative activity. Also, not all faculty members are adept at informal interaction with students. They do not all enjoy playing volleyball, attending tailgate parties, advising departmental clubs, or other forms of informal interaction with students. Other faculty have such robust research agendas that they simply do not have time for these activities. But there are many faculty members, especially those who have successfully negotiated the promotion and tenure process, who may be available and would enjoy this kind of activity. One way of determining the extent to which academic and student affairs partnerships are successfully formed would be to evaluate how frequently and in what context faculty interact with students outside the classroom.

8. Institutional committees and task forces include balanced representation of faculty and student affairs practitioners. This principle cuts both ways in that, historically, student affairs officers have expressed concern about being full institutional partners with faculty members. Student affairs practitioners have expressed concern about being junior partners in the institution's decision-making process but have overlooked that faculty often are left out of the decision-making process in other areas of the institution. For example, whereas student affairs officers might not sit on bodies that make decisions about curriculum, faculty might not sit on committees related to financial aid, the operation of the residence halls, or the apportioning of student fees. No element of an institution's family (faculty, staff, students, or graduates) is any more informed, insightful, or prescient than any other regarding aspects outside its purview. Faculty are not expert in operating residence halls, and student affairs staff possess no special gifts in determining requirements for earning a degree. But representation from all elements of an institution can contribute to the strength of the decision-making process. Garland and Grace (1993) assert that when faculty and student affairs staff work together, good things happen. "Working together, faculty and student affairs professionals can combine talents to better serve students and the institution" (p. 62). Simple questions such as, "Why do we do things this way" or "How does that philosophy fit with our college's mission?" require those responsible for the particular area to examine why they have taken the approach they have.

9. The development of learning communities is widely supported on campus. Learning communities have been demonstrated to contribute to the potency of the student experience. A body of research exists that clearly underscores the value of such experiences for students (see Light, 1992; Astin, 1996; Cross, 1998). But student affairs staff and faculty need to work together. Kuh (1996) asserts that "all members of an institution must work together to link programs across the academic and out-of-class dimensions of students' lives" (p. 137). These communities require the appropriation of resources- faculty time, administrative support, and perhaps financial resources-to make them occur. In a campus where collaboration is common and it is easy to form partnerships, support for this activity is widespread. That does not mean that a blank check would be available to support anything faculty or student affairs staff would want to do, but that support for improving the student learning experience is a part of the institutional culture.

A Final Word

The principles introduced in this chapter provide some ideas that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of partnerships formed by academic and student affairs. Other sources exist that describe partnerships in great detail (for example, the American Association for Higher Education, American College Personnel Association, and National Association of Student Personnel Administrators [AAHE, ACPA, NASPA] joint Task Force report *Powerful Partnerships*, 1998). No doubt there are other concepts that can be applied to specific situations. We think this is good place to start the conversation about the evaluation process. Other steps can be taken to do a thorough job of evaluating these partnerships.

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