

Partnerships and Collaboration for New Student Success

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Student Affairs and Academic Affairs work closely together through the services of the CAPS Center (Counseling, Advising, and Placement Services) at Kennesaw State College for the benefit of students. The New Student Experience, aimed at easing the new students' transition into college, is one of the CAPS programs that very successfully integrates Student Affairs and Academic Affairs.

At Kennesaw State College (KSC) in Marietta, Georgia, a senior college in the University System of Georgia, the divisions of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs work hand in hand to offer students a rich collegiate experience. Because the campus is a commuter institution with a high percentage of students over the traditional age and students who work in addition to coming to school, it is especially critical that all areas of the college community work together toward the common goal of student success. A review of the commuter-student literature underscores that commuters are often what Slade and Jarmul (1975) call the "neglected majority." At Kennesaw State, a totally commuter campus, it is imperative that students are engaged in programming that will promote their retention and achievement. As Ernest Boyer (1987) has so vividly demonstrated, there is a crisis in higher education that centers around the loss of community and a loss of 'connections." To correct this problem, "all parts of campus life ... must relate to one another and contribute to a sense of wholeness" (Boyer, 1987, p. 8). Certainly this implies the necessity for Student Affairs and Academic Affairs to work closely together for students' benefit.

Description of the New Student Experience

One significant illustration of the cooperation that exists between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs (divisions that are, unfortunately, frequently at odds on many campuses) is the work of the CAPS Center (Counseling, Advising, and Placement Services). While CAPS is a component of the Student Affairs Division at KSC, there is a definite link with academic affairs in CAPS programs. The New Student Experience (NSE), aimed at facilitating new

students' success, is an excellent example of a way in which student and academic affairs join forces to help students succeed in college and beyond.

The NSE is a three-phased program including orientation, CAPS advisement, and KSC 101, a freshman seminar course. The Student Orientation, Advisement, and Registration program (SOAR) is geared toward Kennesaw's commuter population, and makes special accommodations for day and evening students and traditional as well as non-traditional students. Although CAPS is responsible for the orientation program, faculty and administrators are also involved. Introducing students to the campus should be a joint effort between Student and Academic Affairs. Without question, orientation is a traditional Student Affairs function, but involving academic deans, department chairs, and faculty advisors creates a more meaningful and informative experience for new students. As Beal and Noel (1980) point out, the most important retention factor for all types of institutions is the "caring attitude of faculty and staff" (p. 19). Orientation is the ideal beginning for faculty and staff to demonstrate that caring attitude.

The second phase of the NSE is the advisement program for undeclared and developmental studies students. This program is housed in CAPS and staffed with faculty, staff, and peer advisors who are given specific advising training. The faculty members come to the CAPS Center to advise in specially equipped advising rooms, another illustration of one way student and academic affairs work together for a common goal. Faculty who serve as CAPS advisors gain institutional service credit toward promotion and tenure along with the personal satisfaction of working directly with students who appreciate help during their initial term on campus. Faculty who advise in the CAPS Center likewise become exposed to the many resources available in CAPS with which they might otherwise not be familiar. In turn, they can - and quite frequently do - recommend these resources to the students in all of their classes. For example, the career exploration and study skills software packages available in CAPS are tools that CAPS faculty advisors come to appreciate and encourage their students to use. In addition, faculty become much more comfortable making referrals to the counseling staff because they get to know the counselors personally by interacting with them in CAPS. Perhaps most importantly, by advising in the CAPS program, faculty are introduced to developmental advising, which has student growth as its major goal (Thomas & Chickering, 1984).

In an article written for *Reaching Through Teaching*, a publication for faculty members on the KSC campus, Christine Ziegler (1989), Associate Professor of wrote of her experience as a CAPS advisor:

Being an advisor in CAPS has been invaluable to me. I have learned a great deal about Kennesaw students, the resources 'available to both students and faculty and how and where to get answers to unique questions. At the end of every quarter the folks at CAPS are always very gracious in expressing their gratitude for my help. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the CAPS

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staff for their patience, assistance, and sense of humor. (p. II)

Ziegler's observations illustrate Murphy's (1990) assertion that "when student affairs professionals and faculty commit themselves to working together, they learn from each other" (p. 380).

The third phase of the NSE is KSC 101, a five-credit-hour freshman seminar course that emphasizes college survival skills. The course is coordinated jointly by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs/Director of CAPS and a coordinator from the faculty ranks. KSC 101 is, therefore, a collaboration between the two divisions in the truest sense and is representative of the joint involvement of Student and Academic Affairs in a course designed to offer students the support group and tools necessary to succeed in higher education.

Implications for Faculty and Student Affairs Professionals

KSC 101 not only offers benefits for freshmen. There are also advantages for the student affairs professionals and faculty members who teach the course, in part because the two groups are able to learn from each other. Specifically, through the training workshop for KSC 101, quarterly meetings of instructors, and a supplemental instructor's manual developed by KSC 101 instructors, faculty and staff who teach the course receive instruction that enhances their teaching skills, knowledge of student development theory, and mentoring skills. It is not uncommon for a faculty member to remark after teaching KSC 101 that his or her evaluations in discipline-based courses improved as a result of teaching the freshman seminar course. Furthermore, liberal arts faculty and student affairs personnel who teach KSC 101 frequently find the common ground and goals shared by liberal arts educators and student development professionals that Kuh, Shedd, and Whitt (1987) have discussed.

The results of evaluations of the three phases of the NSE demonstrate the effectiveness of these joint efforts of student affairs staff, faculty, and administrators. Furthermore, data reveal that the retention rate and the grade point averages for KSC 101 students are higher than a closely matched control group of students who did not take the course. This success is due in part to the fact that the course emphasizes both affective and cognitive development of students - areas where student affairs professionals and faculty can also learn from one another.

Conclusion

The NSE has heightened awareness on the KSC campus of the need for programs to help beginning college students, regardless of their age, adjust to college life. Integrating Academic Affairs and Student Affairs staff in the NSE is one very positive outcome of this comprehensive program that underscores an important fact: both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs share responsibility for new student success.

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