

Leadership Exchange

SOLUTIONS FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS MANAGEMENT

VOLUME TWO • ISSUE THREE • FALL 2004

The Mental Health Crisis on Campus

**Federal Higher
Education Policy**
Problems and Prospects

**Leading
By Example**
Freeman A. Hrabowski, III

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Reconsidered**
Implications for Senior
Student Affairs Officers



Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education



Peg L. Blake

Dear Colleagues:

Where did the summer go? I have so many wonderful childhood memories of lazy summer days, and during the early years of my career of a remarkable slowing of activity during the summer months. Those memories no longer fit with the realities of our university lives. With summer school enrollments reaching all-time highs and

restricted budgets prolonging decisions on what we can accomplish in the coming year, our summers are now filled with the same number of meetings and crises as the rest of the academic year. Be that as it may, I do hope that you made time this summer for a vacation trip or simply for rest and relaxation away from the office.

At many gatherings of NASPA members over the last few years—regional meetings, national conferences, institutes, and symposia—conversations have always included the growing mental health challenges on our campuses. Each of us has our own particularly difficult story to relate, and most of us rely on colleagues, particularly those in our counseling centers, to help us wade through all of the issues and make decisions that are both right for individual students and appropriate for our institutions and communities. Hara Estroff Marano, a writer and editor for *Psychology Today* magazine, addresses these concerns in this issue. Based on her experience covering the topic, Marano offers a unique perspective and formulates some interesting recommendations.

As all of us watch the intensifying media coverage of the upcoming election and wonder what a change in national leadership might mean to our work and our institutions, I encourage you to carefully consider the words of Jamie Merisotis, president of the Institute for Higher Education Policy, who shares his in-depth knowledge and understanding of the political process and reviews the presidential candidates' positions on higher education as well as the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

Part of the goal of this magazine is to focus on innovative and successful management styles and the strong leaders who employ them. In this issue, we feature Freeman A. Hrabowski, III, president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, who has taken his institution out of the shadows and into the limelight and has helped his staff attract a diverse and exceptional group of students in recent years.

Finally, I hope that most of you have read or at least perused *Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience* (NASPA, ACPA, 2004), and have spent some time thinking about how the insights provided can help to inform your daily work. In this issue, Linda Kuk discusses the role of senior student affairs officers in implementing the related initiatives on their respective campuses, and two of your colleagues offer their opinions as well.

My best wishes to you for an excellent fall semester. Welcome to another academic year!

Sincerely,

Peg L. Blake, President

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Leadership Exchange

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Facebooks Go Electronic

College students cherish the campus facebook that contains their photographs and serves as student directories. Now, five Harvard University students are taking the concept nationwide with a student network called thefacebook.com.

Some 250,000 students at 34 colleges nationwide are finding new friends and renewing old acquaintances through thefacebook.com. By registering on the Web site, students can compile lists of friends, send messages, list their classes and summer vacation plans, and divulge as much or as little personal information as they like. Thefacebook.com founders plan to enable users to offer more background about themselves, such as extra pictures on their own Web sites.

Unlike most other social Web sites, thefacebook is targeted only to college students and alumni. Engineered and initially intended just for students at Harvard University, the site's creators hope to have their site available to some 200 colleges in the United States this fall.

—*Wired News, June 9, 2004*

Students Doubt Their Voting Power

Most college students doubt that voting in presidential elections will make big changes in American society, according to a nationwide poll. Only 35 percent of the students surveyed said presidential voting will create "a lot of change," compared to 47 percent who thought so in March 2001. The poll was conducted for the Leon and Sylvia Panetta Institute, a public-policy think tank at California State University, Monterey Bay.

The survey also found that only 19 percent of American college students believe that politics is

Readers Respond



Cary Anderson's article, "Put Courseware to Work for Student Affairs," (Summer 2004) presents persuasive arguments regarding the appropriate use of courseware technology for student affairs applications. The student affairs staff at The University of Montana has expressed a need for greater information sharing and brainstorming within the division. Due to demanding schedules and the time and resources spent managing multiple projects and providing quality services to students within specific student affairs units, it is easy for staff to lose touch with other student affairs sectors.

Utilizing Blackboard courseware for student affairs communication and online workshops makes sense. Not only does it seem to be an effective vehicle for communication, but also it is a way to improve efficiency and service/delivery almost overnight without additional staff, technology, or funds. In these times of fiscal hardship for universities across the nation, putting courseware to work for student affairs really makes sense!

Teresa S. Branch
Vice President for Student Affairs, The University of Montana

Your article on Vanderbilt University is right on target. I hope NASPA continues to follow and monitor this innovative style of management to keep institutions around the nation fully informed of its success.

The typical sportswriter is not going to be very objective on this subject. Most of them really think the only thing wrong with college athletics today is interference by faculty and administrators. They think higher education should be run by coaches.

In addition, the Capstone column mentioning the "Academic Bill of Rights" gives everyone fair warning that this will be an issue in the years ahead and that student affairs folks are apt to carry blame in any related controversy. Deep thought should be given to the issue. Right now, everyone has a pat answer to the problem. Diversity will need to be defined and that definition cannot look like it has an ideological thrust.

John L. Blackburn
President, Blackburn Educational Technologies; NASPA Past President

Gwen Dungy's article, "Leadership in Action," in the Summer 2004 issue does much more than pay generous tribute to President Gordon Gee's leadership at Vanderbilt University, where he launched a major "rebalancing" of academics and athletics last fall. She also provides an accurate picture of the many conundrums presidents (and senior student affairs officers) face with intercollegiate athletics in the arms race for more and better—and especially winning teams—at any cost. The losers in too many institutions, especially those in Division I, continue to be the student athletes, the institutions, and higher education itself. We have surely lost our way in the pursuit of money and national reputation. Where will it end?

Student Life and University Affairs Vice Chancellor David Williams at Vanderbilt carries much of the responsibility for restoring athletics to its rightful place at his university. Every student affairs leader who may find himself or herself in a similar position should keep this article handy along with the Statement on Intercollegiate Athletics recently adopted by the board of directors of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB). The former illustrates what courageous presidents can accomplish when they know their governing boards and trustees will support them rather than run for cover. The latter document, available on the AGB Web site, illustrates what governing boards can do to support reform-minded presidents when they are fortunate enough to have them. Well done, Gwen!

Tom Ingram
President, Association of Governing Boards
of Universities and Colleges
<http://www.agb.org>



“very relevant” to their lives, and 43 percent believe that politics has little or no relevance. The poll consisted of 800 interviews with students at four-year colleges around the country.

—*The Washington Post, June 14, 2004*

Take Five

In every one of his businesses, author Pat Croce has instituted a key communication tool called the Five-Fifteen. Each Friday, all staff members, including managers, write progress reports that land on their supervisors’ desks (or email inboxes). Eventually, the information trickles up to Croce in a Cliffs Notes format.

The idea is that the report takes five minutes for him to read and 15 minutes for employees to write. The Five-Fifteens serve two purposes: they keep information flowing and they get accolades going. Not only do staff write

about their goals, they also take the opportunity to brag about feats great and small. The Five-Fifteen is not viewed as a chore, but rather as a chance to be heard and to gain the spotlight.

On Monday mornings, staff can expect either a Five-Fifteen email response or a hard copy of their Five-Fifteen with notes scribbled in the margins directly from Croce, who says the Five-Fifteen system provides the perfect way to keep a finger on the pulse of an organization. It acts as a sounding board to which he can respond with questions and suggestions and provides a record of employee performance for the annual evaluation. Most importantly, Croce can compliment employee progress on a weekly basis, resulting in more momentum the following week.

—*Forbes Small Business, March 2004*

Five C’s of Career Planning

What advice does one of the nation’s top recruiters offer job candidates? Anne Lim O’Brien, senior partner and practice leader for Heidrick and Struggles International, works on high-profile chief executive officer searches and offers a number of tips. She cites the five Cs—those things that candidates should think about and use to decide what is important in their next jobs.

Challenges. Is this new job going to broaden you and keep you motivated? How does this add to where you want to go?

Company or Organization. This goes beyond homework on the stability of an organization. You must look in the mirror and decide what type of organization best fits your personality or your aspirations.

Culture. Each of us has a set of values that guides our everyday actions. Is there integrity and good communication in your prospective organization or is this a culture with too many toxic staff members?

Chemistry. Many people do not take time to look around to see with whom they will be spending their work days. What is your take on fellow staff members and does your leadership want to get the most out of you without giving you much in return?

Compensation. Don’t short-change yourself. You may look back and feel you were to eager to accept a low offer. Your organization should always respect the value you bring.

—*Fast Company, July 2004*

Readers Respond

There is little “free and open exchange” of ideas in the academy as noted in the Capstone column of your Summer 2004 issue. Conservative voices are chilled on campuses across the country on a regular basis. The Students for Academic Freedom Web site is replete with such stories. Students who wish to critically examine issues like “set asides” or quotas are quickly labeled racists, thereby ending any chance for rational discourse. In what I am sure is viewed by some as an ironic display of empathy, one of the most popular events for conservatives on campuses has been “Coming Out Days.” For these students, passage of the “Academic Bill of Rights” would simply create “safe zones” where they would be free to express themselves openly.

As student affairs professionals, we are in some ways a microcosm of the academy. To what extent do we ever really listen to the voices of these marginalized individuals? Look at the list of featured speakers at our conferences for the past 10 years. We have courted Bill Bradley, we have welcomed the late Barbara Jordan, we were even stiffed by Randall Robinson. We have provided an audience for Barney Frank, a man with no significant legislative accomplishments. Where are the conservative voices at our conferences?

NASPA can help the Secretariat and the higher education community move away from simply lip-synching phrases like “academic freedom” and “diversity” by beginning an earnest intellectual dialogue around issues that truly engage people of diverse opinions and backgrounds. Most would agree, I believe, that such dialogue and the changes that can come from it are preferable to change legislated by those outside of the academy.

Dan Ryan
Director, Career Planning and Placement, University at Buffalo



depression

The Mental Health Crisis On Campus

anorexia

BY HARA ESTROFF MARANO

Several years ago, I began reporting about the mental health crisis on college campuses and the ever-increasing rate at which college students are experiencing serious psychological problems. In the course of interviewing directors and front-line staff of campus counseling centers, I began questioning why a public-health model of preventing now-predictable problems was not being applied to this reasonably captive audience. I also began to wonder if the educational system could use a novel approach for novel times to deal with the many stresses causing college students to stop functioning in unprecedented numbers.

diagnosis

The problems that are currently taxing the resources of campus counseling centers may be just the visible tip of the iceberg.

anxiety

Major depression. Anxiety disorders. Eating disorders. Self-mutilation. Binge-drinking to blottodom. The emotional distress now rampant on college campuses is taking its toll on the mental and physical health of individuals as well as the collegiate infrastructure. "The mental state of students is now interfering with the core mission of the university," affirms Steven Hyman, provost of Harvard University and former director of the National Institute of Mental Health. College, including admission to it, is now part of the problem. Shouldn't it be part of the solution?

An Escalating Problem

Robert Gallagher, former head of counseling services at the University of Pittsburgh and current keeper of an annual survey of campus counseling center directors, pinpoints the rise in the severity of mental health problems on campus to 1988, when those children born just after the first man walked on the moon began entering college.

In 1988, 56 percent of counseling center directors responding to the survey reported seeing students with more serious psychological problems. By 2001, that number had jumped to 85 percent. According to a number of recent surveys, more than 10 percent of the student body, including both traditional and non-traditional students, on the nation's campuses now receives counseling in any given year with the top problem cited as depression. The statistics speak for themselves.

- ◆ Anorexia and bulimia afflict up to 40 percent of female students at some time during their college careers.
- ◆ Hospitalization for psychological reasons, an option of last resort, is increasingly common on campus. In 2003, 333 campus counseling centers hospitalized a total of 2,136 students.
- ◆ With suicide the third leading cause of death among those aged 15 to 24, and the second leading cause of death among those aged 18 to 24, universities can expect almost

1,100 student suicides this year. Two-thirds of all students who kill themselves do not seek help beforehand.

Psychologist Sherry Benton, assistant director of counseling at Kansas State University, where 40 percent of seniors have used the services at some point in their academic careers, reports that through 1996 "the most common problems students came in with were relationship issues. That is developmentally appropriate." But that year anxiety overtook relationships and has remained the top problem.

Perhaps the problem colleges can stand to learn the most from is self-mutilation. An extremely rare event 40 years ago, it is commonplace today. In 2003, nearly 70 percent of counseling center directors reported increases in cases of self-injury such as deliberate cutting or cigarette burning of body tissue. "It has now reached critical mass and grabs our attention," says Russ Federman, director of counseling and psychological services at the University of Virginia, who has hosted a national conference on suicide, violence, and disruptive behavior on campus. Self-harm is a serious symptom but "it isn't about taking one's life," explains Federman, even though it always mobilizes a crisis response. "It freaks others out and people are agitated by it. But rarely does cutting constitute imminent danger to the self. There's not usually suicidal ideation," he adds.

What makes the self-injury disorder commonplace today? "It allows students to take control of painful processes they feel are out of control," offers Federman. What's more, "It is an extremely effective treatment for anxiety. People who do it report it's 'like popping a balloon.'" It serves "an important defense—distraction. In the midst of emotional turmoil, physical pain helps people disconnect from intense emotional turmoil." Since the effect lasts only a few hours, it must be repeated again and again to achieve the same results.

And that's just the beginning. The problems that are currently taxing the resources of campus counseling centers may be just the visible tip of the iceberg. Students themselves point to a huge amount of hidden mental anguish. "In the

stress

self-mutilation

atmosphere that is established at a competitive university,” says a Stanford University graduate now enrolled in a master’s program at Harvard University, “it is often difficult to express personal vulnerability.”

“Indeed,” observes the graduate student, a former peer counselor, “many students see others effortlessly finding success and happiness at college. And they feel they are the only ones who are unhappy.” Once, students might have gained comfort from talking to each other. But today, “the dorm community is not a ‘safe’ place to expose personal weaknesses,” she observes. The climate is just too adversarial and students go to great lengths to keep their problems private. She adds, “They suffer in silence.”

The Sources of Their Discontent

The severity of mental health problems on college campuses has risen dramatically since 1988—one year into the Prozac era. The last 15 years have been marked by major shifts in American culture at large, as well as in the character of American colleges and universities. Despite the stereotypical experience of fraternity parties and spring breaks, the college years are a challenging time of life when individual vulnerabilities are often exposed. “Everyone underestimates the amount of change normally required to leave home and adapt,” offers Linda K. Hellmich, associate director of counseling at Carleton College. “It’s a huge stress.”

From the high cost of a college education to the lack of positive cultural outlets for anger and anxiety, there are a host of reasons why today’s students exhibit stress in its varied guises.

- ◆ Adolescence begins earlier and lasts longer, delaying the transition to adulthood. Kids live in a far more complex world than their parents did as children and they are exposed to “heavy” issues before they have the cognitive and emotional resources to deal with them. For example, they no longer can take the time to discover their sexualities; sex is literally thrown at them at every turn on roadside billboards, in store advertisements, and in magazines.
- ◆ Children grow up virtually unbuffered from stress. Many live in fractured families, which can lead to greater instability in their psychological lives. For many children, it can be hard to focus and to define themselves if the ground is always shifting beneath their feet. As a result, these children lack an internalized sense of stability and have little to draw on when under stress.
- ◆ Most of today’s college students have faced competitive pressures from an early age and they carry a burden of stress that, like radioactivity, is cumulative. “It’s more stressful to be a kid growing up these days,” says Psychiatrist Mark H. Reed, director of counseling and human development at Dartmouth College. “These students experienced competition to get into kindergarten. Today’s kids have portfolios to get into the best prep schools.” By the time they get to college, some lose their love of learning. “Many are on a treadmill with blinders,” adds Reed. “Most of their self-esteem comes from a few areas of excellence. They fail to develop an internal system to sustain them in all environments. They’ve sunk under the weight of obligation at an early age.”
- ◆ Many children are overprotected. Hovering parents contribute directly to the development of psychological problems in their children by overprotecting them and keeping them from learning to cope with frustration or any kind of adversity—such as a C in economics. Today’s parents, bombarded with news reports of kidnappers and sexual predators, seek to create a world that is as risk free as possible for their children. As a result, many children have been protected from struggles in their own young lives even though the struggle toward a goal is neurologically and psychologically necessary for happiness.
- ◆ Psychopathology is showing its true face. Colleges are seeing the natural prevalence of mental disorders, most of which begin in late adolescence. Major depression, bipolar



disorder, and schizophrenia have been there all along. But a generation ago, affected students were seldom diagnosed or treated. Most did not make it to college and, if they did, either dropped out or hid their disorders. Today, the “Prozac payoff” is high and many more students arrive on campus with significant mental health problems. The advent of relatively safe and effective antidepressants has encouraged early diagnosis and care, enabling students to stay in the academic system and function well enough to handle at least some of the tasks of higher education. On a positive note, the diminishing stigma of mental health problems makes it more socially acceptable to disclose and seek treatment—an attitude today’s students will hopefully carry into their post-college lives.

- ◆ You can not discount the roles of basics like consistent sleep patterns, healthy food, and regular exercise in maintaining physical and mental health. The notoriously erratic sleep patterns of students can dramatically affect body systems, which precipitates depression even in those with no prior history of it. Students at some schools compete over sleep deprivation: it is a badge of honor to say they have been up for several days straight. Fast food, in particular, does a giant disservice to the brains of college students at a critical time of development and nutritional need. Further, recent studies demonstrate that the amount of physical exercise young people get inversely correlates with their symptoms of depression. Exercise specifically stimulates nerve growth factors in the brain, changes that underlie learning and mood improvement.
- ◆ Students sorely lack relationship skills. The growing diversity of college populations is great, but it places an unanticipated burden on students. Yes, it is exciting to encounter people of different cultures, says Christine Mullis, a recent Duke University graduate, “but it puts more stress on negotiating differences. Different groups of students bring different ideas of how to make relationships work.” Forging healthy relationships between the sexes, races, and ethnic groups is a continuing challenge for students.
- ◆ Campus peer culture is increasingly competitive. Mullis notes that students even compete over their eating disorders. “Kids need more connection to healthier relationships with friends and professionals,” relates Psychologist Joseph M. Behen, head of counseling at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. “Lots of students learned pathological ways of relating to others not only in their families but in their peer groups. Getting people connected is the solution to the isolation and loneliness students feel that precipitate their crises.”

Searching for the Cure

Just as there is no one cause of the accelerating fragility of college students today, there is not likely to be one cure. It is clear that many forces in the culture are impinging on young people during the college years: a cumulative burden of the past; an isolating, competitive environment; an urgent awareness of a highly uncertain future; and a lack of social supports and personal skills just when the demands for independence become critical.

Just as there is no one cause of the accelerating fragility of college students today, there is not likely to be one cure.

The following approaches are but a few examples of the types of changes colleges and universities may consider.

Develop and mandate a new for-credit course for entering students. Start students with a big push in the right direction. Do not just inform them about the availability of campus counseling services, but seriously educate students about the realities and challenges of college life, about their bodies and brains, and about social and emotional needs. Teach social skills and reinforce the importance of connection. Use all of the tools of the culture, including panels of students who have learned hard lessons, to make the course real, relevant, and riveting.

Adopt engaged learning strategies. “Both alcohol and depression are forms of disengagement,” observes Donald W. Harward, president emeritus of Bates College and head of the new Bringing Theory to Practice Project, which is actively exploring links between engaged learning and mental health. “We think engagement is the solution.” There is no single formula for engagement. It can be encouraged through courses that employ inquiry-based problem solving or through course-based community service, where academic objectives are woven into civic activity. In fostering effective strategies for learning in diverse contexts, in creating passion for solving problems and grasping concepts, in making learning more intrinsically motivating, and in requiring students to take charge of their own learning, engaged learning promises to make students active agents in their own lives and architects of their own resilience.

Require a year of community service before matriculation. Offer provisional acceptance to graduating high school students, based on completion of a year of service at the national, state, or community level. Young people would have a year to mature and they would discover new ways to experience themselves in noncompetitive environments. Students would find new meaning in being of value to others and they might discover unique ways of making an impact on society and broadening individual goals. A consortium of colleges could agree to experiment with such a program. Campuses could offer students a broad range of service options that could be coordinated with coursework during the years of matriculation.

Colleges and universities are ideally placed to innovate solutions as the problems facing campus counseling centers nationwide move into classrooms, residence halls, and the

communities beyond. Even if only the most vulnerable students are openly breaking down, they still comprise a significant portion of the college population and affect the atmosphere in which everyone exists. However well it once functioned, higher education is increasingly failing to meet the emotional and psychological needs of its students.

Any fixes that are ultimately selected must incorporate current lessons of brain science. A revolution is occurring in understanding the human brain with enormous implications for childrearing, education, and the environments and experiences we design. One of the most striking revelations of the neuroscience revolution is that it is highly artificial to separate the cognitive from the emotional in the cortex, the thinking brain. The encoding of information and its storage and retrieval—to say nothing of attention, decisionmaking, and risktaking—are highly influenced by emotional states. How people regulate their own emotions has a powerful impact on the level of stress they experience and how well they can learn. Educational institutions must create conditions in which the whole mind works together through new kinds of courses and new ways of teaching. **LE**

NASPA will hold a unique professional development opportunity to explore mental health issues on campus. Join your colleagues January 6–8, 2005 in Newport, Rhode Island for *Effective Interventions for Student Mental Health On Campus: Collaboration and Community*. For more information, please visit <http://www.naspa.org/prodev>.

Hara Estroff Marano is editor at large and former editor in chief of Psychology Today magazine, based in New York. She has been writing about human behavior for over 25 years, and her articles have appeared in The New York Times, Smithsonian, USA Today, The Ladies Home Journal, Family Circle, Time and other publications. She also writes a popular advice column called Unconventional Wisdom in Psychology Today and Sexual Healing in the New York Daily News. She is the author of two books, most recently on the social development of children, titled “Why Doesn’t Anybody Like Me?”: A Guide to Raising Socially Confident Kids (Morrow, 1998).



Lessons in Leadership

Freeman A. Hrabowski, III

BY DONNA M. BOURASSA AND GWENDOLYN JORDAN DUNGY

Campus environments continue to attract leaders who are reshaping the landscape of higher education—leaders with character, integrity, optimism, and a commitment to work hard. In recent years, numerous organizations and national gatherings have called upon one such leader, Freeman A. Hrabowski, III, president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), to speak on the urgency of developing youth with the capacity to affect change.

Donna M. Bourassa, associate executive director of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and Gwendolyn Jordan Dungy, NASPA executive director, met with Hrabowski in June 2004 to discuss leadership, mentoring, and sustaining a culture of caring for others. Energized by a weekend visit with Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), and John Hope Franklin, James B. Duke Professor Emeritus of History at Duke University and recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1995, Hrabowski was eager to share his reflections on their visit as a context for understanding how we, as educators, can guide our students to achieve greatness.

Leading to Greatness

Freeman A. Hrabowski, III, has served as president of UMBC since May 1992. During his tenure, one of his most noteworthy accomplishments has been the success of the Meyerhoff Scholars Program, a special effort to increase the numbers of minorities, especially African-American women and men, who pursue careers as research scientists and engineers. A nationally renowned educator, author, and speaker, Hrabowski thrives on creating innovative ways for genuine engagement among all members of his campus community.

Our conversation started by referencing the many thinkers, writers, and practitioners who are searching to identify what transforms good leadership into great leadership. “As I thought about Marian Wright Edelman’s training program for taking care of America’s children and John Hope Franklin’s recollections of the civil rights era, it remains so clear to me that ‘from those who have been given much, much is required,’” explains Hrabowski. While colleges and universities are preparing students for future careers, Hrabowski, Edelman, and Franklin question the sense of responsibility students have when it comes to solving the difficult problems we face as a country, such as the distribution of wealth and justice for all people.

“Great leaders think beyond themselves,” Hrabowski notes as he describes the importance of integrity and character. “From the very beginning, my question is what is the character of the human being?” he shares. “Helen Gahagan Douglass, a California congresswoman in the 1950s, said you are not born with character; you build it action by action, word by word, and thought by thought. To me, character is evidenced not only when people can see a person in action, but more important, when we don’t think anybody can see us.”

He urges student affairs professionals, faculty members, presidents, and vice presidents, to talk about issues of integrity and cheating on our campuses and in our society. Hrabowski asserts that when leaders do not speak out, society becomes more and more accustomed to accepting a culture predicated on deceit, dishonesty, and mistrust. “Leaders,” he says, “find ways to connect people around issues of character and integrity. What leads to greatness is the ability to persuade others to raise those issues as well.”

Hrabowski believes a college education must provide young people with the skills to shape policy that will make a difference. “When I think about greatness, I think about people who go beyond the ordinary—who can imagine that which we could never believe would be the case and then pull people into those efforts. It is not enough to make it yourself.”

Besides integrity and character, Hrabowski cites the leadership attributes of fairness, inclusiveness, community building, hard work, and empowerment. He talks with conviction about fostering a generation of leaders who think critically and independently and notes, “Diversity comes in thinking about different issues and having the opportunity to go through painful discussions, and to create a climate in which people can agree, or agree to disagree, and still move ahead with some sensibility and civility.”

On Student Affairs and Innovation

Some of us in this profession still sit at the edge of our seats awaiting favorable news on how we are perceived by our college and university presidents. Others remain convinced that student affairs professionals are anomalies to senior leadership. Listening to Hrabowski describe *any* campus endeavor affecting the lives of students, it is clear that nothing is further from the truth. For him, student affairs professionals are central to an institution’s ability to offer a seamless education.

“We should all see ourselves as student affairs representatives because we should all be about the business of focusing on our students,” he observes. At the same time, student affairs professionals should see themselves as educators. “I would hope that on healthy campuses we realize that the distinctions we make are, frankly, quite artificial,” he adds.

When discussing the innovation imperative for student affairs in the coming years, his immediate response is the concept of living learning communities. “They are not new,



PHOTOS COURTESY OF UMBC



but we are coming back to the idea of having staff, faculty, and students involved in some type of learning activity and talking about it together,” he says.

Hrabowski often reflects on what all of us can learn from small liberal arts colleges in preparing leaders with values. Indeed, he believes the challenge facing universities is to create an ethos in which everyone truly places students at the core, whether in research, in discussion, or in community service. He notes that it is hard to refute the evidence that the liberal arts college experience often makes students feel special. “Leaders tend to be people who have had nurturing experiences,” he recalls. “I want to develop leaders who care, who have integrity, who reflect on experiences, who can be independent in their thinking and not judgmental, who are capable of sitting back and re-examining their own point of view from time to time, and who understand the importance of making others feel special.”

Engaging Students in Substantive Ways

Hrabowski is recognized for his capacity to have meaningful relationships with significant numbers of students. Despite the demands of the presidency, many of his colleagues marvel at how much he knows about individual UMBC students and how he engages a diverse cross section of students in substantive dialogue. He aligns himself with the principles embedded in the educational theories of critical pedagogy developed by Paulo Freire and other constructivists—adhering to the principle that students are not simply vessels into which we pour knowledge.

Maintaining that we must view students as human beings with fears and aspirations, strengths and weaknesses, and needs, Hrabowski says, “We need to see students as a whole—with families, histories, baggage, and, in the words of Dolly Parton, with stories. I am interested in people feeling comfortable, being authentic and honest, and as vulnerable as they can be—with honesty comes vulnerability.” He believes it is only by talking to students that he can truly get a sense of their experiences. “You also get a sense of just how much they understand about life itself and different aspects of life.”

It may just be his personality, but Hrabowski says students tell him all kinds of things, even about boyfriends and girlfriends. They enjoy asking him questions or seeking his

“old-fashioned advice,” such as “be yourself” or “take your time before you make decisions.” He notes that students appear to be surprised at his comfort level in speaking with them, even about sticky issues. Hrabowski appreciates that his student affairs staff often arranges focus groups of students over 30 years old, returning students, first-generation students, and other student groups to talk with him about their experiences at UMBC and beyond.

In his estimation, the most difficult subject to talk about in America today is race. He asserts that we must help our students become proficient in discussing the very issues that will empower the next generation to achieve equality within and beyond our borders. He reiterates, “We teach not only through our words but through our actions. Students watch how we interact with each other, and we can teach so much through meaningful engagement.”

Encouraging a Culture of Mentors

Hrabowski, whether he admits it or not, has a soft spot, affinity, kinship, and empathy for student affairs professionals. In fact, he has not forgotten what it was like when he was a director of a residence hall and a dean of students.

The idea for our interview with Hrabowski was sparked when Patricia Perillo, director of student life at UMBC, in a conversation about leadership, said that she was fortunate that Hrabowski was her mentor as both “a teacher and a learner.” She says that he frequently responds to issues and offers his perspective and advice. She describes the process by which Hrabowski became her mentor. In establishing their mentoring relationship Hrabowski told her, “Patty, I mentor people from all over the country who want to be college presidents, and I think that you have the capacity to be a college president. I want to mentor you toward that end, and I want to meet with you on a regular basis.”

Perillo was stunned at hearing his opinion and his offer of support, particularly because she had never considered the possibility of a presidency. Having established the mentoring relationship, she now perceives a presidency as a potential career option. Described by Perillo as a “charismatic leader who leads with integrity,” Hrabowski gives staff members opportunities to work in his office in order to gain research and writing experiences as they pursue doctoral degrees.

Perillo cites Hrabowski’s creation of a culture of mentoring at the university in which professionals are encouraged to create time to mentor students as well as promising professionals. Perillo says that Hrabowski not only has a distinct philosophy and clear expectation of others about mentoring, but he also “walks the talk,” selecting students, faculty, and staff to mentor and responding positively to students who seek him as a mentor.

Through mentoring, Hrabowski is achieving an important objective of leadership—helping to create community, to model the role of educator, and to promote the growth and development of individual students. Great leadership is not how many personal goals one accomplishes, but what one accomplishes with and through others that will have long-lasting impact. On his campus, Hrabowski has touched

Great leadership is not how many personal goals one accomplishes, but what one accomplishes with and through others that will have long-lasting impact.

thousands of lives and created a legacy of leadership as he has raised the stature and visibility of UMBC.

Lamont Toliver, director of UMBC's Meyerhoff Scholarship Program says, "Leaders who mentor need to know that they are always being watched and evaluated. Their presence, speech, demeanor, and dress are all objects of observation." He adds that leaders who mentor should do their best to give advice based on the personality and leadership styles of those they are mentoring, not their own personality and leadership styles. Toliver attributes much of the success of the Meyerhoff Scholarship Program to his mentoring relationship with Hrabowski.

Sheldon Caplis, vice president for institutional advancement at UMBC, also benefits from Hrabowski's mentorship. Lessons he has learned from Hrabowski include the importance of supporting others, thinking of alternate solutions to a problem, and demonstrating patience. Caplis says that leaders such as Hrabowski set a tone of integrity as they empower individuals. "Freeman treats me as a partner, and I am fully aware of the trust and responsibility inherent in being a partner. To work with him is truly an incredible experience," he offers.

Lisa Akchin, associate vice president for institutional advancement at UMBC, says that wherever Hrabowski is and whatever he is doing, he is always mentoring. "He models excellent leadership and freely explains, in real time, the thinking that motivates his actions," says Akchin.

Diane Lee, associate vice provost for undergraduate education, admires Hrabowski's ability to envision UMBC as a top-tier university and to motivate others to share this vision for the school's transformation from a "safety school" for Maryland residents to a national destination for serious students across the country. "Freeman lives what he preaches, exhibiting moral courage and ethical action," says Lee. "He has the rare intellectual power and vivid imagination one expects of a visionary leader."

Perhaps the most enthusiastic and thorough description of Hrabowski as a leader and mentor comes from D. Philip Shockley, a former UMBC student government president and student regent. He says that he, as well as many other students, sees Hrabowski as a father figure and that they have close personal relationships with him based on respect and trust. He compares the UMBC campus, where most students

know Hrabowski by name and recognize him as he walks around campus, with a university attended by a friend who cannot even name his institution's president.

How can one person successfully mentor so many? Shockley says Hrabowski mentors and teaches through his actions and leads by example. Shockley cautions that, "Leaders must realize what a commitment it is to be a mentor." Mentors must be accessible and must allocate time for regular contact and communication, according to Shockley, who also encourages mentors to acknowledge that they do not have all the answers.

Cultivating Compassion and Optimism

Renowned visionary thinkers, cultural critics, and futurist scholars all believe that we are more fragmented and isolated from one another than ever before. Archbishop Desmond Tutu describes it as "a radical brokenness in our existence," according to Margaret Wheatley in *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope for the Future* (Barrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2002). At times, it appears that our society has lessened its care for one another and that the ideals associated with the notion of true community have waned.

In commenting on how campus leaders can engage members of their communities with one another, Hrabowski emphasizes the value that comes from opportunities to reflect on experiences. He expresses concern that today's students are not accustomed to analyzing, critiquing, or reflecting on their lives as well as the lives of people around them. He states that sometimes people get so involved with the idea or task at hand that they do not see how their approaches to solving problems affect those around them.

Hrabowski believes that student affairs administrators, like many other professionals, are moving too quickly and need to slow down, taking time to reflect and to model their behavior for students and colleagues. "I read novels set in earlier times, just because it allows me to slow down. While it might sound strange, sometimes leadership means simply calming down and taking the time to notice what we are, and are not, doing for each other," says Hrabowski, whose approach to life and leadership stems from his faith in humankind and his belief in humans' capacity for compassion and their strong desire for community. ■

Federal Higher Problems and Prospects

BY JAMIE P. MERISOTIS

The coming year promises to be an interesting and potentially important one in federal higher education policy with many implications for institutions of higher education, students, faculty, and the communities served by colleges and universities. Two major issues will drive the debate about higher education policy.

One, of course, is the outcome of the November 2004 elections, which will not only determine the next president of the United States, but also could have an important impact on the balance of power in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. The other is the specific outcome of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA), scheduled during the 108th Congress but carried over to the 109th Congress next year.



Education Policy

The Campaigns

The second term of President George W. Bush, or the first term of a newly elected John Kerry, could lead to very different outcomes for higher education. In his first term in office, President Bush has focused overwhelmingly on the K-12 education agenda, particularly the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. NCLB has had a profound impact on the U.S. Department of Education, from its physical presence (the main entrances to the department's headquarters building in Washington, DC have been fashioned to look like little red schoolhouses) to its virtual presence (the department's Web site is now infused with NCLB goals and language at virtually every level) to its policy presence.

On the higher education front, much of what has emerged in the annual congressional budget and appropriations processes, and in HEA reauthorization debates, has been related to accountability and efficiency or to increasing students' ability to borrow to finance their educations.

For example, the 2005 budget recommendations submitted by the president to Congress in early 2004 effectively froze spending on student financial aid and other higher education programs. This is a dramatic departure from prior presidents, who have tended to use election year budgets to boost policy proposals tied to their election campaigns. In the past, this has often meant increased funding for special programs for students and their families. With little room to maneuver in the budget, however, President Bush chose to use the 2005 budget proposal to push some of the ideas his administration is advancing in the HEA reauthorization, such as increasing annual borrowing limits in the federal student loan programs.

Senator John Kerry's campaign has focused on increasing access to higher education for low-income students and other disadvantaged populations. Kerry appears to be concerned with the challenge for domestic spending in the context of burgeoning federal budget deficits and increasing costs associated with homeland security, Iraq reconstruction, health care financing reform, and economic growth. Kerry's proposals for increasing Pell Grant support, for example, or for a new program of free tuition in exchange for public service, rely on fairly complex methods for reallocating funds from existing sources. For instance, he has proposed ideas ranging from the "auctioning" of student loans to a reversal or repeal of the bank-based Federal Family Education Loan program in favor of a full Direct Loan system (first championed during the Clinton administration) as ways to generate new resources from existing programs.

The Reauthorization Challenge

Whatever the outcome of the 2004 presidential election, it is likely that the vehicle for implementing policy change in higher education during 2005 will be the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. Given budgetary stringency, the lack of consensus on the needs of higher education, and pressing policy priorities, the focus in reauthorization will likely be on modifications and refinements to existing purposes and programs.

The fact that the HEA reauthorization may be incremental does not diminish its importance. Even small changes in the HEA can have major consequences for students, institutions

of higher education, and lenders. For example, modest changes in the student loan programs could cause shifts of tens or hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue among lenders or other loan program players.

Since its inception in 1965, the ongoing challenge of the Higher Education Act has been to promote access to higher education for all Americans who have the interest and ability to attend college. Broadened access to higher education is one of the most important contributions that the federal government can make to our national well-being and maintaining and expanding that investment in higher education is vital. The simple fact remains that increasing educational opportunities for all Americans results in tremendous public, private, social, and economic benefits. As the accompanying chart indicates, the societal and individual benefits of higher education are enormous and directly contribute to our national economic, social, and cultural advancement.

The Array of Higher Education Benefits

	Public	Private
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased Tax Revenues • Greater Productivity • Increased Consumption • Increased Workforce Flexibility • Decreased Reliance on Government Financial Support • Reduced Crime Rates • Increased Charitable Giving/Community Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher Salaries and Benefits • Employment • Higher Savings Levels • Improved Working Conditions • Personal/Professional Mobility • Improved Health/Life Expectancy
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased Quality of Civic Life • Social Cohesion/ Appreciation of Diversity • Improved Ability to Adapt to and Use Technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved Quality of Life for Offspring • Better Consumer Decisionmaking • Increased Personal Status • More Hobbies, Leisure Activities

Reauthorization Realities

A 2003 publication of the Institute for Higher Education Policy, *Reauthorizing the Higher Education Act: Issues and Options*, edited by Institute Senior Associate Thomas R. Wolanin, provides an excellent primer on the HEA and its numerous goals and programs, possible policy choices that will be made in the reauthorization, and the tradeoffs associated with those choices. In that report, Wolanin observes that each HEA reauthorization has proceeded with a common set of assumptions about what higher education is and who it serves. Since 1965, the goal of the HEA has been, simply put, to help students go to college. Yet the current challenge, according to Wolanin, a former staff director of the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education who has worked on every HEA reauthorization since 1968, is that many changes have occurred since the law was established. For example:

- ◆ Seventy-five percent of undergraduate students are “nontraditional,” meaning that they have one or more of the following characteristics: not a high school graduate; did not enroll in an institution of higher education directly after high school; are attending part time; are working full time; and/or are financially independent, married, or have dependents.
- ◆ Conversely, 25 percent of undergraduate students are “traditional,” meaning that they enrolled in an institution of higher education directly after high school; are attending full time; are working part time or not at all; and/or are financially dependent, unmarried, and without dependents.
- ◆ About 10 percent of undergraduate students are “typical” students, i.e., they have all the characteristics of traditional students, attend a four-year college, and reside on campus.
- ◆ Seventy-six percent of students attend public institutions of higher education.



- ◆ Sixty percent of first-year undergraduate students (freshmen) attend either a community college (52 percent) or a proprietary school (eight percent).
- ◆ About 11 percent of all students attend a minority-serving college or university, including Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and other predominantly black institutions. About one-third of all minority students attend one of these types of institutions.
- ◆ Nine percent of first-year undergraduate students (freshmen) report having a disability, most commonly a learning disability.
- ◆ About five percent of undergraduates attend a “selective” college or university (i.e., one that accepts less than half of those who apply).
- ◆ During their undergraduate years, more than 60 percent of students attend more than one institution of higher education.

The challenge for policymakers charged with reauthorizing the HEA is that the reality of higher education is much different than when the HEA was first drafted 40 years ago. Demographic projections indicate that many of the populations historically underserved by higher education—low-income groups, minorities, and persons with disabilities—may in fact be the fastest-growing, college-eligible populations in the country. With these changes come significant pressure to increase spending to ensure access to higher education for members of these groups. While the HEA does not appropriate any money—it is simply a law that authorizes programs for which funding must be sought—approval for programs it supports is closely tied to the likelihood of increased investment in higher education.

The Coming Year: Prospects

So what does the coming year look like for higher education at the federal policy level? In all likelihood, the HEA reauthorization will begin with many of the same issues that were

discussed in 2004—raising borrowing limits on student loans, modifying rules for institutional eligibility to participate in federal student aid programs, and changing definitions to permit more flexibility for technology-mediated learning using federal resources. A second George W. Bush administration, or a first John Kerry administration, will probably not emphasize reauthorization or higher education funding, absent a significant new stream of tax revenues or cost savings from existing programs. However, several proposals discussed in Congress or within the administration could impact colleges and universities, even without the new funds needed to support increasing access.

Promoting access to higher education remains one of the most critical responsibilities of the federal government to ensure the nation’s public, private, social, and economic stability and prosperity. In these challenging times, making investments that will lead to greater access requires a great deal of political courage. Far from impossible, broadened access does seem a dim prospect in the near future given the significant challenges facing the nation, particularly its financial uncertainties. ■

Jamie P. Merisotis is the founding president of the Institute for Higher Education Policy. Established in 1993 in Washington, DC, the institute is regarded as one of the world’s premier research and policy organizations concerned with higher education policy development. Merisotis is a leading authority on college and university financing, particularly student financial aid, and has published major studies and reports on topics ranging from higher education ranking systems to technology-based learning to student demographics. He also is the coordinator and facilitator of the Alliance for Equity in Higher Education, an unprecedented coalition of more than 340 minority-serving colleges and universities. Previously, he was executive director of the National Commission on Responsibilities for Financing Postsecondary Education, a bipartisan commission appointed by the president and the Congressional leadership.

Promoting access to higher education remains one of the most critical responsibilities of the federal government to ensure the nation’s public, private, social, and economic stability and prosperity.

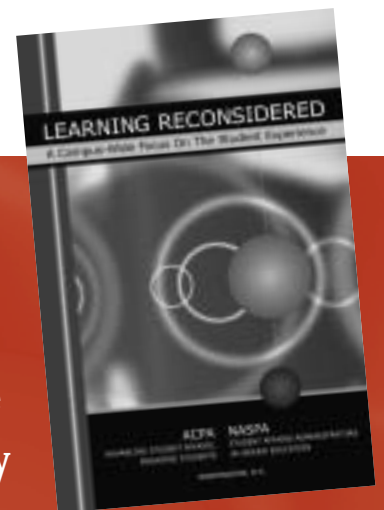
Learning Reconsidered

Implications for Senior
Student Affairs Officers

BY LINDA KUK

The new concept of learning recognizes the essential integration of personal development with learning; it reflects the diverse ways through which students may engage with the tasks and content of learning.

Student learning produces both educational and developmental outcomes; distinguishing them is pointless and potentially harmful, and the goal of institutions of higher education should be the integration of all domains of learning and of the work of all educators.



—*Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience*

(NASPA, ACPA, 2004)



PHOTOS COURTESY OF COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Institutional leaders often find it difficult to balance expectations against the need to produce results.

With the publication of *Learning Reconsidered* in March 2004, NASPA and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) offer a solid rationale for “the integrated use of all of higher education’s resources in the education and preparation of the whole student.” By merging concepts and research surrounding student and community development and learning into a conceptual framework labeled *transformational learning*, the report raises awareness of the importance of attending to the whole student and creates a realistic context for challenging the way higher education operates.

Within this conceptualization, student affairs is integral to the learning process because of the opportunities it provides students to learn through action, contemplation, reflection, and emotional engagement as well as information acquisition. Most important is the recognition that transformational learning always occurs in the active context of students’ lives. Developing intertwined academic and development outcomes for students requires a broadening and diversification of the concept of learning now held by many faculty and administrators and requires senior student affairs officers (SSAOs) to take more active leadership roles.

It is difficult to predict how institutions will use the information in *Learning Reconsidered* or how they will implement plans for change. In these early stages of discourse, it is important to consider the implementation of this new framework and its implications for SSAOs and their organizations.

The Reality of Implementation

Most SSAOs will view this work wearing two lenses. Through the theoretical lens, they will see exciting and stimulating notions that elevate the status of their work to new levels of importance in the learning process. *Learning Reconsidered* dispels the notion that learning and human development are two distinct processes that must compete for attention and resources.

Through the practical application lens, SSAOs will see these same notions as presenting revolutionary and extraordinary opportunities as well as daunting challenges for their staffs and their institutions. It is exciting and refreshing to contemplate the possibilities that these ideas generate for students and communities engaged in the learning process.

At the same time, the excitement of generating great ideas is often dampened by the reality of implementing them. Any approach to changing campus culture requires buy-in from both institutional leadership and faculty. In fact, *Learning Reconsidered* offers that, “Both members of the academic faculty and student affairs educators must be prepared to assess and change their work.” Student affairs practitioners cannot implement these provisions alone and implementation efforts may frequently involve considerable infusions of personal attention, resources, and energy on the part of SSAOs.

Initially, SSAOs face the challenge of appearing as the visible campus champions for initiatives related to living and learning. As high-ranking campus administrators, SSAOs are in positions to sell their presidents, provosts, and the faculty governing bodies on the importance and necessity of evaluating the way learning occurs on campus. They will also need to convince institutional leaders that the provisions of *Learning Reconsidered* can effectively serve as templates for these efforts. Building these provisions into their institutions' strategic planning processes and involving faculty and professional staff governance groups early in the process are keys to achieving success for this initiative.

Even if campus leadership is convinced that evaluations of learning and its processes are necessary, engaging the full campus community may not be easy. Colleges and universities are faced with increasing constraints that significantly impact their abilities to fulfill their missions and to meet the requirements of their constituent groups—all of which are competing for limited resources. Institutional leaders often find it difficult to balance expectations against the need to produce results.

With yet another perceived demand added to the mix, constituent groups could raise obstacles to what they perceive as threats to tradition and culture. A compelling case for change, which includes realistic, measurable goals, can contribute to the credibility of any proposed plan. Examples of how such efforts can heighten the stature of the institution, as well as enhance the visibility of each constituent group, will help sell the plan to vested groups. Providing each group with a voice in the discussion will also go far in promoting dialogue.

Refocusing Energies

In today's higher education environment, SSAOs face the daunting task of convincing faculty and staff to refocus their energies on changing a culture that has adequately met their needs for centuries. Most college environments are open, collegial systems in which faculty, and to some extent professional staff, value autonomy and have strong tendencies to perpetuate the status quo. On many campuses, the talk about student- and learning-centered environments has not yet

Learning Beyond the Classroom

Throughout the country, senior student affairs officers (SSAOs) are looking for new ways to provide students with "the essential integration" defined in *Learning Reconsidered*. Two student affairs leaders describe how their institutions are drawing on the tenets of *Learning Reconsidered* to meet this ongoing challenge.

Rebecca Mills, vice president for student life at University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), manages a 300-person department and the services of her staff meet the needs of some 27,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Her philosophy, and that of her institution, is one of partnering throughout the higher education process.

"As student affairs professionals, it is our role to partner with teaching faculty as educators," she shares. "*Learning Reconsidered* nicely captures the learning outcomes that can guide our work with students outside the classroom and it provides a common language for divisional discussions, co-curricular planning, and academic partnerships."

Mills relates how the first goal in the UNLV strategic planning document is to create and sustain a student-centered learning environment. "We are fortunate that the university's strategic plan begins with a focus on students, which allows us, as student affairs professionals, to center institutional conversations on what students need, want, and expect from the institution," says Mills.

Currently, UNLV is working on a co-curricular agenda that parallels the recommendations presented in *Learning Reconsidered*. "This gives us a wonderful framework for continuing that work and it was great affirmation to know that divisional conversations about the co-curriculum are in line with the thinking of national experts," she adds.

Steven Neilson, dean of student affairs at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida ordered more than 30 copies of *Learning*

Reconsidered and encouraged his entire staff to read the publication in preparation for a divisional day-long retreat.

"*Learning Reconsidered* puts our work into a context that we have been looking for," explains Neilson, who points to its seven clearly identified learning outcomes. "We know the impact of student learning, but this provides a construct to take our practices and match them with the agreed upon outcomes—in other words taking practice to theory."

In the retreat, staff explored the significance of *Learning Reconsidered* and discussed programs at Rollins in terms of outcomes and assessment. Jennifer Browning, a first-year student affairs professional who serves as assistant director of Career Services at Rollins, notes, "We know, in the division, that our programs challenge students to think critically and reflectively, we just need to explain this to others. Providing specific, concrete examples from our programming does help us define our work." Browning believes that explaining the benefits and outcomes of student affairs work through stories and examples of student behaviors, learning styles, and thought processes over time is a better way to measure outcomes than relying solely on traditional statistical methods.

As a follow-up to the retreat Neilson describes, "We have committed ourselves to a sustained, in-depth series of seven monthly meetings, each of which will focus on a specific outcome. Eventually, we hope to build large assessment and outcome matrices that will give language and meaning to our work and integrate learning across the entire institution."

As the college begins work on a quality enhancement plan as part of its upcoming re-accreditation, Neilson is hopeful that *Learning Reconsidered* will generate further dialogue on outcomes throughout Rollins.

translated into reality. Change takes time and prospective participants in this new framework must be convinced of the benefits. SSAOs can take a leading role in communicating with their colleagues in all areas about how changes in their work and a renewed focus on learning can result in greater intrinsic rewards and stronger connections with students. SSAOs and their supporters must understand the dynamics of change and intentionally design implementation strategies to deal with any anticipated resistance.

Campuses committed to reinventing approaches to learning must creatively bend the existing paradigms that currently inhibit the learning process at most institutions. Limited resources and numbers of faculty and staff trained in very specialized and isolated disciplines make this task even more challenging. To quote *Learning Reconsidered*, how does one develop a process whereby students “design their own learning plans” and “skilled educators...help students develop their plans, considering the kinds of challenges and support they need to succeed, and help them reflect and make meaning about their learning from those experiences”?

Achieving the Greatest Impact

Indeed, this process raises a host of questions. How does one move from a system with uniform standards based on the currency of accumulated credit hours to a system with learning activities that are designed to address individual learning objectives that are measured differently for each student? Will the standards for acquiring a bachelor's degree change, or will the notion of a degree become irrelevant? How can the costs of this type of individualized instruction be contained so that a college education is accessible to students from all walks of life? What would a campus look like that supports learning in a variety of forms based on individual need? How would the learning process be orchestrated and managed in different campus settings, at different times of the day, facilitated by different types of educators?

A plan that intentionally unfolds in stages, at key times, and in critical areas designed to have the greatest impact on campus may be most acceptable to constituents. The comprehensive plan should outline steps and timelines for implementation in a systemic way across the campus. SSAOs must be realistic about the magnitude and timing of the planned intervention and must consciously design the implementation so that it can serve the learning needs of all students in a compressed time frame.

The introduction of new learning initiatives brings new challenges to student affairs staff as well. It may be difficult to engage staff in a change process that will significantly alter the way they are organized, their status within the organization, and aspects of the jobs they perform. While student affairs practitioners may find the ideas contained in *Learning Reconsidered* stimulating and engaging, they may also be viewed as threatening to job security. SSAOs may have to devote more management expertise to quelling the emotional unrest and uncertainty that accompanies change and to

ensuring each employee of his or her value to the organization. Enhanced communication and reassuring words and actions by SSAOs throughout the change process are critical to keeping staff engaged in their work and in advancing the plan.

SSAOs will be faced with difficult choices when it comes to redirecting limited resources to training and retooling staff. They also may be faced with making decisions about staff changes to better meet the needs of the new competency requirements. New standards must be set for incoming staff and greater demands will be placed on younger staff hired directly from student affairs preparation programs. Performance expectations will intensify as faculty and student affairs staff partner in the learning process and new goals are set for measuring their joint contributions.

Despite all of the details that come with implementing the provisions of *Learning Reconsidered*, SSAOs are likely to experience a significant and positive impact on their own roles within their institutions. Increasingly, they will be viewed as the sources of connections among student learning activities and as important conduits to understanding the relationships between students and institutional cultures. Their staffs will likely become real partners, providing consultation on issues about students and their learning processes. Their organizations will be viewed as playing significant roles in achieving institutional goals of producing “engaged, lifelong learners and effective citizens.”

Students will always be the primary beneficiaries of any changes in the learning process. Through the approaches advanced in *Learning Reconsidered*, they will be given opportunities to realize more intentional and wholistic approaches to their educational experiences. As the designers and navigators of their own educations, students will more clearly understand the connections among the elements of content and process in their learning. LE

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To obtain copies of *Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience*, please visit <http://www.naspa.org/publications> or call 301-638-1749. Quantity discounts are available.

Working With Legal Counsel

BY PETER LAKE

One of the most important opportunities for a higher education administrator is working with legal counsel. Some schools are blessed with significant in-house counsel staff, who are available and routinely accessible. Other institutions may have just one lawyer, who may be off campus and not regularly available. Even senior staff at institutions with the greatest legal luxuries experience challenges working with counsel and maximizing the limited, and often expensive, time of lawyers.

How can you work best with your institutions' lawyers? The answers depend, in part, on whether you are being sued or you are seeking advice regarding the legal ramifications of past, present, or future acts.

First, be prepared. The practice of law is an exercise in preparation. Lawyers respond to clients who contemplate their questions in advance, bring related supporting documents, and revisit details and significant information prior to a meeting. Preparation saves time and lawyers, like many of us, live in a world where there is never enough time to complete each and every task.

Second, never ask, "Can I do this," or "Will I get sued if I do this?" If you ask lawyers if you can do something, we tend to answer "no." Our aversion to litigation guides us to tell you to find a nice bear- and terrorist-free cave in which to live to avoid getting sued. If you let us, we will try to reduce your legal risks to zero. Of course, your campus may go out of business in the process.

Be careful what you ask for and what you project. If you ask for the impossible in our litigation-crazy society (and send the signal to your lawyers that you fear litigation more than anything), you will likely receive legal advice to create a hermetically-sealed campus. The better approach is to go to meetings with lawyers with several options or strategies and ask questions such as, "What are the legal implications of the following strategies?" You may find that type of question elicits feedback that actually improves your strategy in non-legal ways. We can help you a great deal in the formulation process, but you take us out of the game if you ask yes/no questions about whether or not you will get sued.

Third, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of lawyers. Once your institution is sued, you are wise to follow counsel's guidance faithfully. Honesty and candidness help everyone in litigation. Yet, a fear of lawyers or a specific fear of hearing "no" often keeps administrators from bringing lawyers into the process of managing a campus. Lawyers are called mostly in crisis. Ironically, a crisis might have been avoided altogether with preventive legal counsel. By the nature of our business and training, you must ask for help first. Ask now how we can help you, what options you have, or what legal tools you can use to achieve your goals. Lawyers can assist with such tasks as seeking zoning changes, working with city councils and alcohol regulatory bodies, and bringing strategic litigation to establish legal rules that aid a campus.

Fourth, try not to turn every problem into a legal problem. Many times we hear from clients who want us to engage in shock and awe legal tactics. Often, however, the presence of law obstructs constructive progress and raises the stakes of a conflict. Moreover, legal training does not teach lawyers how to manage student affairs, Greek systems, or academic discipline. The law is a great tool, but not the only tool to use on campus. In fact, it is often one of the least effective tools. For example, in drafting an honor policy it is far better for administrators than for legal counsel to create the language and vision of the policy. It is very appropriate to involve lawyers in the process, but we have a tendency to replicate systems familiar to us—our campus may end up with a mini-court system rather than a viable student affairs process. Recognize the limits of what we can do for you.

Fifth, and most importantly, do not use lawyers to avoid your responsibility. It is common in our society to hire a lawyer to fight someone, rather than take responsibility for one's share of a conflict. It is tempting to turn our moral issues into legal ones, and hide behind the arguments our lawyers make in court. Universities and colleges teach responsibility and integrity. It is not appropriate for the souls of our institutions to use the law as a way to avoid responsibility. It is a first-order mistake to build a student affairs model on litigation avoidance. The law is ultimately our best ally when we are performing our jobs responsibly and with compassion.

Peter Lake, professor of law at Stetson University College of Law, is co-author of The Rights and Responsibilities of the Modern University (Carolina Academic Press, 1999). An expert in higher education law and policy, Lake sits on several boards, including The Center for Academic Integrity and the review group of The Higher Education Center.



Who's Reading What?

Word Freak: Heartbreak, Triumph, Genius and Obsession in the World of Competitive Scrabble Players by Stefan Fatis (Penguin Books, 2002) offers an unusual look at words, games, rules, the business world, and people in general—all in the context of a Depression-era board game. The book follows the history of Scrabble from the development of the written language to a recent North American Scrabble championship. Along the way, we learn a great deal about rules for life and “playing the game,” along with details on the individuals who created and manufactured this enduring board game.

Farewell, Godspeed: The Greatest Eulogies of Our Time edited by Cyrus M. Copeland (Harmony Books, 2003) provides a wonderful history lesson through tributes to a diverse group of individuals, including maestros, visionaries, wisecrackers, captains of industry, matinee idols, explorers and high fliers, tunesmiths and troubadours, movie moguls, and wordsmiths. Calling a great eulogy “both art and architecture—a bridge between the living and the dead, memory and eternity,” the 64 remembrances of notables by those who knew them best paint a compelling picture of famous lives and times.

In ***Bright College Years: Inside the American Campus Today*** (Simon and Schuster, 1997), Anne Matthews follows an academic year, from summer to summer, providing insights and observations on higher education—what she calls a “remarkably unwatched industry.” Over the course of 12 months, the author examines “those who learn, those who teach, and those who arrange” in virtually every type of higher education institution as she searches for answers to the question: what, exactly, is college for these days?

Dennis Black, Vice President for Student Affairs, University at Buffalo

Good to Great by Jim Collins (HarperBusiness, 2001) examines companies that outpaced their competitors and consistently outperformed market leaders like Coca-Cola, Intel, and General Electric. The book includes an interesting perspective on leadership that challenges many long-held beliefs that the best leaders are charismatic and forceful. In his “hedgehog” concept, Collins asserts that what makes these companies great is a singular focus on what they do best, eliminating anything that detracts from that focus. Hedgehogs are simple animals, but great survivors. Similarly, great companies are highly successful at maintaining a narrow focus on a simple goal.

Teresa Hall, Assistant Vice President, Student Involvement and Transitions, Towson University

In ***Walking A Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool*** (Penguin Putnam, 1995), Lauren Artess explores the labyrinth as a crucible for change, facilitating an awakening of our spiritual consciousness necessary to develop a higher level of awareness. Artess believes the labyrinth is a “tool to guide healing, deepen self-knowledge, and empower creativity.” The book salutes and honors the spiritual yearnings and journeys of seekers outside the institutional church and is an excellent resource to reflect upon the path of life and to step away from the everyday world to refresh one’s mind, find new resolve, and refine one’s focus.

Sarah Marshall, Assistant Professor, Educational and Community Leadership, Central Michigan University

Web Sites to Watch

Strategy+Business
(<http://www.strategy-business.com>)

This site boasts the “best ideas in business.” Innovation and change management are among the most discussed topics. Management articles found in *strategy+business* magazine are featured under sections that include the Creative Mind and CEO Succession. Subscribe to the electronic newsletter for more ideas and analysis via email.



Wired (<http://www.wired.com>)

For a different twist on virtually any story, access this site, which features *Wired* magazine articles and new online content. Hot Off the Wire updates the latest news stories and special interest stories that can be accessed through the topic heads of culture, technology, business, and politics. Real fans can add the toolbar to their favorite browsers. The site also gives you the option to set up your hand-held device to access the latest wired news through your desktop or a wireless modem or data-enabled mobile phone.



CEO Express (<http://www.ceoexpress.com>)

If you can wade through the cluttered home page, this site is a great resource for any type of information you wish to access. Connecting business executives to information that matters, the site links directly to news services, daily newspapers, and business magazines. On the CEO@Home page, accessed through Express Destination on the toolbar, find resources on health, sports, living arts, personal finance, and even a homework helper, which may be of particular interest to your students.



Gadgets and Gear

BY KEVIN KRUGER

As a new academic year begins, it is always interesting to see what students bring with them to campus. While many students come with traditional tools such as spiral notebooks and pens, increasing numbers of college students are equipped with the latest tech gadgets for both their academic and entertainment needs. A few of those “hot” technologies and their implications for campus administrators are discussed below.

Is That a Cell Phone?

The latest “gotta have it” for college students is the desire for cell phone ring tones that are unique, unusual, and that represent an expression of the phone owner’s personality. Increasingly, millions of cell phone owners share that sentiment. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* reported in its July 1, 2004 issue, “Ring tone revenues in North America totaled \$94.3 million in 2003, and they’re expected to jump to \$116 million in 2004, according to Strategy Analytics, a market research and consulting firm.”



Naturally, as with all new technology, there is new terminology. The cool new phones allow for downloads of polyphonic tones, which consist of multiple tracks of notes and sound just like the real song, compared to monophonic tones (probably what you have on your cell phone), which sound more basic.

Approximately 82 percent of college women and 74 percent of college men, according to Harris Interactive, now own a cell phone, making it even harder to reach every residential student through the university voicemail system. Most college students are abandoning traditional telephone lines in their residence halls in lieu of cell phones that are their one-stop shop for connectivity and entertainment. Since 60 percent of college students use their phones for text messaging, the cell phone is becoming the center for voice, data, and, thanks to the camera phone, visual communications. As cell phones become even more advanced and multifunctional, what is next?

iPod and Music

When your first-year students arrived in August, odds are most of them were sporting a pair of long white wires coming out of their ears. Those wires are discretely connected to the single hottest piece of technology among college-age youth—the iPod. Created by Apple, the iPod stores and plays music in a compressed file format called MP3 and the biggest iPod can store up to 10,000 songs! Apple has sold more than two million iPods since its premiere in October 2001, representing a 50 percent share of the market in portable digital audio players.

Where are students getting all of this music? Most still get their music illegally, since illegal file sharing has become the ubiquitous college experience, exceeding even that of drinking (59 percent admit to illegally downloading music). However, the decision by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) to sue individuals who illegally download music has resulted in a decrease of “downloaders” among adult Internet users from 29 percent to 14 percent, reports the September 2003 Pew Internet & American Life Project.



PHOTO COURTESY OF APPLE COMPUTER www.ipod.com

Increasingly, students may be getting music from their own colleges. Last month, Yale University announced a pilot program to allow students to download music legally for around \$2 per month. Yale joins The Pennsylvania State University, the first to offer such a service, and other campuses with pilot programs such as the University of Rochester, Bentley College, and Wake Forest University.

The Tablet

This fall, tucked inside the backpacks of some 400 students at the University of Virginia will be the Tablet PC, a full-strength multimedia PC tool that allows students to take handwritten notes and to produce images that will connect them with material from the classroom. This experimental program, sponsored by Microsoft, will put these relatively expensive toys (\$2,000 each) in the hands of students and faculty in biochemistry, psychology, and statistics classrooms. Other colleges are adding Tablet PCs to their campus laptop programs. Winona State University in Minnesota has purchased 4,000 Tablet PCs for its students, which is the largest deployment of Tablet PCs at any college or university, according to Gateway Computers.

What is That Around Her Neck?

No, that is not a key chain around her neck. Most likely it is a USB flash drive, or a portable drive that hooks into the USB port of your computer. It acts just like a floppy disk, but can contain up to 512 megabytes of memory, or a little less than five times the storage capacity of a floppy disk. Flash drives make it easier than ever to transport term papers, photos, and even presentations between computers.

Also, be on the lookout for new personal digital assistants (PDAs) that come packaged with cell phones, TV remote controls, dictionaries, MP3 players, keyboards the size of your palm, wireless mice, and a whole host of other untethered gadgets.

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Benchmarking at Your Institution

BY JENNIFER LIPNICK

Colleges and universities are under continuing pressure to increase accountability and to provide services in a fast and effective manner. In those states where deficits are forcing budget cuts, institutions are being asked to reduce spending wherever possible. When these financial issues arise, where can senior student affairs officers (SSAOs) turn for comparative information to demonstrate their efficiency and effectiveness? When setting strategic or operational goals or performing internal institutional analysis for accreditation, what source of higher education benchmarking data is available for student services or student affairs?

Benchmarking data for student affairs has long been a priority for SSAOs. Since the mid-1990s, NASPA has been working with other student affairs associations to develop a benchmarking tool for student affairs. Following these efforts, in 2000 NASPA began a collaborative relationship with McLean, Virginia-based BearingPoint, Inc. to produce the first comprehensive benchmarking survey for student affairs. Housed within the Higher Education Benchmarking Consortium at <http://www.HigherEdBenchmarking.com>, the Student Affairs/Student Services Benchmarking program recently completed its first round of data collection. The goals of the program are to:

- ◆ Provide surveys that are applicable to student affairs/student services
- ◆ Produce data that can help measure institutional efficiency and effectiveness over time
- ◆ Allow institutions to compare themselves with peer institutions
- ◆ Incorporate a large number of diverse institutions to ensure comparisons are meaningful
- ◆ Create additional products based on the survey data provided at a low cost to higher education institutions

Nearly 100 colleges and universities participated in the first round of data collection. Participants represented all sectors of higher education from large state research institutions to small private religious colleges to community colleges. Once data collection was complete, all participants received customized reports showing how they compared with other similar-sized institutions. Special reports comparing particular subsets of institutions are also available to participants, who were given the opportunity to subscribe to unlimited access to an online Data Analysis System.

Participants who purchased access to the Data Analysis System can run an unlimited number of reports and data comparisons with groups of peer institutions. Comparison groups of institutions can be saved and used to monitor changes over time. Results can then be utilized to create baseline studies, set target goals, verify national/local resource

allocation standards, demonstrate self study for accreditation purposes, and support other change and improvement efforts. Non-participants may purchase other resources created from the data. Basic reports cost from \$200 to \$300 and specialized reports are priced separately.

Assessing Your Progress

This benchmarking resource has proven to be invaluable for higher education administrators seeking evidence of good performance and areas for potential improvement.

"The benchmarking data provide performance indicators to systematically measure and compare the work processes of my student services functional areas by bringing an external focus to our internal activities, functions, and operations," says Frank Ardaiole, vice president for student life at Winthrop University. "These performance indicators measure my student services' positions against those of my peer institutions, the success of our strategies and tactics, and our relative position in relation to past operational performance."

Ardaiole adds, "The collected data work like dashboard instruments in a car. They are measurements of performance that do not necessarily indicate the reasons something is happening. However, just like when the engine heat indicator on the dashboard shows that the car is overheating, you better check under the hood to avoid bigger problems later."

The second round of data collection is scheduled to launch this fall and benchmarking contributors hope to increase participation by their peers. Some institutional representatives plan to register with a group of similar institutions, so they can guarantee that comparative data will include their peers.

Lee Gordon, assistant vice president for student services technology and assessment at Purdue University, says his area decided to join the student affairs/student services survey because it was important for student services to fully join Purdue's newly-adopted strategic planning process. "Recently, we included benchmark data in a proposal to provide additional space for student activities and organizations," says Gordon. "Without this benchmarking resource, it would have been difficult to demonstrate the need for change. We quickly saw the value of benchmarking and how it could be the cornerstone of a systematic program for assessing progress toward achieving goals."

As the industry adapts to rising demands, institutions are seeking comparative data on which to base decisions. Benchmarking is utilized more and more frequently in the

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Student Affairs in China

BY HOWARD WANG

While higher education reform in China began two decades ago, new developments and efforts occurred in the late 1990s and early this century. Still, it is difficult to determine when student affairs programs were initiated. Today, most universities and colleges previously controlled both financially and administratively by China's Ministry of Education (MOE) are now controlled either jointly by MOE and local, provincial, and/or municipal governments or entirely by local governments.

During the reform period, little mention was made of goals or strategic plans for student support services or enhancement of campus and student life. Reform efforts focused more on changes involving institution consolidation and mergers, academic curriculum development, establishment of a research agenda, and teaching improvements. Although there has been no mandate from the central government to reform or improve student services, my own visits to campuses in the last two years lead me to believe that student and campus life are flourishing with continuing developments in the areas of career services, housing, and financial aid.

I share the following information about Chinese student services:

- ◆ In China, undergraduate students are generally grouped by major disciplines and class levels. Each group has a "class mentor," typically a faculty member who provides advising and helps students in their daily campus lives. Class mentors play a much greater role than student affairs staff. In this respect, their role is similar to that of "resident faculty" members in American colleges and universities in the 18th and 19th centuries, when moral education, citizenship, and vocational training of students were part of the educational process overseen by faculty members. As Chinese higher education reform continues, faculty members are expected to perform research, create new classes, and broaden the curriculum—all of which will lessen their roles as student caretakers.
- ◆ Since the reform, students at many Chinese universities have created their own organizations and clubs and increased their involvement in sports and cultural and artistic activities. In China, student unions are not physical buildings, but operate more like student governments on American campuses. The Chinese "student unions" have no formal link to student affairs and are directed by university administrators and party leaders.
- ◆ Campus life, by and large, is still centered around academic departments. Another outlet for campus life continues to be the Thought Education (or Moral



PHOTO COURTESY OF HOWARD WANG

Education) Department, through which students are recruited to join the Communist Youth League. These leagues are administered as part of the same division as student services and provide services and activities that promote the Communist Party.

- ◆ Chinese students are just as, or more, concerned about their careers than American students. Prior to the reform, university students were assigned majors. After graduation, the government assigned jobs to graduates with no regard for majors, skills, or competencies. Greater freedoms now apply to choosing an academic discipline and competing for desirable jobs. Career placement services continue to expand, assisting students in resume writing, matching students with desired positions, and inviting employers for campus interviews.
- ◆ Reform provides greater access to higher education for students from a variety of backgrounds. Financial aid services are growing and now include scholarships, government loans, and on-campus work-study.
- ◆ The admission function, centrally controlled in China by the MOE, has provided the flexibility to redirect students to other educational opportunities and to control unwanted growth in four-year institutions. As institutions gradually gain control of the admission process, financial aid is likely to be used more often as a recruitment incentive.

China's continued entry into the world market propels and accelerates its efforts to reform higher education in order to better meet market-driven labor needs. In doing so, little attention is being paid to either the theoretical or practical aspects of facilitating student development through student affairs programs and services. Since student services differ around the world, it would be interesting to perform a comparative examination of student services in the United States to others abroad. Colleagues in the United States can further student services reform in China in a number of ways, a few of which are outlined below.

Conduct Research. Comparative studies on developmental measures of Chinese American students in the United States, and Chinese students in their homeland, may offer preliminary information for designing further research studies of Chinese student development. Results could potentially be

useful in formulating concepts and constructing a model of Chinese student development theory in the context of Chinese social and cultural values.

Share Expertise in China. Since most institutions in China cannot afford to send staff to the United States for further training, American presenters with at least a sufficient understanding in conversational Chinese should consider making presentations in China if opportunities arise.

Assist in Curriculum Development. Interest has been expressed among individual senior student services directors in China in developing an academic curriculum for a master's level degree program in college student services work. The challenge is to create a glossary of terms that provides meaningful translations of western student affairs terminologies to Chinese.

Implement a Student Affairs Staff Exchange Program. In addition to short-term tours of international campuses, extended stays of a month or longer at campuses in countries such as China, including the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong, Singapore, or the Philippines, would provide a great "immersion" program to learn how student affairs work is conducted in other Asian countries and to share diverse student affairs perspectives with international colleagues. At the same time, international staff members could visit campuses in the United States. Such exchange programs would also be helpful in Australia and New Zealand.

Host a Student Affairs Professional from China. Given budget constraints facing many campuses, travel to China may

be prohibitive and, in China, funding for training student services staff is lacking. Hosting a student affairs colleague from China would be beneficial for both the host institution and the visiting scholar.

A Great Opportunity

China's reform efforts in higher education present a great opportunity for student affairs professionals in China to assess, evaluate, and plan for the future growth of Chinese student development and its application to student affairs. Student affairs professionals in the U.S. stand to gain a great deal by expanding their involvement beyond American borders and actively engaging in international professional associations.

Howard Wang is the associate vice president for student affairs and acting executive director for the Student Health and Counseling Center at California State University, Fullerton. He previously served as chief executive officer to the assistant vice chancellor for student development and health at the University of California, Los Angeles for more than a decade. He is a member of the Asia Pacific Student Services Association and has presented papers, served as a panelist, and provided advanced training on student development theories, student affairs administration and governance, and other selected student services topics to student affairs administrators from the greater Beijing area and Guangdong Province in China.



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Gadget Tour Coming to a College Near You

As if students needed any more incentive to stock their off- and on-campus rooms with technology, the TKO Tour (techno-overload) will be visiting some 60 college campuses this year. The TKO tour is an offshoot of the Consumer Electronic Association, which sponsors an annual consumer electronic show every January in Las Vegas, where future trends in consumer electronics are displayed to the media. The TKO tour showcases new electronics that will end up on the shopping lists of today's college students. A highlight of the TKO tour will be "the ultimate dorm room," featuring the latest and greatest electronics in the market. It might make for an informative staff development program for your residence life staff! To see if your campus is on the "tour," visit <http://www.tkotour.com>.

Kevin Kruger has served as the associate executive director of NASPA since 1994 and also directs the NASPA Center for Technology in Student Affairs. Prior to joining NASPA, he served as associate vice president for student affairs at University of Maryland, Baltimore County.



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higher education community. Yet, few benchmarking surveys are exclusive in higher education. Your support of this program will assure its continued availability and provide your institution with valuable comparison data.

For more information about registering for the fiscal year 2004 Student Affairs/Student Services Benchmarking Program, please visit <http://www.naspa.org/resources/benchmark.cfm> or contact Kevin Kruger at kkruger@naspa.org. You can also visit <http://www.HigherEdBenchmarking.com> or contact Jennifer Lipnick at jennifer.lipnick@bearingpoint.com.

Jennifer Lipnick is a senior consultant with BearingPoint, Inc. (NYSE:BE), one of the world's largest business consulting and systems integration firms, where she manages The Higher Education Benchmarking Consortium and consults with colleges and universities. Previously, she worked with The National Academy of Public Administration, performing research and writing reports to improve governance at all levels.



Connecting Assessment and Retention

BY GWENDOLYN JORDAN DUNGY
Executive Director, NASPA

In June 2004, many of you braved the over 100-degree temperatures to join close to 300 colleagues from around the globe in Scottsdale, Arizona for NASPA's *National Assessment and Retention Conference*. At the conference, I shared a recent personal experience that emphasized how important it is to understand the relationship between assessment and retention.

I am a member of a number of boards of trustees of colleges and universities. Recently, academic and student affairs at one particular institution had begun to focus on the whole student and learning both in and out of the classroom; they were crossing divides and bringing to life a true interdisciplinary approach to learning.

Meanwhile, the institution's retention rate was lower than that of peer institutions and administrators were not providing explanations that resonated with board members. At a board meeting, the chair, a businessman of considerable stature and tenure who had made many generous contributions to the college, became quite agitated. He said, "Years ago when we didn't have all this collaboration, and there weren't all these new professional staff roles, we didn't seem to have a retention problem." And, turning to me, continued with, "No offense Gwen, but I think we need to go back to the basics where faculty are responsible for everything related to students." I was so taken aback by his emotional outburst and for being singled out that I could merely mumble, "No offense taken."

While I was not offended, I was chagrined that we did not have adequate assessment and retention data available about the college. There was no concrete data to support the assumption that the integration of student life and traditional classroom teaching was negatively impacting retention and might be causing students to leave the institution.

John Braxton and his colleagues remind us in their book, *Reworking the Student Departure Puzzle* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2000), that students and institutions change and our thinking about how and why students leave should be influenced by these changes. It is no surprise to student affairs professionals that, as the Braxton book tells us, the majority of students leave for non-academic reasons. Therefore, it stands to reason that to solely rely on traditional classroom faculty to address the "student departure puzzle" will not be an effective strategy in retaining students.

Major non-academic reasons for retention problems are disappointment or misunderstanding. NASPA and Jossey-Bass are currently collaborating on a book about aligning the expectations of stakeholders with what the institution can offer in educating college students. Examining expectations requires us to assess intentions. Assessing intentions and evaluating the effectiveness of deliverables are critical steps in our quest to have a positive impact on retention.

The manner in which we might connect assessment and retention can be summed up in a number of questions, some of which I've gleaned from an article on professional learning communities featured in *Educational Leadership* (American Society for Training and Development, May 2004), the Braxton book, other readings, and my own thinking:

1. What are students' goals and expectations for success in attending an institution? And, are these expectations aligned with the mission, resources, and culture of the college or university?
2. What do we, all of us at the institution, want students to have learned/gained by the time they leave? Are our programs and activi-

ties closely aligned with these overall learning outcomes?

3. Do students have the appropriate prerequisites or foundations for learning what we are teaching? What is our connection with insuring that the resources are available and that students take advantage of these resources?
4. How will we know how well each student is learning? Are we assessing the impact of every teaching and learning opportunity?
5. How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning or meeting any of the requirements of the college? Have we made continuous improvement our goal of assessment?
6. How will we as internal stakeholders respond to external stakeholders when students depart? Are we sharing assessment and retention data often and broadly?

A recent *Chronicle of Higher Education* poll on the public's confidence in colleges and universities reports that the most important role for a college or university is to prepare undergraduates for careers. Assessment and retention are integral to fulfilling this public expectation. As higher education professionals and responsible educators, we are charged with fulfilling the overarching promise of providing a quality education to all students. Assessment and retention are critical in measuring the degree to which we are meeting our charge. NASPA is committed to connecting assessment and retention in order to better understand and address the "student departure puzzle."

I welcome your thoughts, reactions, and feedback. Also, for more information on assessment and retention efforts, please see <http://www.naspa.org/publications> and plan to attend NASPA's next *National Assessment and Retention Conference* in June 2005.