



Sharyn Slavin Miller, Director, Research Division
Report for the 2011 December Board of Directors Meeting
December 1, 2011

Action Items

Call for a vote to accept or endorse the Research and Scholarship Agenda Report (*Report Attached*)

NASPA GOALS & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Goal# 1

1. Build the capacity to create knowledge and use data to provide evidence that will support excellence in practice.

Guiding Principles

Inquiry – Supporting research and scholarship to add to the knowledge base of the profession and ensure that data informs practice.

See attached report.

DIVISION REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

Region IV-E

Region IV-E introduced a \$500 research grant for the first time at our conference this past weekend. Submissions are due by January 20th, 2012 and the announcement of the recipient will be announced at the NASPA National Convention in Phoenix this spring. One major advantage of this grant it is build more knowledge within the region by having the award winner present their findings at a future Region IV-E conference.

Region IV-W

In region IV-West we have been:

- continuing our publishing and research support. The faculty liaison, myself, and the KC for assessment and research offer assistance to anyone trying to navigate the publishing process!
- the faculty liaison and myself write a newsletter article for every publication about issues to assist on the writing journey and also offer our assistance to writers/researchers!
- we all three did a presentation on publishing and research at the regional conference!
- we have also made available grant money from the region for folks partaking in research projects.

- lastly, we have teamed up with a group of board members to conduct a research project on how NASPA members do and do not use the available NASPA resources and how we could increase the use of those resources.

Region V

In June 2011, Region V Advisory Board members allocated \$2000 to support the development of a research grant. In response to this, a subcommittee developed grant proposal, timeline, and review processes. Informed by the great work that is already being done in Region III, Region V's Scholar-Practitioner Grant is focused on funding efforts in student affairs that further a culture of research and evidence-based decision making in the region and are consistent with the mission of NASPA's Research Division. Specifically, NASPA Region V is seeking to support research that is: (a) systematic in its approach to discover relationships between variables or to explain a particular phenomenon, (b) grounded in theory, and (c) generalizable or has broad implications for practice so that it contributes to the body of student affairs scholarship. Proposals that involve the analysis of existing data are welcome, but should meet the criteria above.

This new grant will be publicized via the NASPA website and at the regional conference in November 2011, with particular emphasis on working with the Faculty Liaison Division Representative and the New Professional and Graduate Student Knowledge Community Coordinators. The first series of grants will be reviewed and awarded in the summer of 2012.

Region V and VI

Region V and VI collaborated with the joint regional conference committee to identify programs presented at the conference that had a special focus on research. In addition, information on funding opportunities in both regions will be distributed in the program.



NASPA

RESEARCH DIVISION

**A Research and Scholarship Agenda
for the
Student Affairs Profession**

Prepared by the NASPA Task Force
on
Research and Scholarship

October, 2011

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I. FOREWORD

Foreword

It was not long ago that those of us practicing student affairs work lamented the lack of scholarship in our field. We borrowed from other disciplines to inform our work but had very little research that we could truly call our own. Today the situation and challenge is thankfully different.

The amount of student affairs research being produced is impressive, as is the quality of much of that work. Our lament is now the lack of time many of us have to sift through the volumes of scholarly works available to us as a profession. That evolution, in my mind, is a healthy and positive development for student affairs.

This circumstance does present our profession with a different kind of challenge and that is the increasing importance to generate knowledge that is both needed and actually used. Theory should inform practice and practice should inform theory. This is a linkage that needs strengthening and consistent conversations between faculty and practitioners. We, as a profession, have yet to master this critical relationship.

The research agenda described in this document is an important contribution to addressing this challenge. Through an extensive process of discovery, the agenda outlined in the following pages reflects the expertise of faculty and staff, their shared perspective on what knowledge and skills are needed to better serve our students now and into the immediate future. [A Research and Scholarship Agenda for the Student Affairs Profession](#) thus serves as an important guidepost for all student affairs professionals and those preparing to join our ranks.

The creation of this agenda is a prime example of what can be accomplished when scholars and practitioners work collaboratively on a task of merit and are supported by our national associations. Hopefully this document will prompt an era of meaningful scholarship and enhanced practice that contributes to the shared goals of improving student learning and institutional effectiveness. Dave McKelfresh and his colleagues are to be congratulated and thanked for providing our profession with this valuable resource.

Mike Segawa
2009 NASPA President

II. INTRODUCTION

The mission of the NASPA Research Division is to “*promote NASPA's core value of spirit of inquiry and advance knowledge creation and dissemination in the fields of student affairs and higher education in order to keep NASPA members up to date on the most current scholarship related to postsecondary education and postsecondary students.*”

In the summer of 2011 the NASPA Executive Board developed a new set of strategic goals. Goal number one is to “build the capacity to create knowledge and use data to provide evidence that will support excellence in practice.” This research agenda has been developed to support this strategic goal and three of its related objectives which are:

- Be the primary source of data on the experience of college and university students
- Demonstrate the impact of student affairs on student learning, persistence, and success through scholarship, assessment, evaluation, and research.
- Tighten and align the connections among theory, research, and practice.

The research agenda is presented in three major sections: 1) Contemporary research topics, 2) State-of-the-profession research topics, and 3) Professional competency research topics. Research questions are listed under each topic. The research agenda provides substantial integration across topics and competencies.

BACKGROUND

In 2009 Mike Segawa, in his role as NASPA President, had a vision for NASPA and its research and scholarship efforts, and encouraged and supported the initiation of a research agenda. As a result the “NASPA Research and Scholarship Agenda for the Student Affairs Profession” has been developed to guide the research and scholarship efforts of members of the profession.

It is the purpose of this research agenda to describe what we want and need to know, to identify key issues in student affairs, to encourage thought and discussion about the conduct and application of research, and to inspire scholars and practitioners to participate in research. This document is intended to build upon our past, and support present strategic objectives.

A small task force was appointed to discuss and develop a research agenda.

- Task Force Members: The members of the NASPA Research and Scholarship Task Force are:
 - Randy Hyman, Associate Professor, University of Minnesota – Duluth
 - David McKelfresh, Executive Director of Assessment and Research, Colorado State University (Task Force Chair)
 - Sharyn Slavin Miller, Associate Professor, Department of Leadership and College Student Development, Azusa Pacific University

- Frank Ross, Vice President for Student Life, Northeastern Illinois University
- Charge to the Task Force: Patricia Telles Irvin, in 2011, provided the charge to the task force which was to “identify current, and anticipate future, researchable questions for the student affairs profession. Develop a vision and strategy for this research agenda and for the student affairs profession.”
- Acknowledgements: The task force members would like to acknowledge the following people:
 - Mike Segawa, for his vision and encouragement for this project.
 - Elizabeth Griego and Patricia Telles Irvin, for their strong and unwavering support for the NASPA Research Division and the work of the task force.
 - Gwen Dungy, for her guidance and the development of the Research Brief regarding the history of the NASPA Research Division.
 - Elizabeth Whitt and her colleagues on the 1997 NASPA Research Task Force, for their comprehensive work in developing “an overarching vision for NASPA’s role in “providing useful research information in a consistent and well marketed manner.”
 - NASPA Faculty Fellows, for the development of the Q-List, on which much of the section on Contemporary Research Topics is based.
 - NASPA Staff Members, for their excellent support for the ongoing business of the task force.
 - NASPA Foundation Board members for their consultation and guidance regarding student affairs research priorities.
 - Student Voice Staff Members, for their assistance with task force assessments of NASPA members.

RESEARCH AGENDA DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

- Documents Reviewed: The following documents were reviewed to assist in the development of the research agenda.
 - 1997 NASPA Research Task Force Report – Elizabeth Whitt and task force members (Karen Arnold, Karl Beeler, Michael Jackson, Daryl Smith and Lee Upcraft).
 - NASPA Historical Brief – Research Division – authored by Gwen Dungy
 - 2009 Faculty Fellows “Research Questions that Matter” - Randy Hyman, Chair (evolved to “Q List”)
 - Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Practitioners – 2010 Joint Task force Report
 - Envisioning the Future of Student Affairs – 2010 Joint Task Force Report
 - Critical Issues for Student Affairs (Sandeem and Barr, 2006)
- Assessments Conducted: The NASPA Research Division conducted two assessments of NASPA members in May and June 2011 to assist in the development of a research agenda for the profession. The two online assessments were administered by Student Voice with the assistance and guidance of the NASPA staff. Survey instructions to NASPA members were as follows:

The NASPA Task Force on Research and Scholarship is in the final stages of developing a research agenda for the profession; we are interested in knowing what types of

research you believe is needed in the field of student affairs. The established research agenda will be informed by member assessments, as well as embrace the charge to the task force, which is to: “Identify current, and anticipate future, researchable questions for the student affairs profession. Develop a vision and strategy for this research agenda for the student affairs profession.”

Assessment #1: Contemporary issues and State of the profession: Please select the topics from the sixteen general areas listed below for which you believe research is most warranted. State of the profession: Please select the topics from the areas listed below for which you believe research is most warranted. In the area provided, please describe the specific research that is needed to complement or fill the void in the existing scholarship in the field.

Assessment #2: Professional competencies: Please select the topics from the 10 general competency areas listed below for which you believe research is most warranted. In the area provided, please describe the specific research that is needed to complement or fill the void in the existing scholarship in the field.

- **Scholars and Practitioners consulted**: The following scholars and practitioners were consulted to inform the development of this research agenda.
 - Jody Donovan, Dean of Students, Colorado State University
 - Tim Ecklund, Chair, NASPA Faculty Fellows
 - Judy Rogers, Associate Dean, School of Education, Miami University, and past chair, NASPA Faculty Fellows
 - Jason Spratt, Dean of Students, Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis

The research agenda that follows is presented in three major sections: 1) Contemporary research topics, 2) State-of-the-profession research topics, and 3) Professional competency research topics. The research agenda provides substantial integration across topics and competencies with research questions listed under each topic.

III. Contemporary Research Topics

Twelve contemporary research topics are listed below with research questions for each topic. The contemporary research topics are based on the work of the NASPA Faculty Fellows as well as NASPA member assessments.

Topic 1: Returning Student Veterans

Within the very near future, it is estimated, some 250,000 U.S. veterans of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will be returning to civilian life, some intending to re-enter the work force and many taking advantage of recent legislation (Post-9/11 GI Bill) to pursue further education. Significant numbers will do so with both physical and psychological injuries. As an urgent moral and practical imperative, post secondary institutions must gear-up to respond to this new wave of students with effective programs and services. Exemplar questions might include:

- What are the characteristics of returning veterans on our campuses? By institutional type?
- What previous experiences with formal education do these students bring with them as they prepare to re-enter the system?
- What institutional or organizational barriers and challenges exist for those who come with physical and psychological injuries?
- What programs are already in place and what practices best serve these students' needs?
- What relevance do their transferable leadership skills and experiences have for the institutional goals of student engagement?

Topic 2: Student Mental Health

Over the past decade increasing numbers students with extended histories of mental health challenges have entered higher education institutions. These students are typically already on psychotropic medications for various mental health issues. Some of these entering college students carry with them the effects of emotional trauma, experience with previous hospitalization, and expectations of mental health services.

- How do student affairs educators support and enable the success and student engagement of students with minor to severe mental health issues?
- What legal considerations must student affairs professionals accommodate as guides to their work as educators with the population of students with minor to severe mental health issues?
- How do we support and educate faculty and other campus colleagues about students' mental health issues to ensure a productive and safe learning environment for all?
- How do student affairs educators collaborate with campus colleagues to address the challenge of violence both in and out of the classroom?

Topic 3: Student Development and Evolving Student Populations

The changing profile of today's students prompts us to critically assess our work. We wonder if our theories or preferred explanations are sufficiently accommodating of their emerging characteristics. New approaches and definitions of success warrant a new agenda of student development research, as illustrated in the following exemplars.

- What generational shifts have occurred among American college students over the last few decades? Are our current theories on how students develop into more complex human beings relevant for current students? What new developmental concerns does this new generation present to us?
- How can we better understand the unique developmental paths, for example, of Asian-American, Latino/a, African American, LGBTQ, Native American and multiracial students?
- What student development factors and dimensions are insufficiently addressed in the literature (e.g., role of spirituality and/or religion and the evolving family structure) and what role do they play in current college students' development? Does their importance vary among differing student populations? How do they contribute to student success?

Topic 4: Cost of Higher Education

Various national reports and the proposed report card for higher education (e.g., Measuring Up, 2006) identify access, completion, and affordability as three major areas of concern for higher education. An argument can be made *for a strong relationship among* the three. Another area of concern, raised in particular by critics of higher education, is the notion of a value-added educational experience, i.e., that the experiences a student has while in college provides them a greater value beyond that which was expected.

- How is the *cost* of attending college affecting the amount *of time* students can devote to their learning and/or pursuing learning opportunities? How do concerns about paying for college affect students' ability to be engaged in campus and academic life?
- How do student concerns about college affordability affect the mix of student affairs services, programs, and policies? How do institutions maintain the optimal mix of choices and preferences for students given the constrained resources?"
- What types of college experiences are more beneficial to students in times of personal and institutional financial constraints? What programs are already in place and what practices best serve these students' needs?
- What is the role of student affairs educators in supporting timely (perhaps accelerated) progress toward graduation?
- How does the under-resourced nature of community colleges impact their student affairs programs given the increasing enrollments in these often more affordable institutions?

- What information (and with what tools) must we communicate to external stakeholder groups about the costs of higher education and the financial support available?

Topic 5: Student Affairs and Community Colleges

“The economy is changing at a breathtaking pace, and we need different skills these days,” Mr. Obama said, according to the *Wausau Daily Herald*. “In a moment when people are finding it harder and harder to get ahead, it’s time to call upon our community colleges once again.” (“Obama Says Community Colleges Key to Economy,” February 16, 2008). Presidential proposals include a \$4,000 tuition credit that would result in more affordable community college attendance. Student affairs educators are well-advised to follow the growing trends in the community college sector of higher education. Because past practice in student affairs has predominantly focused on four-year institutions and traditional-aged college students, this shift in research and practice is timely.

- How does the shifting demographics and new populations of students (e.g., Iraq and Afghanistan War veterans, Cyber Generation) affect how student affairs is practiced in community colleges?
- What innovative and cutting edge student affairs practices in community colleges have applicability for the entire field?
- How does student affairs facilitate the articulation and transfer of credits to four-year institutions?
- How do student affairs practices impact degree completion at two-year institutions?
- How do student affairs educators facilitate increased student engagement and success at two year institutions?

Topic 6: Emerging Technologies

The use of new information and communication technologies provides increased flexibility, easy communication, and immediate resources and support to students. For example, social networking websites offer a broader communication network for students and have replaced much of their face-to-face communications. Today, college students prefer immediate communication styles, yet, most have little understanding of security issues and impacts on their interpersonal relationships. Meanwhile, data warehousing, data mining, and BI (business intelligence) analytics are emerging technological tools for high education to learn more about the institution, students, and how well operations are working. Yet, we know very little about the impact of technologies on students and higher education institutions.

- How does the use of technologies affect student affairs practice?
- What are the challenges and benefits for student affairs to adopt new technologies?
- What is the effect of technologies on student development?
- What is the effect of technologies on student relationships?
- What are the relationships between technologies and student learning?

Topic 7: The Implications for Student Affairs of Institutional Sustainability and Viability

The current and ongoing economic crisis provides challenges for all aspects of higher education. Student affairs units, traditionally a first place to look for resource reductions, are being stretched as budgets and staff are reduced. The retrenchment that has occurred during the recent economic crisis negatively impacts staff and faculty morale, productivity, and value within the institution. This is particularly the case in those student affairs divisions that have been traditionally under-staffed. Resources that might otherwise be dedicated to programs and services for students are frequently expended on external consultants. The work of external consultants is often treated as tangential to the everyday operation of the institution. As such, the money expended on these efforts can be a less than satisfactory use of limited resources.

- How can student and academic affairs better collaborate to lessen the impact of budget cuts on all areas of institutional effort?
- What are the benefits and risks associated with using external resources or consultants rather than internal scholars and experts as student affairs divisions seek to clarify their purposes and institute change? Is the use of external resources or consultants cost effective? If so, how is its effectiveness measured?
- What strategies are effective in sustaining staff morale, productivity and institutional value of student affairs divisions during times of retrenchment?
- What models can best be used to sustain quality, excellence, and viability of student affairs divisions in the future?

Topic 8: Globalization and Internationalization

Globalization has resulting in nations increasing their higher education capacity to meet the increased demand for a highly trained and educated workforce. Internationalization of higher education has focused on providing nations whose higher education capacity is not yet sufficient to meet these new demands with access to a quality education through distance learning, branch campuses, joint programs, study abroad, and other learning opportunities provided by well-established higher education institutions. Both globalization and internationalization bring forth challenges and opportunities for student affairs educators. Three researchable questions related to these topics are:

- **What is the role of college student affairs professionals in a national higher education system where higher education is seen as a public good rather than a private benefit?** In the USA, Project Measuring Up (2006) considers socio-economic benefit to the community as an indicator of success for colleges and universities. This point-of-view is in keeping with what international organizations such as OECD, The World Bank, and UNESCO have about higher education as a capacity builder. Similar perspective seems to be embedded within the Bologna Process in Europe. Student affairs in the US have traditionally been based in a student development model as exemplified by Chickering and Reisser (1993), Baxter

Magolda (1992, 2004). The question now seems to focus on the viability of the student development model in an educational system defined as a public good vs. a private benefit.

- **How are college student affairs professionals meeting the current needs of international students related to student engagement and learning opportunities?** Traditionally, the USA has benefitted by attracting international students to study at its colleges and universities. The ground rules for international students attending higher education institutions in this country have changed as a result of immigration and national security laws and regulations because of 9-11. This change, along with national policy considerations by other countries has led to increased competition for international students. How are campuses adapting to the new regulatory environment?

- **How does a student affairs/student development model fit and/or work under new cultural conditions, where institutional presence is either virtual or through proxies with institutions with a model that differs from the U.S. student affairs context?**

International education is creating new opportunities through distance learning, partnership opportunities between a US higher education institution and foreign universities, or the opening of branch campuses based on the different national protocols defining what a university is. Each approach provides challenges to the traditional notions of college student affairs, particularly in the realm of student development and engagement.

Topic 9: Social Justice

Student affairs educators have long taken the lead with diversity, cultural pluralism, and social justice efforts on college campuses. As student populations continue to increase in terms of diversity (e.g., race, sexual orientation, economic class) and empowerment (e.g., equal access to campus services, marriage rights, economic justice), student affairs educators will continue to adjust and further develop as a professional field.

- How are national civil rights movements (e.g., GLBT marriage equality) influencing equality and equity regarding on campus student affairs practice?
- How can student affairs affect institutional change regarding social justice?
- What populations exist on college campuses that are not the focus of student affairs educators?
- How do student affairs professionals' varying perspectives on diversity determine student affairs services, programs, policy, and environmental management?
- How does student affairs maximize the educational attainment of all students?
- What is student affairs educators' role in increasing access to all students across a range of institutional types?

Topic 10: History of Student Affairs

As the current generation of institutional and professional association leaders approaches the latter stages of their careers in the student affairs field, it becomes a critical point of continuity to acknowledge, articulate, celebrate, and transfer their stories and record their history. Describing and appreciating the historical roots of the profession are important for framing and guiding its current trajectory. In the absence of its acknowledged history, student affairs risks losing its sense of purpose and direction. Exemplar questions might include:

- What are the key events of the 20th century that have shaped the course of student affairs in American higher education?
- Who are the student affairs educators who have contributed significantly to the legacy of leadership in the field? Who has had critical impact on its understandings and practices? What has been the impact of their influence?
- What is the historical genesis of the essential values and philosophical assumptions of the field?
- What academic genealogies exist among student affairs preparation faculty and how have they shaped the principal teachings in the field?
- What stories and accounts warrant preservation in the student affairs archives?

Topic 11: Student Success and Persistence

Over many years student affairs educators have exhorted their campus colleagues to focus on the development of the whole student. Our commitment to student development has evolved to a richer understanding of the importance of student involvement and engagement to student learning and successful persistence to graduation. The scholars of our field have provided powerful leadership within the higher education community about the importance of student success, to the point where regional accrediting bodies have it a priority for institutional attention.

- What should be the role of student affairs educators in providing institutional leadership on initiatives that support student success and persistence?
- How can student affairs educators contribute to the development of goals and objectives that reflect institutional commitment to student success?
- How can student affairs educators more effectively collaborate with faculty to promote student success?
- What institutional functions can student affairs staff directly impact to improve student persistence?
- How can student affairs educators help their campus colleagues better understand the factors which most significantly contribute to student success?

Topic 12: Student Affairs Leadership, Administration and Organizational Management

The evolution of student affairs as a field has led to various, sometimes conflicting views about its appropriate role in our postsecondary institutions. Recent institutional initiatives (Texas Tech

University, Southern Illinois University Carbondale) have resulted in radical restructuring of divisions of student affairs. Other organizational trends reflect a variety of institutional determinations about the reporting relationship of the senior student affairs officer. Such determinations affect decisions around finite resources and institutional policy, and significantly impact support for student needs.

- How can student affairs organizations best position themselves to support their institutional missions?
- Where should student affairs be placed within the organizational structure of the institution?
- How can student affairs attract and retain a diverse, qualified staff of professional educators?
- What sources of revenue affect student affairs?
- What should be the role of student affairs professionals with assessment of student learning outcomes?
- How can professional associations best serve the needs of student affairs educators and the field of student affairs?

IV. Student Affairs State-of-the-Profession Research Topics

Five state-of-the-profession research topics are listed below with research questions for each topic. These research topics are based on the results of NASPA member assessments.

Topic 1: Student Affairs Perspectives on Student Affairs Professionals (competencies, culture, skills, and knowledge)

In 2010, NASPA and ACPA introduced a joint publication identifying student affairs competency areas. The report was intended to “define the broad professional knowledge, skills, and for some competencies, attitudes expected of student affairs professionals, regardless of their area of specialization or positional role within the field. The competencies address the complexity of our work and provide an agreed-upon set of areas of development for all student affairs professionals.” The cumulative list of expected professional knowledge is vast and gives important guidance for both learning outcomes review and possible curriculum enhancement within graduate preparatory programs. It also provides direction for professional development enrichment within both student affairs divisions and professional associations. These competency areas should be considered as future research on the state of the profession is designed.

- How are student affairs competency areas reflected in graduate preparatory programs? How do we ensure graduates of our programs enter the profession with skills and knowledge necessary to do the work?
- As professionals enter student affairs from a variety of educational backgrounds, what are the best strategies for “quality control” related to the professional competency areas?
- How do we share our collective knowledge of the changing needs of students with those outside of student affairs—academic affairs and other administrators on campus, as well as with external stakeholders and legislators?

Topic 2: Quality of Work Life in Student Affairs

Limited resources in student affairs organizations often lead to “doing more with less.” This commonly-understood administrative practice in our profession significantly impacts the quality of work life in student affairs. This is particularly salient for graduate students and new professionals who might not understand the level of personal sacrifice necessary for this work—which is often challenging and thankless. An exploration of the quality of work life in student affairs, particularly at mid and senior levels, will lead to better understanding of strategies to increase staff satisfaction, morale and retention of staff at all levels.

- Career support, including participation in professional development opportunities, has been identified as an important contributor to job satisfaction. Fiscal short-falls in higher education have left many student affairs divisions with limited travel budgets. Given this reality, what professional development opportunities, and in what delivery method, will yield the greatest positive impact on student affairs professionals at all levels?
- Previous research (Evans, 1988; Hancock, 1988; Holmes, Verrier, & Chisholm, 1983; Lorden, 1998) has addressed reasons (low pay, lack of opportunity for advancement, and poor work environment) for attrition within student affairs. This is a critical area of understanding for sustaining our profession, and future research is warranted to develop successful strategies for retention. What reasons for attrition currently exist within student affairs?
- The student affairs profession has historically been characterized by professionals who work countless hours to complete the tasks at hand. Now multiple generations are present in the student affairs division—each with unique generational values and work ethics. The literature indicates an increase in the number of hours that student affairs professionals spend at work. Given this, and the fact that our graduate students and new professionals are millennials who likely bring a different work “ethic” and expectations of time spent at work, how are student affairs departments coping with this reality and maintaining the same levels of productivity? Or, are they?

Topic 3: Characteristics and Structures of Student Affairs Divisions

The structures and characteristics of student affairs divisions are varied depending on the type and size of institution, and often have been shaped by both institutional leadership and organizational history. We know that “organizational design and structures within student affairs are not and cannot be fixed and permanent” (Kuk, 2009). Our organizational structures are responsive to change, with regard to both student needs and shifts in institutional priorities. As we find today, often external forces—the political landscape and fiscal environment also have an influence on the characteristics and structures of student affairs divisions.

- Many colleges and universities are opting for administrative restructuring in response to reduction in resources. How does student affairs maintain its identity if it is absorbed under the Provost, or divided and placed in a variety of other administrative portfolios? How do we ensure high levels of student advocacy and support for student success is maintained in an administrative restructuring?
- Given the need for additional resources, student affairs is being forced to look externally for additional sources of funding. This requires skills—grant writing and fundraising, often not part of traditional student affairs preparation, and often contrary to the reason many of us entered the profession. How prevalent is this? How is this work being accomplished? Are student affairs divisions hiring grant writers/ development directors?

- How common is it to have enrollment management functions (i.e. admissions, financial aid, scholarships) located in student affairs? What is the benefit of this administrative structure, as opposed to having enrollment reporting to academic affairs or to the President?
- Often, new SSAO's will orchestrate some level of restructuring when taking leadership of a student affairs division. What is the rationale for this administrative change? Change for change sake? Is it for financial reasons? Is there theoretical support for the decision? Was the decision to restructure based on a model at a previous institution?

Topic 4: Student Affairs Perspectives on Students

Today's college students are constantly and rapidly changing, and represent greater diversity in all ways. On our campuses we see students who were once in the minority now representing majorities. We also see new students entering higher education as a result of increased access, as well as from increased outreach to populations before not part of the higher education landscape. With this change comes the need for responsiveness from student affairs to actively maintain understanding of today's student and the needs—individual and collective, they bring. Student affairs professionals must keep up-to-date; be aware of the best practices in serving today's student, and be mindful of trends to prepare for students who are still in the educational pipeline.

- How well do student affairs professionals understand the needs and unique challenges faced by diverse students (beyond surface appreciation of difference)?
- To what extent do SSAO's involve students in decision-making?
- Are student affairs professionals knowledgeable about and prepared to serve the increased numbers of students who enter higher education with documented disabilities? With mental health issues?
- How are student affairs professionals staying current with today's student—given their heavy reliance on technology and social media (Twitter, Facebook)? Is this connection happening at all levels of the student affairs organization, or primarily with younger professionals?

Topic 5: Career Goals and Career Paths of Student Affairs Practitioners

Researchers have given attention to aspects of the vocation of student affairs—issues related specifically to staff at various levels, namely graduate students, new professionals, mid-level managers, and SSAO's. Further investigation of the career development process within student affairs should occur to provide insight into best practices for preparing future student affairs administrators and creating meaningful experiences to nourish their professional spirit. Better understanding of the student affairs career path will allow for development of intentional strategies to retain professionals through career growth and advancement.

- The majority of student affairs preparation programs are found at research universities and comprehensive institutions, yet our new professionals are hired to work in a variety of settings. How are we preparing future student affairs professionals to have the skills necessary to work at other types of institutions (i.e. HBCU's, community colleges, liberal arts colleges, etc.)?
- How do career paths differ between "traditionally-trained" student affairs professionals and those who come from different academic preparation?
- What is the best preparation for student affairs professionals who aspire to become senior student affairs officers? Presidents?
- What role does mentoring play in setting/ achieving career goals? What impact does the NASPA Undergraduate Fellows Program (NUFP) have on the career paths of program participants?

V. Professional Competencies Research Topics

Four professional competency research topics are listed below with research questions for each topic. Additional professional competency research topics are listed in order based on the percentage of NASPA members indicating where research is most warranted. These research topics are drawn from the professional competencies from the “Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Practitioners” 2010 joint report, and the research questions are based on the results of NASPA member assessments.

Competency 1: Assessment, Evaluation and Research

As today’s college students and their parents continue to be critical consumers in gaining an education that they believe is worth what they are paying for, and the country’s economy continues to prompt campuses to implement severe budget cuts, the importance of colleges and universities assessing the needs of their students and evaluating their programs is critical. Universities need to be able to “effectively articulate, interpret, and use results of assessment evaluation, and research reports and studies” (Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Practitioners, p. 8) in order to be familiar with who their students are and what they are learning. The competency of assessment, evaluation and research was considered to be of most importance for future research by the respondents to the NASPA survey. The Assessment, Evaluation, and Research competency area (AER) focuses on the ability to use, design, conduct, and critique qualitative and quantitative AER analyses; to manage organizations using AER processes and the results obtained from them; and to shape the political and ethical climate surrounding AER processes and uses on campus.

- As more colleges and universities are initiating learning outcomes assessment, what would be considered best practices from those who are developing measurable student learning outcomes? How do they assess student learning and utilize the data received for improvement?
- What are effective assessment models used with student support programs that focus on improving student retention and progression to graduation?
- How can colleges and universities most effectively use assessment results to advocate for increased institutional resources?

Competency 2: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Over the last two decades, institutions have focused on the issue of diversifying their campuses, retaining those diverse students once recruited to the institution, modifying their curriculum and hiring more diverse faculty to serve as role models for these students. The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) competency area includes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to create learning environments that are enriched with diverse views and people. It is also designed to create

an institutional ethos that accepts and celebrates differences among people, helping to free them of any misconceptions and prejudices.

- What models of student development theory have been updated to represent the diversity of our current students on campus? Are we effectively preparing our graduate students to serve this diverse student population?
- What are the experiences of LGBTQ students on our campuses? How are campus environments that celebrate differences impacting these students' development and success?
- What are current campus policies on bullying and how are they being implemented and adjudicated?

Competency 3: Student Learning and Development

Our focus in student affairs needs to be intentional student learning. Whether inside or outside of the classroom, we serve as students' partners in their learning journey and should see ourselves as educators above all else.

The Student Learning and Development competency area addresses the concepts and principles of student development and learning theory. This includes the ability to apply theory to improve and inform student affairs practice, as well as understanding teaching and training theory and practice.

- When incorporated into student affairs programs, does learning theory impact the ability of students to learn more effectively?
- What increased impact, if any, does student affairs have on student learning if they are under the jurisdiction of academic affairs?
- How does our current generation of students identify themselves ethnically and what would they identify as validating and non-validating experiences on our campuses?
- How do we best assess and evaluate the relevance of the theories we are using to build programs with the changing student population?

Competency 4: Leadership

As the landscape of higher education changes as do the students we work with, many of us seek advice and knowledge about how to be effective leaders. The gurus of leadership, Kouzes and Posner (1995) have stated, "The domain of leaders is the future" (pg. xxv). As we prepare to be leaders of the future, focusing on collaboration, best utilization of resources, and inspiring others to "contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organization" (ACPA & NASPA, 2010, p. 23) will be critical. The leadership competency area addresses the knowledge, skills, and attitudes

required of a leader, whether it be a positional leader or a member of the staff, in both an individual capacity and within a process of how individuals work together effectively to envision, plan, effect change in organizations, and respond to internal and external constituencies and issues.

- What are effective leadership strategies during times of financial constraint?
- What theories from the management literature can be successfully implemented in the higher education setting?
- How can graduate preparation programs best educate their students on leadership skills that will be effective in the future?
- How can an institutional culture that supports collaboration and positive change be developed?

The following are additional professional competency topics listed in order based on the percentage of NASPA members indicating where research is most warranted:

- Human and Organizational Resources
- Law, Policy, and Governance
- Advising and Helping
- Ethical Professional Practice
- Personal Foundations
- History, Philosophy and Values

VI. References

- American College Personnel Association (ACPA) & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), Joint Task Force on Professional Competencies and Standards. (2010). *ACPA/NASPA professional competency areas for student affairs practitioners*. Washington, D.C.
- Kouzes, J.M., & Posner, B.Z. (1995). *The leadership challenge*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.