Fostering Effective Partnerships to Enhance Educational Quality

Forum on Collaborating for Student Success at Purdue

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Partnerships to Enhance Quality

Student Success, as a desired outcome of higher education, is more likely to result from institutional environments characterized by strong partnerships that link academic and student affairs professionals, faculty and students.

Interdependent View of Undergraduate Education

Interdependent View Propositions

- **Believe:**
  - Students whole collegiate experience provides a platform for learning
  - Learning is holistic, outcomes cross the cognitive-affective domain
  - Student success is everyone’s business

- **Requires:**
  - Acknowledging many ways of learning
  - Synergistic relationships across institutional divisions
  - Undo false dichotomies

The Value of Campus Partnerships & Collaboration

- Key component to creating environments that foster student success
- Powerful vehicle for launching and institutionalizing policies & practices and complementary programs such as first-year initiatives, general education, service-learning...
- Factor in creating educational improvements
- Essential during times of dwindling resources

A Perplexing Question:

If partnerships are so essential to educational effectiveness and improved conditions for learning and success, then why are they so difficult to achieve? Why are partnerships the exception rather than the rule?
Collaboration & Partnerships in Higher Education

“The problem is that we keep trying to force collaborative innovations into a structure and culture that supports individual work.”
— provost at a large comprehensive university

Entangled bureaucracies
Antiquated reward structures
“Siloed” practice
Allegiance to individualism

Kezar & Lester, 2009

Plotting A Course to Partnerships

Ways must be found to overcome the artificial, organizational bifurcation of our educational delivery systems — P. Terenzini

Partnerships are Possible

In fact, they are essential to educational environments that foster learning and success

Partnership Lessons from Educationally Effective and Improving Institutions

1. Project DEEP – studied 20 high-performing institutions to document educational effectiveness
   a. Project DEEP 5 year follow-up – what sustains educational effectiveness?

2. Learning to Improve – identify factors fostering institutional improvement

Partnership Lessons from Educationally Effective and Improving Institutions

Project DEEP – studied 20 high-performing institutions to document educational effectiveness
   a. Project DEEP 5 year follow-up – what sustains educational effectiveness?
Six Shared Conditions of Educationally Effective Institutions

1. “Living” Mission and “Lived” Educational Philosophy
2. Unshakeable Focus on Student Learning
3. Environments Adapted for Educational Enrichment
4. Clearly Marked Pathways to Student Success
5. Improvement-Oriented Ethos
6. Shared Responsibility for Educational Quality

Shared Responsibility for Educational Quality
- Students, all staff, and faculty are partners in educating students
- Faculty & student affairs educators fuel the collaborative spirit
- Student ownership is fostered
- Caring, supportive community

Ask: Is this the Best Structure to Foster Student Success?
A study of students’ experience in advising at UTEP resulted in a shift of responsibility for an advising component from student affairs to a unit in academic affairs.

How did Student Affairs react?
“I gave up designs about territory long ago. Yes, one might look at this move as a loss for student affairs, but now we are better partners working to support students.”
– VP Student Affairs

Create & Sustain Partnerships for Learning
- Tighten philosophical & operational linkages between academic and student affairs.
- Student affairs recognizes obligation to support academic mission, and view themselves as full partners in the enterprise
- Discuss and celebrate contributions

Academic-Student Affairs Partnerships
Student affairs staff members described themselves as “partners in learning in developing a community of learners” and identified desired co-curricular outcomes complementing the College’s 8 Ability Outcomes. “We see ourselves as an extension of the classroom.”
– student affairs staff member

Create & Sustain Partnerships for Learning
- Tighten philosophical & operational linkages between academic and student affairs.
- Focus programs, policies, and practices on enriching educational opportunities and creating seamless learning environments.
**Strive for Seamless Learning**

- Seamless learning – student learning has the potential to result from virtually all student experiences
- Shared mission and learning goals between student & academic affairs
- *Learning Reconsidered* (2004) calls for greater integration of resources to educate and prepare the whole student and raise the quality of learning

**Partner on High-Impact Practices**

“High-impact practices” provide substantial educational benefits to students


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**High Impact Activities**

- First-Year Seminars and Experiences
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Learning Communities
- Writing-Intensive Courses
- Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- Undergraduate Research
- Diversity/Global Learning
- Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- Internships
- Capstone Courses/Projects

**Create & Sustain Partnerships for Learning**

- Tighten philosophical & operational linkages between academic and student affairs.
- Focus programs, policies, and practices on enriching educational opportunities and creating seamless learning environments.
- Develop mutually respectful partnerships

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**Mutually Respectful Partnerships**

- Understand and value what partners bring to collaboration; power may be distributed according to abilities
- **EXAMPLE:** Student & Academic Affairs forged partnership to enhance service-learning (S-L)
  
  - Student affairs professionals & faculty, each with valuable knowledge and unique skill set worked collaboratively as educators to build S-L projects into classroom learning

**Shared Responsibility: Student Agency**

- Emphasis on student empowerment, initiative
- Policies and structures facilitate student ownership
- Need to guide students—teach them what it means to be an academic citizen
**Students don’t do optional!**
- Guide students to what is important to do
- Require visits to advisor, tutoring, writing or math center -- knit-in to course assignments

**What do you require of students?**

**“Get in Students’ Way”**
Students report that some of their most meaningful college experiences involve those teachers and administrators who actively "get in their way" by offering advice, opportunities, and challenges.
- Richard Light, Making the Most of College

**SSiC Follow Up: Educational Effectiveness - Guaranteed to Last?**
Checked back with DEEP schools 5 years later...
- NSSE results about the same -- a few slips, a few gains
- Graduation rates comparable, or better
  - 7 schools increased by 6%, & 3 by 10%
- Six shared conditions still hold

**Keys to Sustaining the Student Success Agenda**
\(a\). Student success is an institutional priority when everyone--especially campus leaders--make it so.
\(b\). Stay “positively restless” – pay attention to data that matters for student success
\(c\). Enhanced partnerships between student and academic affairs

**Enhancing the Partnership**
- Longwood’s “mission-driven partnership” between academic & student affairs is supported by structures that nurture interactions between and among faculty and staff.
- 13 member CARE Team
- Academic Affairs – Student Affairs Collaboration Team -- to promote clear and effective integration of in- and out-of-class programs and activities

**Sustaining Student Success: Lessons About Partnerships**
- Good will among colleagues is not enough to launch, let alone sustain, partnerships
- Bridge the organizational chasms between academic and student affairs
  - Easier to do when mission & strategic plan emphasizes student learning & success and when the institution is focused on these ends
Learning to Improve --- Studying Quality Improvement

- 1,500 baccalaureate institutions in NSSE 2000-2011
- 600 institutions administered NSSE 4+ times

**OPPORTUNITY:** What can we learn about institutional improvement and change?

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Are Institutions Improving?

**Yes.**

Positive trends outnumber negative ones, by margin of 7:1

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Conditions that Fostered Improvement

1. Grants, Pilots, External Initiatives
2. Stability & Trust in Leadership
3. Physical space/creation of new learning spaces
4. Comprehensive & Targeted strategic planning
5. Data Informed & Culture of continuous improvement
6. Strong role of faculty – impact of generational change
7. Intentional partnerships in administrative areas – Student and Academic Affairs

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Partnerships: First-Year Focus

"We have always done a lot to help students stay in college and think about how we move students out successfully." -- Lynchburg College faculty member

- Low persistence rate in 2005 captured everyone’s attention... formed **Student Success Team**
- Sent dozens faculty & staff to FYE conference

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Partnerships: Supporting Student Learning & Success

- Enhanced student tutor program to support student success
- Faculty invested in active and collaborative learning experiences in-and out-of-classes
- New student success center
Partnership to Create FYE

- Launched FYE pilot in 2007. Orientation, FYE Inquiry Seminar linked to general education reform, common read, faculty development
- Provost and VP Student Affairs collaborated on FYE pilot, brought to faculty curriculum committee to endorse
- Conducting cohort studies to study the impact of the program and determine where to continue to make improvements

Targeted Effort informed by Data & Research:
Southern Connecticut State University

No First-year Experience in 2005; 50% students in FYE in 2007; All in FYE in 2009

FYE components:
- Orientation
- Common read
- Learning communities
- Inquiry 101 seminar
- Academic tracking & early intervention
- Student success workshops
- Academic support workshops & study groups
- FYE program office

www.southernct.edu/academics/academicaffairs/assess/

First-Trend Example

Pace University (NY)

“Sophomore Working Group” comprised of faculty, academic administrators, & student affairs professionals, focused on developing an “experience” for sophomores to enhance academic commitment, persistence and success

Created: Pace Plan, Sophomore Kick-Off, Career Exploration Course, One Stop Services

Robust Partnerships Between Student & Academic Affairs

- Change facilitated by a robust partnership between academic & student affairs

Successful Partnerships between Academic & Student Affairs

- Focus on learning versus merits of academic primacy (privileges academic affairs) or educating the whole student (privileges student affairs) (Arcelus, 2011)
- Capitalize on boundary spanning activities (assessment, accreditation, HIPs, retention etc.) (Kuh, et al., 2010)
How Might Purdue Promote Collaboration?

- NSSE results show lower levels of Student-Faculty Interaction and Supportive Campus Environment for First Year Students than on comparable Big 10 campuses.
- How might you collaborate to enhance these experiences for new students?
  - Students working with faculty in and out of class
  - Increased feedback & support for academic work
  - Help students feel Purdue is committed to their success

Successful Partnerships between Academic & Student Affairs

- Partnership is not about “developing a program together” but exhibiting mutual understanding and developing an ethos that values a broader, reinforcing educational mission
- Requires dialogue to develop trust and mutual understanding

Successful Partnerships between Academic & Student Affairs

Encourage & Organize for Dialogue


Making Partnerships Possible

- Create an ethos for collaborative work
- Kezar & Lester’s (2009) 3 Stage Model:
  - Building Commitment to Collaboration
  - Committing to Collaboration
  - Sustaining Collaboration

Caution: Scrutinize Partnerships

- FIRST ASK: Is partnership a good idea?
- EXPLORE partners core values & cultural norms – but first, understand your OWN culture and how this influences your actions and interpretations
- DISCUSS the ends and means of collaboration & assumptions of the partnership
- ASK: Is the partnership meaningful, reciprocal & responsive?