

# memorandum

Date: January 15, 2012

To: California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office

From: WestEd and the RP Group

## Question 6: Integrating Academic and Student Affairs

Identify successful models where academic and student affairs are integrated.

## Background

The predominant community college model divides interactions with students into two distinct institutional divisions. *Academic affairs* focuses on curriculum and instruction, whereas *student affairs* provides supports such as counseling and tutoring. Often there is little coordination between the two sides of the institution, making it more difficult to address the full spectrum of student needs and provide consistent information to students.

In times of limited budgets, academic and student affairs may have to compete for scarce resources. In California, this tension is exacerbated by the 50-percent law, which requires community colleges to spend at least half of their budgets on classroom faculty's salaries. However, some community colleges are working to break down structural and administrative barriers between academic and student affairs in order to create a more integrated approach. Not only does this create a more seamless experience for students, but research also indicates that integrated approaches may yield stronger persistence and retention rates, particularly for disadvantaged populations.<sup>1</sup>

There are two predominant models for integrating academic and student affairs — structural and collaborative. *Structural integration* entails administrative consolidation of academic and student affairs functions. For instance, in smaller colleges or during constrained budget periods, academic and student affairs may be combined under a single dean or vice president.

*Collaborative integration* focuses on efforts between departments or individuals to coordinate academic and student services resources, such as pairing students enrolled in basic skills courses with peer mentors. These cooperative efforts are often facilitated through intensive support programs that serve disadvantaged students, such as Puente or Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS), or

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<sup>1</sup> Weissman, E., Cerna, O., Geckeler, C., Schneider, E., Price, D. V., & Smith, T. J. (2009). *Promoting Partnerships for Student Success: Lessons from the SSPIRE Initiative*. New York, NY: MDRC. Retrieved from <http://www.mdrc.org/publications/521/overview.html>

through programs that connect students to the community, such as service learning and internships. Collaborative integration often occurs with a limited number of faculty and staff and reaches a small number of students. However, a number of highly effective colleges — such as many of the finalists for the 2011 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence — have prioritized the integration of academic and student affairs across the institution.<sup>2</sup>

## Scenarios for Implementation

Integration of academic and student affairs can take many forms, from small efforts by individual faculty members and counselors to institution-wide initiatives. Examples include:

- learning communities in which cohorts of students take several linked courses that share curriculum, such as bridging together a student success course that focuses on education planning and a transfer-directed academic course
- first-year experience programs (which can last anywhere from several weeks to an entire academic year) that are designed to help students transition from high school to college by building both academic and life skills
- tailored programs for specific student populations that are less likely to succeed (e.g., Puente for Latino students and Umoja for African American students) that combine counseling and basic skills instruction
- revising curricula and training faculty to increase student engagement, such as through peer tutoring and mentoring
- summer bridge courses that give new students an introduction to college life or introduce discrete basic skills (e.g., math), and provide ongoing tutoring after the start of the fall term
- campus spaces where students can come to study, access counseling, and receive academic support from faculty
- focused case management programs in which a dedicated advisor supports specific populations (e.g., migrant students or those close to achieving completion) in navigating both personal and academic challenges

Whatever the scale of work, collaborations between academic and student affairs underscore that student learning happens both inside and outside the classroom and that curricular and co-curricular efforts support each other.

Between 2006 and 2009, MDRC and the James Irvine Foundation collaborated to support the Student Support Partnership Integrating Resources and Education (SSPIRE) program, which funded efforts by nine California community colleges to find innovative ways to enhance student success by integrating academic instruction with traditional student services. A final report documented important implementation considerations, including:

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<sup>2</sup> Booth, K., & Karandjeff, K. (2011). *Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence Site Visit Report*. Berkeley, CA: RP Group.

- Instructional and student services professionals should be brought together at the very beginning of the process and should work collaboratively in all phases of the program.
- It is better to start with a clearly defined program with measurable outcomes and scale up from there.
- Specific structures are required to ensure that collaboration continues on an ongoing basis. If those structures are not in place, integration is dependent on relationships between specific people and can erode if any of those individuals ends or reduces involvement.
- Senior leadership must support the program, and strong leaders are needed to keep the program on track and move it toward institutionalization.
- Collaboration requires more time and effort than conventional, siloed approaches. Whenever possible, additional compensation should cover this work.
- Having faculty and student services professionals review data, particularly student perspectives on experiences with integrated approaches, can help drive program improvements.<sup>3</sup>

## Research on Integrating Academic and Student Affairs

The research on integrating academic and student affairs is divided into three themes: (1) analyses of the process of changing to an integrated model, (2) structural integration, and (3) collaborative integration.

### Process Analysis

Most of the research analyzes the process of changing from separate to integrated academic and student affairs models. Studies generally focus on three change models: Kuh's Model for Developing a Seamless Environment, the Planned Change Model, and the Restructuring Model. *Kuh's Model* emphasizes creating dialogue about the change to build values that will support integration. This model is based on six principles: creating energy around the reform, developing shared goals for learning, creating a shared language, nurturing cross-functional relationships and conversations, analyzing the impact of student cultures on learning, and honing in on systematic change. The *Planned Change Model* focuses on altering institutional processes, such as assessment, planning, and budgeting. Rather than focusing on dialogue, this approach relies on change agents, shared goals, and a strong planning process to facilitate change. The *Restructuring Model* focuses on the structure of the institution as the key to implementing effective change. Its key assumption is that the structure of the organization drives individual behavior.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Weissman, E., et al. (2009).

<sup>4</sup> Kezar, A. (2001). Organizational Models and Facilitators of Change: Providing a Framework for Student and Academic Affairs Collaboration. In A. Kezar, D. J. Hirsch, & C. Burack (Eds.), *Special Issue: Understanding the Role of Academic and Student Affairs Collaboration in Creating a Successful Learning Environment (New Directions for Higher Education)* (pp. 63–74). Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/he.v2001:116/issuetoc>

A number of specific strategies from those models were noted as being important for successful collaborations across academic and student affairs, including

- fostering senior administrative support and leadership (80 percent reported it was a very successful strategy);
- promoting cross-institutional dialogue (57 percent reported it was a very successful strategy);
- setting expectations (44 percent reported it was a very successful strategy);
- generating enthusiasm (41 percent reported it was a very successful strategy);
- offering staff development (40 percent reported it was a very successful strategy);
- creating a common vision (39 percent reported it was a very successful strategy); and
- planning (30 percent reported it was a very successful strategy).

The obstacles most commonly cited were limited faculty and staff time (82 percent), faculty disciplinary ties (75 percent), faculty resistance (72 percent), and lack of established goals (21 percent).<sup>5</sup>

Kezar makes the following recommendations for creating collaborations between academic and student affairs:<sup>6</sup>

- Begin with first-year programs and co-curricular areas that have a history of coordination.
- Develop senior administrative support.
- Create an environment of cooperation, develop cross-institutional dialogue, institute shared goals, generate enthusiasm, examine personalities, evaluate who is doing what work, foster engagement, and conduct staff development.
- Do not ignore structural strategies (e.g., planning, restructuring, and incentives) that will help guide and institutionalize collaborative integration.
- Encourage student affairs staff to value the importance of incentives and restructuring as part of a successful change process.
- Bring in new people to reinforce strategies.
- Do not let institutional obstacles and barriers deter efforts.

Kezar also notes that, while smaller institutions may be able to depend on leadership to integrate academic and student services, larger institutions need to rely more on planning, restructuring, incentives, and other structural strategies.

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<sup>5</sup> Kezar, A. (2001). Documenting the Landscape: Results of a National Study on Academic and Student Affairs Collaborations. In A. Kezar, D. J. Hirsch, & C. Burack (Eds.), *Understanding the Role of Academic and Student Affairs Collaboration in Creating a Successful Learning Environment* [Special issue]. (*New Directions for Higher Education*, 39–51. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/he.v2001:116/issuetoc>

<sup>6</sup> Kezar, A., Hirsch, D. J., & Burack, C. (Eds.). (2001). Editors' Note. *Understanding the Role of Academic and Student Affairs Collaboration in Creating a Successful Learning Environment* [Special issue]. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 1–8. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/he.v2001:116/issuetoc>

## Structural integration

Price's research focuses on merging academic and student affairs, so that student affairs becomes a part of academic affairs.<sup>7</sup> For example, the vice president for student affairs would become the associate provost or dean of students, reporting to the provost or vice president of academic affairs. The paper argues that for this merger to be effective, it must be done with deliberation, and faculty and staff must be willing to give up their traditional roles. Price recommends that learning should be reconceptualized so that it happens across boundaries and that student affairs and academic affairs should have daily conversations about learning — ranging from team teaching to learning communities to course curricula to student outcomes. While Price makes these recommendations within a specific model of merging student affairs into academic affairs, these recommendations could apply to any integration model.

## Collaborative integration

Whether or not academic and student affairs are restructured to become institutionally integrated, academic faculty and student services staff can be encouraged to collaborate in various ways. Several papers discussed programs that aim to engage both academic and student affairs with the shared goal of student learning.

**Community service learning** links community service with curricular content. Courses with a service-learning component generally require students to engage in their community by applying their newly acquired knowledge and skills from class to help others. At minimum, these courses lead faculty to think more broadly about how student learning goes beyond the classroom. Often, these courses link the faculty member teaching the course with a student services staff member who coordinates the service-learning relationships.<sup>8</sup>

**Learning communities**, particularly those that focus on an educational goal such as transfer or a certificate in a specific discipline, enable staff from academic and student affairs to work together closely.<sup>9</sup> For example, content-specific knowledge (e.g., higher level mathematics taught by a faculty member) may be paired with career exploration and education planning led by a counselor. Student services staff also may partner with faculty to build collaborative learning activities and group facilitation skills.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Price, J. (1999). Merging with Academic Affairs: A Promotion or Demotion for Student Affairs? *New Directions for Student Services*, 75–83. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ss.v1999:87/issuetoc>

<sup>8</sup> Kellogg, K. (1999). *Collaboration: Student Affairs and Academic Affairs Working Together to Promote Student Learning*. Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education. Retrieved from <http://www.ericdigests.org/2000-2/affairs.htm>; Knefelkamp, L. L. (1991). *The Seamless Curriculum. CIC Deans Institute: Is This Good for Our Students?* Washington, DC: Council for Independent Colleges; Kezar et al. (2001).

<sup>9</sup> Bourassa, D. & Kruger, K. (2001). The National Dialogue on Academic and Student Affairs Collaboration. *New Directions in Higher Education*, 116. 9-38; Kezar et al. (2001).

<sup>10</sup> Tinto, V. (1998). Learning Communities: Building Gateways to Student Success. *National Teaching & Learning Forum*, 7(4). Retrieved from <http://www.ntlf.com/html/lib/suppmat/74tinto.htm>

**First-year experiences** often involve faculty in the orientation and programming to support students in their first year — roles traditionally held only by student affairs staff.<sup>11</sup>

**Targeted student support programs** may involve faculty in traditional student affairs roles, such as programming for students with disabilities, faculty mentoring, career planning, and diversity programming.<sup>12</sup>

**Outcomes assessments** sometimes require academic faculty and student affairs staff to work together to determine student outcomes and how to assess them, analyze outcomes data and discuss their meaning, and build strategies that help more students meet the outcomes.<sup>13</sup>

The College Student is a program that uses **student affairs staff to teach faculty** about the development, traits, and characteristics of their students, who may come from significantly different backgrounds and may have grown up in a different era.<sup>14</sup>

Both faculty and student services staff are usually involved in the development of **student success centers**, which are “learning-living spaces” in which academics are linked with co-curricular activities. Student success centers can house academic and career counseling, leadership development programs, and student organizations. They also provide a place where faculty and staff can readily enter into dialogue with students.<sup>15</sup>

**Freshman interest groups or fellows programs** often assign both faculty and student services staff to engage students in activities, lectures, and discussions related to the college.<sup>16</sup> In residential institutions, this may extend to faculty-in-residence programs, which invite faculty to participate in dormitory programming, often with faculty living in the residence with students. Faculty may also hold extra class discussions in the residence hall.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> King, N. S. (1993). Partnerships and Collaboration for New Student Success. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 13(1), 44-47; McAuliffe, G. J., Huskey, H. H., & Buchanan, N. L. (1989). From a Standing Start: Easy Places to Begin. *NASPA Journal* 26(1), 54-59; Bourassa & Kruger (2001); Kellogg (1999).

<sup>12</sup> Bourassa & Kruger (2001).

<sup>13</sup> Banta, T. W., & Kuh, G. D. (1998). A Missing Link in Assessment: Collaboration between Academic and Student Affairs Professionals. *Change*, 30(2), 40-46; Kellogg (1999).

<sup>14</sup> Bourassa & Kruger (2001).

<sup>15</sup> Collins, A. G. (2004). *The Evolution to Academic Excellence: Key Driver for Clarkson's Overall Evolution to Excellence*. Potsdam, NY: Clarkson University. Retrieved from <http://www.clarkson.edu/about/welcome/documents/evolution.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Hyman, R. (1995). Creating Campus Partnerships for Student Success. *College & University*, 71(2), 2-8; Phelps, C. E. (1993). The Faculty Fellow Program at the University of Arizona. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 13(1), 475-480; Schroeder, C. S., & Hurst, J. C. (1996). Designing Learning Environments That Integrate Curricular and Co-curricular Experiences. *Journal of College Student Development*, 37(2), 174-181; Kellogg (1999).

<sup>17</sup> Bourassa & Kruger (2001).

## Examples of Community Colleges Integrating Academic and Student Affairs

**Mendocino College** places academic affairs, student services, and the Dean of Students Office under **one vice president**. As a result, all matters pertaining to student success are remarkably integrated. The vice president is the point person who receives and disseminates information about college programs, highlights areas of synergy, and convenes key players to develop holistic solutions to pressing issues. Faculty and staff note that this has led to greatly improved communications, with participants gaining a better understanding of each other's concerns, procedures, timelines, and professional languages. For example, when counselors sought to develop more technology-based mechanisms for registration and faculty expressed concerns that many students did not have the skills to use these tools, faculty and staff worked together to develop a system that was both efficient and accessible for students.<sup>18</sup>

**Columbia College**, in response to the needs of its students, created a voluntary Academic Wellness Educators (AWE) initiative. AWE helps instructional faculty, student services staff, administrators, and students to work across boundaries to build stronger outcomes. The group sponsors workshops, provides tutoring, engages in targeted research using focused inquiry groups, and provides collaborative solutions to issues that affect students. For example, AWE was instrumental in the redesign of the college's basic skills curriculum, which included creating contextualized courses (e.g., using Payroll Accounting to teach math skills), incorporating writing into math courses, and integrating disability resources.<sup>19</sup>

**Foothill College** has integrated academic and student services at the program level in its **first-year experience** program. The program initially focused on math and English instruction, but faculty discovered that students also needed support from counselors to address issues such as math anxiety. Faculty and counselors worked together, using learning-styles inventories and student-engagement pedagogy, to help tailor instruction to individual student needs. Faculty and counselors also collaborated to ensure that students received additional support as issues arose over the term.<sup>20</sup>

**Merced College's** Study Central is a multidisciplinary drop-in **tutoring center** where students can come to receive academic assistance from faculty, counselors, and peer guides. The center provides a "coffee shop" atmosphere where students can work individually and in small groups. Computers and internet access are available for class-related assignments. Study Central also offers drop-in student success workshops in the afternoons and includes two study rooms that are used for supplemental instruction throughout the semester. The Study Central schedule is posted online so students can come in to work with an instructor from a particular discipline if they need assistance in that area. Study Central is open to

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<sup>18</sup> Randall, M. (personal communication, November 28, 2011); Mendocino College website: [http://www.mendocino.edu/tc/pg/378/institutional\\_research.html](http://www.mendocino.edu/tc/pg/378/institutional_research.html)

<sup>19</sup> Raby, M. (personal communication, February 2011); see Columbia College AWE program website at <http://awe.comm.gocolumbia.edu/default.aspx>; see RP Group's Hewlett Leaders in Student Success program website at <http://www.rpgroup.org/content/2008-HL-columbia>

<sup>20</sup> Balducci, M. (personal communication, November 15, 2011).

all, but conducts intensive recruitment in developmental education classes. Basic skills students who use Study Central demonstrate higher pass rates and persistence than peers who do not use the center.<sup>21</sup>

In its efforts to ensure that students find and stick to **clear pathways** that lead to their goals, **Walla Walla Community College** in Washington has put in place a number of structures such as integrating classroom faculty into student advising, making advising mandatory, requiring student orientation, and sending alerts to both students and their faculty advisors when performance problems emerge. In addition, there is a dedicated director of retention who supports efforts to engage students at critical transition points. Faculty and staff have established strong collaborations to support students; when a student is identified as struggling, advisors and instructors work together to identify the appropriate interventions.<sup>22</sup>

**Northeast Iowa Community College** has made **retention** everybody's business. When students are struggling, faculty and staff work to understand their concerns and provide both personal and academic support. For example, the college has a dedicated position for someone to reach out to students who drop out to determine how they can re-enroll. The college has also capped class size at 30 so that faculty members have the opportunity to get to know and support their students. In addition to their classroom responsibilities, faculty help staff the college's student learning center and collaborate closely with student services staff to address important transition points, such as when students move from non-credit to credit divisions.<sup>23</sup>

## Additional Resources

Albin, T., Currie, L., Hensley, R. B., Hinchliffe, L. J., Lindsay, B., Walter, S., & Watts, M.M. (2005). *Meeting the Student Learning Imperative: Building Powerful Partnerships Between Academic Libraries and Student Services* (see page 3 for references on "Collaboration Between Academic and Student Affairs"). Retrieved from [http://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/dspace/bitstream/1808/266/2/ACRL\\_05.pdf](http://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/dspace/bitstream/1808/266/2/ACRL_05.pdf)

Banrey, V., & Zummo, J. (2007). *Organizing, Developing and Maintaining Collaborative Educational Practices within Academic and Student Affairs*. Presented at the Association of American Colleges and Universities Network for Academic Renewal Conference, Savannah, GA. Retrieved from <http://www.aacu.org/meetings/SharingResponsibility/documents/R9.ppt>

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<sup>21</sup> Drummond, T. (personal communication, November 29, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Booth, K., & Karandjeff, K. (2011).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

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