Capstone: Comprehensive Exams

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Capstone: Comprehensive Exam One

Introduction

Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) metaphorically resemble the notion of a salad or fruit bowl, because of its heterogeneous elements that are created, developed, and currently make up the entire organization. These elements include, but are not limited to, units in academic affairs, human resources and personnel, student affairs, etc. Collectively, the elements work together to create a harmonious culture with common goals, mission, vision, and values.

Below is an attempt to unpack the historical development of higher education and student affairs. This essay will examine the literature of how higher education was created, and what key historical moments contributed in its development. Next, a robust overview on each approach of the student affairs model will be discussed in depth, which will allow the reader to wrap his or her arms around key aspects of the three models. Supporting examples will assist in facilitating the discussion on the student affairs models, and explain the similarities and/or differences of the approaches. Additionally, historical watershed themes will be assimilated into each model in order to develop a perspective on how each align, partially align, or does not align or relate to student affairs. Finally, the ACPA and NASPA competencies will be integrated in order to capture the overall fundamentals of the profession and how they enhance practitioners’ growth and development in the field.

Higher Education and Student Affairs Historical Overview

“Tracing the history of American higher education involves no less than the interesting task of interpreting this blend of continuity and change” (Schuh, Jones, Harper, et al. 2011, p. 3). This continuity has much to do with the impact of institutional segmentation and student heterogeneity playing a major role in unpacking the development of American colleges and
universities. Furthermore, the shaping of student affairs within different institutional context assist in fostering student learning and development not only academically, but socially, psychologically, mentally, and emotionally. Additionally, student affairs within higher education helped to make sense of the progression of student access and diversity on individual college campuses.

Academic institutions have not always delivered a perception of inclusiveness. The historical context of its development traditionally supported a homogeneity approach because of the impact society, law, and governance had on institutions. These same factors contributed a role in eventually diversifying the institutions of higher education (Schuh et al., 2011).

The Morrill Land Grant Acts of 1862 and 1890, commonly known as the Morrill Land Grant Legacy, played a pivotal role in the development of higher education and the initial impact the federal government had on institutional segmentation and student access (Thelin, 2011). During this historical period, partnership between the federal government and selected state governments assisted in the establishments of land-grant institutions that essentially created institutional context that housed collegiate academic programs in agricultural and mechanical colleges and liberal arts colleges that facilitated direct contributions to institutional segmentation of college types. Senator Justin Morrill of Vermont Morrill Act supported this idea of access for students, by providing them with an education. The Morrill Act of 1862 was a substantial factor that afforded many students the opportunity to receive an education who perhaps could not attend private or charity institutions; hence, it changed the type of student who would now attend a public institution (Thelin, 2011).

The Morrill Act of 1890 was implemented and sought to provide equal access to the existing colleges or establish separate institutions for the people of color in their state” (Urban
This creation of black colleges “illustrated both gains and the limits of higher education in the Progressive era” (Thelin, 2011, p. 135). The results here further influenced what the institutions were beginning to look like in regards to its segmentation and divisions, but more importantly, the outcome of the added legislation directly “extended access and services to blacks yet did so only within the framework of racial separation” (Thelin, 2011, p. 136). On the contrary, the second Morrill Act caused public land-grant colleges to consider enrolling white women, which most were more apt to do oppose to having blacks attend their institutions, especially in the south. There were colleges that banned women from enrolling, which surfaced the emerging of the Seven Sisters institutions; yet another institutional context.

The Morrill Land-Grant legacy established the foundation of federal government involvement with American higher education, had direct and indirect impacts on the institutional segmentation, and produced at least three distinctive institutional contexts. This initial founding of institutional segmentation and student access, influenced by the Morrill Act Legacy, formed diverse college and student typology. Additionally, it planted a seed for future legislation acts, Supreme Court decisions, and educational policies that include the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act or GI Bill that financially supported student veterans.

The 1947 Truman Commission birthed community colleges with a general mission that emphasized improving college access, and advocating for low-income students and other marginalized groups to receive a college education. The 1954 Brown vs. Topeka School Board court decision put the de jure racial segregation in perspective and eliminated the “separate but equal” legislation that was previously upheld in the Plessy v. Ferguson case. Now, black students could legally enroll in public institutions, including the southern colleges. The dynamic change here directly impacted, as well as, allowed for the diversity in segmentation amongst the
developing college student (Thelin, 2011). The Higher Education Act of 1965 “sought to alter governance of higher education” (Thelin, 2011, p. 338). This direct contribution to student heterogeneity was in place, because federal government began to provide need-base aid and programs including the pell grant. Furthermore, Title IX of 1972 implemented gender equity amongst colleges and universities, specifically between men and women athletic sporting competitions. Similarly, the 1973 Rehabilitation Act created provided students with disabilities access for mobile educational environments. It also allowed more students to be “mainstreamed, that is, placed in regular classrooms” (Urban and Wagoner, 2009, p. 365).

Each of these federal influences (either direct or indirect), aided to the overarching make-up of American higher education development, its missions, and student diversity. Because institutions were quickly becoming segmented there was a necessity for practitioners to begin fostering more than just academic access to students. Faculty were being appointed as Deans of Men and Deans of Women, as well as serving in the role of disciplinary administrators (Thelin, 2011). College typology was enhancing and becoming diversified; hence, the mission of the colleges were forced to change in order to support the students it was serving. These characteristics, along with others, all aided in the development of three student affairs approaches.

**Student Affairs Models**

The three models and/or approaches of Student Affairs (SA) that support institutions of higher education (IHE) include Student Services (SS), Student Development (SD), and Student Learning (SL). Each model has similarities and differences depending on how they are applied when fostering student success at the college level, as well as what type of institutional context
within post-secondary education these models are enforced. Furthermore, each of these models demonstrates an illustration of how student affairs work is organized and carried out daily at IHEs, and should be applied to student learning and development.

Student Affairs’ Student Services (SS) model is based in the tradition that practitioners are administrators who are responsible for providing quality services to students in nonacademic functional areas (Schuh et al., 2011). Admissions, financial aid, counseling, housing, health services, veteran services, etc., are all areas charged with providing resources to students, so that they can “concentrate on and excel in academic pursuits” (Schuh et al., 2011, p. 38). Additionally, administrators providing these resources to students typically wear multiple hats at the institution. For example, a student may go to an office and an administrator will assist him or her with admissions and financial aid in one sitting. This one-stop-shop model towards student affairs work support Schuh’s idea of making resources easily accessible so that students can focus more on their academics once enrolled. This concept is also a core value within the profession; the idea that IHEs should work to minimize students stress levels by having ongoing and available access to campus resources.

Traditionally, institutions that utilize this model and are a better fit are less selective and tend to be categorized as local community, technical, and/or two-year colleges. These institutional types are typically located in more metropolitan areas, but there are several schools in rural and suburban areas with similar characteristics. The student typology that attends SS institutions are usually non-traditional and/or underrepresented students, and/or students who may not have excelled academically in high school. With recent changes to the economy, SS institutions are now housing students who choose to return to school simply to develop additional skills so that they can return to the workplace to seek better jobs and higher pay.
City College in Casselberry, FL is an example of an institution that operates using the SS model as its organizational structure. City College is a private, two-year Hispanic Serving Institution that does not have a designated office for SA according to the website. However, the school’s general mission is to educate and train students for their chosen career field. According to their 2012 President, Esther Fike, City College is committed to providing services to students in tutoring, career advising, financial aid, and job placement, in order to be success academically, personally, and professionally (City College, 2012). This institution has a primary focus to enroll, train, graduate, and place its students in jobs. Hence, it is “difficult to discern how the mission influences the scope of student affairs work” (Hirt, 2009, p. 35) in general.

Student personnel services serves as an umbrella for the SS approach based on Student Personnel Point of View (1937); thus the model aligns with this historical perspective. The SSPV (1937) philosophy for the SS model indicates that selecting and admitting students; orienting them into the college environment; and providing adequate services (e.g. food, financial aid, part-time employment, academic diagnostics, etc.) all collaborate to ensure students have the proper resources needed to excel as a student. Furthermore, the Student Personnel Point of View (1949) partial aligns with the SS model from this historical perspective, because it suggests that services in mental health, remediation, counseling for married students, and opportunities for self-help through summer employment and internships creates avenues for student success. Although, both the Student Learning Imperative (1994) and Principles of Good Practice (2008) recognize the need for adequate resources for students to foster success at the institution, they do not demonstrate any direct alignment or correlations to the SS approach.

Strengths of the SS model include administrators’ abilities to effectively provide services to a plethora of students daily. Proficient and positive customer service practices are also
strengths of this model, in addition to practitioners having knowledge in several student affairs functional areas. Another potential strength of this model is the contribution to the institutional effectiveness between faculty and student affairs staff. In many SS IHEs a faculty member can also be an advisor. This structure can create personal connections occasionally, which is not common for this model.

Weaknesses of this model include the risk of no genuine relationships being established between practitioners and students. Students are given all the resources they need; however, their learning and development tend to be overlooked. Using this approach, based on definition, there are no opportunities for dialogue to build rapport. Hence, it would be unlikely for a practitioner to become what Baxter-Magolda theoretically defines as a learning partner who assists in fostering students’ co-curricular success as well as academic success.

The second SA model, Student Development (SD), has traditionally utilized theoretical philosophies, data, and practices as an approach towards student affairs work. This model serves as a guide on how to develop students, and alters SA professionals from not only being service providers, but to also specialize in non-cognitive issues that play a role in student development (Schuh et al., 2011). Psychological, emotional, personal, or even identity development issues are areas in which practitioners should be competent in when working at an IHE using this model (Schuh et al., 2011). According to Alright et al. (1987), how students “feel affects how well they think” (p. 9) when they are in an academic setting. Furthermore, research suggests that if practitioners responded to the non-cognitive needs affecting students outside the academic setting, then the cognitive abilities of students would improve (Schuh et al., 2011). These concepts are important when considering how this model works to develop students to be functional within society post-graduation.
IHEs that are a better fit and typically operate using the SD model include small liberal arts schools, faith-based colleges, and even a historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Here, SA practitioners wear several hats, similar to some SS model IHEs. Because an administrator can have several responsibilities, a student affairs core value that is present at this institutional type is having a strong connection with the students; additionally, having an open-door policy to students.

SD institutions are located in rural, metropolitan, suburban, and mid to large size cities. Students who typically enroll within this institutional context are those seeking a four-year degree. Some students could be first-generation, second-generation, want to specialize in a certain academic area, and/or have received a scholarship to attend since many liberal arts schools are private; thus, they can be costly.

Florida A&M University (FAMU) is an example of an institution that utilizes and operates using a SD model. This HBCU has a mission that is “significantly associated with students’ cognitive development” (Schuh et al., 2011, p. 36) in the classroom, in addition to outside the classroom. Specifically, racial and identity development perceptions of African American students are immersed in the majority of this institution’s general education requirements. Because, FAMU’s mission is “dedicated to the advancement of knowledge, resolution of complex issues and the empowerment of citizens and communities” (FAMU, 2012), a general goal here is for students to develop cognitive dissonance so that they can be of service to their society. The institution’s general mission aligns with the student affairs mission, which is centered on the principles of developing students emotionally, physically, spiritually, and intellectually. Services within student affairs that promote student development at FAMU
include Orientation, Housing, Counseling Services, Student Activities, etc. Each of these services strengthens the institutions focus to operate using the SD model.

The emphasis to develop “the student as a person rather than upon his intellectual training alone” (p. 3) illustrates an alignment of the Student Personnel Point of View (1937) with the SD model. Assisting students to take ownership of their potential to make contributions for the betterment of society (SPPV, 1937), further promotes this historical and theoretical alignment. The (1949) Student Personnel Point of View also aligns with perspectives of SA practitioners when working with students, because of the theory being imbedded in the model. An example of this is Chickering’s student-faculty key influence (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, Renn, 2010) that connects with “fostering teacher-student intellectual and social relationships outside of the classroom” (SPPV, 1949, p. 23). Stimulating development of small groups; fostering student-initiated activities that improve development; and encouraging diverse programming are other factors that align in the SPPV (1949). Each of the aforementioned positions facilitates students’ adjustments to an institutional environment, and assists students in feeling valued and having a sense of self-worth (SPPV, 1949). This benefit supports the institutional effectiveness between faculty and student affairs that the model seeks to embody.

The Student Learning Imperative (1994) only has partial alignment with the SD approach as it relates to student affairs. The partial parallel here indicates “higher education is preparing students to lead productive lives after college including the ability to deal effectively with such major societal challenges” (p. 1). The ability for students to cope with these changes depend on their individual development that is fostered in non-academic settings. Additionally, it depends on students’ critical thinking and ability to apply knowledge to practical problems they encounter in several areas of their lives; it also integrates students’ ability to make decisions, and determine

Strengths of the SD model, as it relates to student affairs, include the ability to foster development in students’ psychological, emotional, spiritual, mental development, in addition to the academic development that is the main goal of higher education. The rapport that is built using this model is a strength, because the personal connections that are created can assist with the IHEs retention rates; hence, graduation accountability of students. More importantly, students being able to understand critically, become problem solvers, and have the ability to express themselves, which adds to the strength of this model.

A weakness of the SD model can depend on the type of student that attends the institution. If students are not interested in their development being fostered by practitioners then this model will not be conducive. Furthermore, if all practitioners at the institution do not have a student development theory background, the model will not be effective because there is a lack of knowledge. Finally, this model can potentially take away from the goal of achieving academic success (i.e. graduation) if a student affairs practitioner begin to focus more on students personal development and not their academic development in the classroom.

Many modern day practitioners can argue that the Student Learning (SL) model is the better model for fostering student affairs in IHEs. This model’s main focus works to develop the whole student, academically, socially, psychologically, and emotionally. In addition, the SL model emphasizes learning in and outside the classroom. An example of a type of learning accomplished using this model is a class structured as a service-learning course. Meaning, students are learning academic material in the classroom, but also participating in service outside the class that promotes what was learned in class.
Schuh et al. (2011) explains that SL redefines “learning as a comprehensive, holistic, transformative activity that integrates academic learning and student development” (p. 388). Furthermore, it situates learning and co-curriculum with student services and student development approaches as a foundation (Schuh et al., 2011). This model redefines SA practitioners and suggests they see themselves as educators, “if learning is to become the centerpiece of the co-curriculum” (Schuh et al., 2011, p. 389).

The SL model is traditionally housed and is a better fit at institutions that have a more selective admissions process. These schools typically have a strong academic affairs and student affairs, and practitioners seek to enroll high achieving students who are usually traditional. IHEs that utilize this model have several programs, interventions, and activities that foster student learning; in addition, assessment and evaluation play an integral role in program improvement in order to support positive student learning outcomes.

The University of Kansas (KU), a research and doctoral granting university, is an example of an IHE that operates using the SL model. The mission at KU correlates with the “breadth and scope of service for students” (Hirt, 2009, p. 32) both in the classroom and outside the classroom. Specifically, KU’s mission reads “extends beyond the classroom, and is to engage the KU community in services and programs that complement academic goals and enhance quality of life; they care about students’ studies, social growth, and well-being” (KU, 2012). The SA mission supports the overarching university mission, and that is “to serve as a center for learning, research, scholarship and creative endeavor in the state of Kansas, the nation and the world” (KU, 2012). Here, the collaboration “form learning partnerships that promote college students’ holistic learning” (Magolda & Magolda, 2011, p. 11), and in turn provide an environment for students to become self-authored in and outside the classroom. This same
collaboration contributes to the institutional effectiveness between the faculty and student affairs practitioners.

From a historical perspective, the Student Personnel Point of View (1937) incorporates partial alignment using the SL approach, because the philosophy imposes an “obligation to consider the student as a whole” (SPPV, 1937, p. 3). However, the Student Personnel Point of View (1949) includes more correlation and alignment with the SL model. Here, it encourages the development of the whole student, and for them to be well-rounded; this includes “physically, socially, emotionally, spiritually, as well as intellectually” (SPPV, 1949, p. 17). Furthermore, it fosters a sense of self-authorship in students, as the SPPV (1949) indicates “the student is thought of as a responsible participant in his own development and not as a passive recipient” (p. 18). Requiring various aspects of integration in the curriculum, and the ability for students to have a full balance in development also signifies this historical alignment (SPPV, 1949).

The Student Learning Imperative (1994) and Principles of Good Practice (2008) both have strong alignment towards SA perspectives using the SL model. Principles of Good Practice (2008) enhance the alignment by offering suggestions for best practices for administrators. These practices include demonstrating institutional commitment to students and what they learn; having effective partnerships to foster learning in and outside the academic environment; creating service learning opportunities to build students’ involvement and civic duty; and facilitating leadership development for students and educators (Good Practice, 2008). Each of these suggestions should be supported by “meaningful assessment to be associated with effectiveness in partnership programs” (Good Practice, 2008, p. 243), in order to sustain the focus in student learning.
The Student Learning Imperative (1994) expresses that the key to enhancing students’ learning and development, is to “create conditions that motivate and inspire students to devote time and energy to educationally-purposefully activities, both in and outside the classroom” (p. 1). It also suggests that peer groups influence affective and cognitive development in students, and “the more students are involved in a variety of activities inside and outside the classroom, the more they gain” (Learning Imperative, 1994, p. 4). The conceptual framework allows practitioners to “seize the present moment by affirming student learning and personal development as the primary goals of undergraduate education” (Learning Imperative, 1994, p. 5). This holistic philosophy is used to correlate learning with the institution’s mission.

Strengths of this model strive to include and develop the whole student, along with fostering success in the classroom and outside the classroom. This structure differs in the earlier models mentioned. Furthermore, this model seeks to merge academic affairs and student affairs within a college setting. This idea is a modern day recommendation and according to research enhances student learning and outcomes. A weakness of the SL model is that not all students come to college to be developed holistically. Some students only want to attend class, learn, graduate, and receive their degree. Practitioners have to be mindful not to push this model on students who may not be interested in the co-curricular experience. In doing so, they could potentially affect retention if the students no longer wish to attend the university, because they are forced to participate in activities involuntarily.

Conclusion

The aforementioned historical narrative has much relevance to the ACPA and NASPA joint competences in the basic form that student affairs practitioners should be well versed on the roots in which higher education was formed. Practitioners being able to wrap their arms around
the History, Philosophy, and Values competency is the first step in having the ability to synthesize basic knowledge in order to fully understand the work of student affairs.

As student affairs reflective practitioners it is imperative that a framework is created that will utilize the aforementioned student affairs models and foster student success, development, and learning in IHEs. Students are unique and have diverse needs during their tenure on campus; thus, reflective practitioners have the responsibility to “model what we wish for our students, and increase the capacity for learning and self-reflection” (Learning Imperative, 1994, p. 6) is important. A major step in facilitating this process is to implement the ACAP and NASPA competencies in daily practice, and encourage self-authorship in students, academic affairs, and student affairs. Furthermore, assessing outcomes on a continuous basis through quantitative and qualitative research, assessment, and evaluation will provide evidence-based data that the profession of student affairs works (ACPA & NASPA, 2010).
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Capstone: Comprehensive Exam Two

Introduction

Student development theory can arguably be one of the most ambiguous and complex aspects of the student affairs profession. Most practitioners have an appreciation for theory, because essentially it is rooted in tested and researched evidence-based data. However, the majority of the theories referenced and taught is graduate programs are out dated and/or only reflect certain populations of students on a college campus. Hence, more research in theory need to be conducted in order to supplement for the modern day student, practitioner, and college experience. Nonetheless, theory still has valuable information, validity, logic, and guidance in how to work with college students. At least, theory creates a base line of where to start with understanding students development. Thus, below are a series of theories that I feel I will likely use in my professional career at some point post-graduation.

Perry’s Theory of Intellectual and Ethical Development

William G. Perry’s Intellectual and Ethical Development theory originally was created to assist students in making meaning of their learning and teaching process. Perry opted to use the term position over stage with this theory, because position had no assumption about duration, individuals demonstrated a range of structure at any time, and positions were the way in which individuals look at the world from their point of view. These nine positions are outlined on a continuum of development from duality to evolving commitments, and have transitions that separate each position (Perry, 1970).

Dualism “represents a mode of meaning making in which the world is viewed dichotomously: good-bad, right-wrong, black-white” (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, Renn, 2010, p. 86). Anyone in authoritative role is considered to have all the right answers, and most
students will not question what they are being told to do or think, because it makes it easier on the student’s thinking process. *Cognitive dissonance* is the transition between dualism and multiplicity. It occurs when an authority figure does not have the right answer or there is disagreement. *Multiplicity*, according to Perry, is “honoring diverse views when the right answers are not yet known” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 86). Here, students become analytical thinkers, because they have broadened his or her source of information, and used knowledge as a form of legitimate sources.

Recognizing the need to *support outside opinions* of others becomes the transition from multiplistic thinkers to relativism. *Relativism* consists of thinkers who “acknowledge that some opinions are of little value” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 86). Students in this position see knowledge as qualitative, and based on evidence. “*Ethical development* rather than increasing cognitive complexity” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 87), is the movement or transition from relativism to commitment. Lastly, *Commitment in Relativism* help thinkers to make ethical decisions and choices not solely based on knowledge, but also including external factors. They are beginning to developed a sense of identity, and will categorize their thinking about the commitments being made based on area and style. Additionally, *three Deflections from Cognitive Growth*, including temporizing, escape, and retreat, emphasizes Perry’s “notion that development does not occur in a linear fashion” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 87).

Utilizing the learned and developed helping skills I have obtained in my graduate program, I will be able to apply Perry’s theory in my professional career when working with traditional and non-traditional students. If my professional path allows me to continue to work in first year programs, Perry’s theory will provide me with a foundation on how to make ethical and sound decisions in the classroom. Specifically for the traditional students I will teach (i.e. first
time in college freshmen between 17-19 years old), the majority will likely be dualistic thinkers. Coming directly from high school, they will probably only see the answers or solutions to problems as yes-no, black-right, or wrong-right (Evans et al., 2010). They will see me as an authoritative figure and assume my I have all the correct answers, and will look to me to tell them exactly what to do; something they are likely used to in secondary school. Having an understanding of this theory can equip me with guiding them to have more diverse opinions based on the knowledge they have gained in my class and in their other courses. This type of thinking will in turn detour my students from simply wanting me to tell them the answer, but rather formulate their own opinions and commit to their decisions.

Similarly, for non-traditional in a first-year program setting, I will be able to use Perry’s theory to foster more engaging conversations in the classroom. Unlike the traditional age students, non-traditional students tend to have more life experiences; hence, more knowledge on basic life principles. I can foresee non-traditional students in a classroom setting being able to offer opinions, suggestions, and life lessons on issues that will trigger (hopefully) dissonance amongst traditional aged students. With a mixed classroom setting, I will also enhance my helping skills as an instructor on how to facilitate dialogue and discussion so that inclusiveness remains in the classroom. This atmosphere will be more conducive for me to carry out ethical and intellectual decision-making as Perry suggests as the goal of his theory (Perry, 1970).

In addition to the above opportunities that Perry’s theory will offer for traditional and non-traditional students, the theory also has limitations and challenges. A major challenge of this theory is that it was generalized from traditional aged white males at a prestigious institution (Evans et al., 2010). If my professional work summons me to work with student athletes at a large division one institution, non-traditional underrepresented students at a community college,
or underrepresented first-generation students at a technical school, it would be difficult to fit this theory with the student typology housed in these different institutional contexts. This difficulty would come because there is no evidence-based research to support the students I am interested in working with that has used Perry’s theory. A framework would have to be hypothetically constructed and tested rather than historical data being compared and tested.

Because this theory, like the majority that will be discussed in this comprehensive essay are out dated, another challenge is that it is not conducive to modern students’ learning processes. It is set-up to operate in positions that occur in a specific order with transitions. This method could provide a framework for traditional students to follow in order to make more sound decisions. However, non-traditional students entering college at different phases may not be able to fit into this theory’s context. This limitation also serves at a major weakness of Perry’s theory.

**Schlossberg’s Transition Theory**

According to Evans et al., transition is defined as “any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles” (p. 215). Nancy K. Schlossberg’s developed her transition theory because, “she believed a need existed to develop a framework that would facilitate an understanding of adults in transition and aid them in connecting to the help they needed to cope with the ordinary and extraordinary process of living” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 213). Schlossberg’s theory was not originally designed for college student development; however, it can be applied to any student who was entering a transition within his or her life. Having a perception of the transition, recognizing the environments pre and post transitions, and understanding the individual experiencing the transition are variables that affected adaptation in this theory (Evans et al., 2010).
Schlossberg described transitions occurring in different forms including type (anticipated, unanticipated, or nonevents), context, and impact (Schlossberg, 1995). The process in which a person undergoes a transition was defined as extending over a period of time. Here, the theorist explains that a person goes through a series of phases, which are termed… moving in, moving through, and moving out (Evans et al., 2010). Additionally, as a person copes with a transition in his or her life, Schlossberg explains that the situation, self, support, and strategies (i.e. the 4 S’s) are factors that have significant impact on the outcome (Schlossberg, 2012).

If my professional career affords me the opportunity to work with non-traditional students at a community college, Schlossberg’s theory would align more effectively than with the traditional aged students. This dynamic is primarily because when the theory was reconstructed to fit the higher education setting (original intention was the work place), it was meant to create interventions for adult learners (Schlossberg, 2012). These interventions would develop my helping skills and allow me to assist non-traditional students with numerous of transitions they face as a new or returning student as a seasoned adult. Specialized services, referrals, and counseling are helping skills that will aid in my contribution to the non-traditional student population, which is an opportunity and strength of this theory (Evan et al., 2010).

When working with traditional students in a different institutional context (e.g. four-year public) it is imperative that I understand how students will perceive their college classes and coursework, specifically if they are first-year students. The majority these students will have never taking a college course, nor used a course syllabus; the same can also apply to non-traditional students. Therefore, reviewing the syllabus in my course more than once may be a necessity. Having a monthly check-in to be sure students are reviewing other class syllabi and are on task, and simply being a level of support will assist these students with coping with their
stress levels and new environments while in the transition process. Thus, although the theory was not intended for higher education, opportunities and strengths exist for both traditional and non-traditional students to benefit from this theory in several institutional contexts.

**Kolb’s Theory of Experiential Learning**

David Kolb defines learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 138). His work of experimental learning was developed and connected to the previous work of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget, and was created “to underscore the role of experience in the learning process” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 138). Kolb’s theory involves different learning styles, which he defines as a habitual way of responding to certain learning environments. This learning style factor of Kolb’s theory is highlighted often; however, conceptually is broadly based as a developmental theory and can be applied to adult development (Evans et al., 2010).

The relationship between learning and development, and the implications of learning styles for higher education further explains the learning cycle that Kolb uses to explain his theory in more detail (Evans et al., 2010). Kolb indicated that this cycle was used because in order to be effective, learners need the abilities that are represented by each of the four cycle components. These components include concrete experience (i.e. learn by feelings), reflective observation (i.e. learn by watching), abstract conceptualization (i.e. learn by thinking), and active experimentation (i.e. learn by doing) (Kolb, 1984). Additionally, Kolb (1984) describes individual preferences for learning styles that align with or are polar opposites of the cycle processes. Accommodators carry out plans and adapt to change; divergers are imaginative and illustrate an awareness of meaning; assimilators are inductive with reasoning and create theories; and convergers are problem solvers and decision makers (Kolb, 1981).
What is unique about Kolb’s theory is that I will be able to apply it to both traditional and non-traditional students differently but equally. Additionally, regardless of the institutional context, a form of learning is the goal and mission. If I am in a professional position teaching first-year students, advising student athletes and/or first-generation students (traditional and non-traditional), or working as a housing director in a residence hall, the type of pedagogy I choose to use, with Kolb’s influence, will foster learning in students. The flexibility in Kolb’s theory can arguably be seen as the greatest opportunity and strength of the theory.

Furthermore, “if academic disciplines are to be accessible to students with diverse learning styles, efforts must be made to provide varied methods of instructions and evaluation” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 143). With every advising session, housing program, assignment, and/or lesson I plan in my chosen profession, I must make a conscious attempt to include varied learning styles so that each student is able to relate to and participate in the topic. When preparing activities, now after understanding Kolb’s theory, it will be a goal that each student will learn and develop and understanding about their individual strengths, interests, skills and abilities. In addition, they are able to illustrate the knowledge that he or she gained in the process.

Nonetheless, there are challenges, critiques, and weakness of Kolb’s theory. As stated earlier and a common theme across student development theory, Kolb’s theory was not constructed based on a diverse population of participants, in terms of demographics (Evans et al., 2010). With this in mind, it will be important for me to use my helping skills and general knowledge of ethnic and gender differences and backgrounds to create and foster an environment that is conducive for learning. It will be important for me to debunk any myths, barriers, or limitations in a classroom or office setting that will hinder students’ development. Likewise, if
the institutional context is one that is historically African American or Hispanic, it is important for me to create a framework that is advantageous for the student typology at that college or university. Ultimately, creating an educational and working environment to support a diverse group of students will enhance the challenges of Kolb’s theory.

**Phinney’s Model of Ethnic Identity Development**

Ethnic identity has varying definitions according to researchers, theorists, psychologists, etc. However, a general definition that can be used is that it is a multidimensional construct of feelings, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors that are classified as external or internal components. Furthermore, “ethnic identity models outline how cultural characteristics are acquired and sustained” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 274).

Theorist, Jean Phinney, was one of the first to explore and test a model of identity development. Influenced by Erikson and Marcia’s identity model, Phinney based her model “on growing evidence that revealed commonalities across ethnic groups and their dissimilarities under a microscope” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 277). These groups consisted of 196 participants who were identified as Asian American, African American, Hispanic, and Caucasian. She surveyed each of them to assess how important ethnicity was to minority students’ identity development (Phinney, 1993).

Phinney’s model consisted of three stages, (1) unexamined ethnic identity (diffusion-foreclosure), (2) ethnic identity search/moratorium, and (3) ethnic identity achievement. Stage one, suggested that students who identified as minority may have initially accepted the dominant culture values, including negative images of their own ethnicity. In stage two, the persons become aware of ethnic identity issues and choose to explore their own culture. Here, they may have anger toward the dominant culture or feel guilt or embarrassment. Stage three, students
form a healthy bicultural identity, and begin to accept and understand ethnic and racial issues. They are able to resolve identity conflict and are open to other cultures (Phinney, 2007).

Within the profession of student affairs helping skills and specifically facilitation skills when discussing Phinney’s model is important in order to create open and positive environments that foster student learning. This theory have similar challenges in that it is out dated, and was constructed based on a minimize subpopulation of students (Phinney, 1993). However, when I consider the professional and academic work that I seek to immerse myself in in the future, I argue that it is one of the more important theories. Linking “ethnic identity achievement and positive intergroup attitudes and mature intercultural thinking” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 279), is a concept I feel is necessary to include as the foundation for working with traditional and non-traditional students. Regardless of the type of student, engaging in activities that encourage students to talk about ethnicity and diversity with their fellow peers, will serve as a meaningful experience for self-reflection about their own identity. This type of dialogue can be both a challenge and opportunity for students, because most conversations about “diversity” can be a taboo topic. However, conversations will develop and educate students about other cultures besides their own. It will provide awareness of the many cultures in the world, and college should be a safe place to raise this type of awareness.

As a professional, I will use Phinney’s model when dealing with issues associated with ethnic identity, and ensuring negative influences are not affecting the development of minority students’ positive self-concept (Evans et al., 2010). Depending on the type of institution I am employed at and students I am working with, I will have to combat the weaknesses of the theory’s perception. Meaning, I will have to create buy-in or help facilitate the importance of promoting acceptance of all ethnic identities.
Baxter Magolda’s Theory of Self-Authorship

Marcia Baxter Magolda define “self-authorship as the internal capacity to define one’s beliefs, identity, and social relations” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 183). Her research was influenced by Robert Kegan, and had a purpose to answer the questions, How do I know? Who am I? and How do I want to construct relationships with others (Evans et al., 2010)? Each of these questions referred to the epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal phases, respectfully, when considering a student’s internal development. Baxter Magolda expressed that understanding how to assist students with becoming self-authors is complex and challenging. Hence, applying one phase at a time will support the developing process, and foster the internal voice.

Phase one of Baxter-Magolda’s self-authorship theory is following formulas, where one allows others to define them and approval is needed. Phase two is crossroads, which a person is not happy where they are in life and seeks to change. Becoming the author of one’s life, phase three, is where a person learns to develop his or her own set of beliefs, values, and morals. Lastly, phase four, internal foundation, is when an individual becomes grounded in his or her own developed outcomes (Baxter-Magolda, 2001).

In additional to the four phases, Baxter-Magolda describes three elements of self-authorship. These elements include trusting the internal voice, building an internal foundation, and securing internal commitments. She denotes that each element can be found in each phase when a person is becoming self-authored (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). Furthermore, this theory includes a learning partnership model that the theorist describes as a way to assist a student with developing their own path and becoming authors of his or her own lives. She explains that these
partnerships provide an environment for mutual learning, problem solving, and allow one to take the wheel and steer his or her path (Baxter-Magolda, 2010).

“Developing self-authorship takes time and energy” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 184), which is both an opportunity and challenge for the profession of student affairs. When I reflect on my graduate experience, I believe that this theory has been the most beneficial in developing me as an individual. Hence, I feel confident enough to apply this theory to practice when working with traditional and non-traditional subpopulations of students. When using this theory in my professional position, regardless of my title and the type of student I am working with, I have to consciously make myself aware that I am in this profession to support the students. I should not use my role as an authority figure to push my views and beliefs on a student. In fact, it would be best if I took the back seat with this self-authorship process that Baxter Magolda describes as a tandem bike (Baxter-Magolda, 2010). I should provide the resources for the students, and explain to them how to access the resources so that they can help themselves. I have to allow students to make their own decision when they come to a crossroad. Once students have surpassed the crossroad phase and develop their own set of beliefs, I must make the effort to assist in becoming a learning partner by working together with students.

This philosophy can be applied to any student typology (i.e. traditional and non-traditional), because all students are charged with the task of making a decision while in college; a common task being to choose a major. If I am serving as an advisor or instructor my role will be to provide students the information they need, and it is their responsibility to make the final decision that is the best fit for them. For non-traditional students, I can foresee them being more comfortable making decisions, ideally. However, it depends on a student’s predispositions and/or inputs they enter college with, based on life’s experiences. Depending on the institutional
context, as a practitioner I may or may not have the liberty to have an in depth conversation with students about a decision they are trying to make. For example, if I am working at a community college that is student service oriented, my role may be to simply provide a service and that is it. I may not have the support to use my helping skills in order to foster learning and development like I would at a four-year public institution. This limitation can be seen as a weakness of this theory if used in the wrong institutional context.

On the contrary, an opportunity with using Baxter-Magolda’s model with traditional students specifically, is that I will have the chance to witness students go through each phase. This opportunity of course depends on the setting I am working within an institution. Being a student and having to wrestle with each phase of the model has been the biggest developing tool for me. Hence, I am secure in knowing what not to do when applying this theory to practice.

**Importance of Evidence-Based Assessment**

After a robust discussion of each of the aforementioned theories, an overarching theme is that more evidence-based assessment needs to be conducted in order to support modern day higher education. Each of theories mentioned in this essay are either out dated, was created using one type of student or at one type of institution, and/or does not fully apply to traditional and non-traditional students. As student affairs practitioners, it is imperative that more research is done in order to gather data on all subpopulations of students.

Furthermore, when data is gathered it is important that it is used ongoing for program improvement, enhanced classroom learning, and develops positive individual interactions with students. Evidence-based assessment should be conducted ongoing so that the data is reliable and valid. Utilizing assessment tools like the CAS standards can provide support for reliability and validity across the profession. Furthermore, if evidence-based assessment if continuous used and
updated, institutions admissions, retention, and graduation rates would likely increase, because changes are being constantly applied.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, integrating watershed themes of Personal Foundations, Student Learning and Development through the ACPA and NASPA competencies will provide me with a framework in order to unpack what the application of theory to practice means. Before I can fully immerse myself in theory as a practitioner, I have to first recognize and develop my competency skills. I am not only interested in enhance my skills in order to work in the profession, but I need to be able to articulate my own personal foundation competency areas. Additionally, I should be able to unpack the developmental areas in my life that fostered learning and success for me. Going through this process personally will better equip me with working with students. It will also help me to understand what works when applying to theory to practice and what needs more development.
References


http://www.transitionsthroughlife.com/
**MEMORANDUM/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

To: University of Peace Student Affairs Division (Dr. O. Gilbert Brown, Associate Dean)  
From: Vice President Sally Archer (Robin Hamilton, Graduate Student)  
Date: January 16, 2014  
Re: Proposed Two-Year Strategic Plan for the Student Affairs Division

**Introduction**

The purpose of the memo/executive summary is to update the University of Peace Student Affairs Division on recent organizational and management issues that have affected the division’s budget and overall resources for the next fiscal year. Below will detail a brief overview of the recent developments and decisions that have been made and are in effect immediately as new priorities for the division in order to align with the campus’s mission. Additionally, this executive summary will include a tentative plan of action in the form of a two-year strategic plan draft on how to begin implementing the new priorities mandated by the executive cabinet and faculty leaders of the institution. Practical evidence-based literature on policy, ethics, law, finance, governance, leadership, and management will be embedded throughout the summary to illustrate professional support of suggestions and recommendations listed throughout the summary. Lastly, in the spirit of upholding the competencies of the student affairs profession, a conclusion on the importance of assimilating the ACPA & NASPA competencies (i.e. Human and Organizational Resource, and Law, Policy, and Governance) will be addressed.

**Case Issues Overview**

The overarching issue in the case is the student affairs division will be affected financially, because planned reductions in appropriations of general funding in the upcoming fiscal year. Due to these reductions, the division’s budget will be cut 15% and alternative
considerations to stretch and/or reallocate funding is necessary (Nuss, n.d.). Additional issues in the case include academic-degree units being cut 5%, academic non-degree units’ reductions are 8%, and effectively immediately there is a freeze on hiring and any travel. The current strategic plan that VPSA Archer is consulting “provides little guidance for this predicament” (Nuss, n.d., 80), meaning there is no guidance on how to handle issues of handling budget constraints, setbacks, and/or unfortunate departmental news, etc. Mark and Karen, who are both students, have made comments and quotes in the campus newspaper that relate to the budget reductions, and appear to be very upset. They have a perception that VPSA Archer is willing to allow students to pay the price for the state’s financial crisis. Lastly, Steven Gibson request to meet with VPSA Archer about the budget cuts and how it affects his department (Nuss, n.d.).

**Proposed Strategic Plan Components**

1. *Develop a list of persons with whom you will consult in developing the plan.*

   Internal and external stakeholders are those individuals “who may be directly or indirectly affected by a decision” (Nash, 1997, p. 2) made in a case. These individuals have rights and vested interest in an issue or situation, especially when promises are made to them. Furthermore, stakeholders should be aware of their responsibilities when an ethical issue arises (Nash, 1997). Stakeholders who should be consult when developing this strategic plan include Vice President Archer, Karen Nice (student body president), Steven Gibson (director of Special Student Support Services), Marilyn Jones (director of Residence Life), each department head of the other five sectors under the student affairs division, the Chief Financial Officer or person over general institution budget, and Andrew Smith (president).

2. *What other resources will you consult?*
Providing information to the department heads on being a good steward over all resources and illustrating responsibility is an important area to consult in order to have effective dialogue with stakeholders and the division. Experiencing budget cuts is not something that the division is used to, so it is imperative that training and explanation is provided to those who are over individual departments fiscal management. Schuh et al. (2011) explains that illustrating good stewardship is being responsible for funds, facilities, and any fiscal and physical element of the job. It is illustrating an understanding of right versus wrong when making decisions that involves the budget or any ethical decision on the job (Schuh et al., 2011). Essentially being transparent with fiscal involvement and management will limit any ethical issues that may arise during this delicate period of undergoing budget cuts.

Consulting with the institutions legal counsel is also a resource that the strategic plan should include, especially when interacting with students, handling funds, and being in an authoritative role representing the institution. Students have legal rights such as freedom of speech through the first amendment of the U.S. constitution; hence, it is important to know that they can express themselves via media outlets like the campus newspaper. It is a public forum and institution administrators should be aware that when issues arise, such as the one mentioned here, administrators do not have the right to discontinue this public forum unless there is a breech with certain exceptions by law (Kaplin and Lee, 2009).

3. How will you determine/assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of seven departments?

Utilizing the CAS standards is an effective way to assess and determine the strengths and weaknesses of each of the seven departments within the student affairs division. It may be difficult to implement the CAS standards in the same year that the budget cuts will go into affect;
however, putting together the assessment committee is a realistic goal for the fiscal year. This committee is made up of individuals who are not housed within the department. Ideally, they are administrators who work in a separate institutional entity all together.

4. *How will you determine which programs and services are the most central to the university mission?*

Proper assessment will determine what programs are effective and align with the university’s mission. Before this assessment can be conducted however, a clear definition of the mission is needed. A shared purpose and vision should be provided to everyone so that ownership in the assessment process is established (Bresciani, Gardner, & Hickmott, 2009). Once there is buy-in in the process of assessment stakeholders will likely want their programs and service assessed. Perhaps a general survey can be conducted to determine if the basic outcomes of the program or service are being met at the surface level. From these results, which will probably be quantitative in nature, an in depth qualitative assessment should take place to take a deeper look at program and service goals and ending outcomes. As a result of this second round of assessment, administrators can determine where to focus time, resources, and personnel for any program or service improvement that needs to be done.

5. *What are the opportunities and threats facing the division and you for submitting a strategic plan that isn’t aligned with the institution’s priorities as outlined in the case?*

Submitting a strategic plan that is not aligned with the institution’s priorities will probably not be received from the executive cabinet and faculty leaders. As a result, the administrators in authority may have the right to not allocate any funds or reduce cuts even more if guidelines are not followed. Depending on the type of culture at the institution, there may not be room for negotiation, discussion, or compromise. An organization’s culture reflects the action that is
done, who does it, and how it is carried out within the environment (Tierney, 1988). For example, if the university is bureaucratic in nature then there will be a top-down hierarchy in place for formulating and making decisions. The higher the position using this leadership style, the more authority the leader has over a unit (Manning, 2013). If the plan is not properly aligned, a threat could be discontinuing funding all together and/or removing employees from positions (i.e. terminated). On the contrary, if the unit fosters a New Science culture, there may be an opportunity for the division to voice opinions, concerns, and suggestions. The New Science approach to leadership thrives on open communication amongst leader and follower, trust, and cooperation (Manning, 2013). Hence, more opportunities may be available for the division rather than threats if the strategic plan does not necessarily align.

6. **Other watershed themes, ideas, recommendations?**

Because the idea of facing budget cuts can be a sensitive topic for any unit or department within an institution, it is important that the leader facilitates major functions of communication, change, morale and motivation, planning, organizational structure, outcomes and results, resources, and the skill of tight budgeting (Culp, 2011). The leader should be well versed and comfortable with each skill set in order to be a effective and create a good working environment for followers.

Thinking strategically about how to do more with less and having the competency to lead change, creates the opportunity to witness the options given yet still finding a way to be effective (Ellis, 2011). It signifies being a good steward of what was given despite the circumstances; making lemonade when given lemons. This outlook is important for a leader to convey to followers in order to keep the morale in the division positive.
Conclusion: Application of ACPA & NASPA Competencies

Having the knowledge and being able to assimilate ACPA & NASPA’s competencies, specifically Human and Organizational Resources and Law, Policy, and Governance, makes it easier to fully unpack the watershed themes that correlate with institutional finance, governance, law, policy, and leadership. When charged with the task of completing a strategic plan, creating a budget, or analyzing ethical issues at the institutional level other competencies also play a role in the effectiveness of the outcome. For example, the competency, Leadership, helps one work together with others to envision plans, effect changes in organizations, and respond to internal and external issues that may arise (ACPA & NASPA, 2010).
References


