

1. Introduction to the functional area:

a. Historical origins of the functional area

- i. Academic affairs, although maybe not the exact phrase, has been around since colleges and universities started. Academic affairs is a broad field that encompasses many different topics on campus. For instance, in addition to student learning academic affairs professionals would be responsible for topics such as “criteria for promotion and tenure, a faculty development program, the addition, deletion, or reduction of academic programs, compensation policies, faculty and staff evaluation procedures, admissions criteria, and graduation requirements” (Chait & Taylor, 1983, p. 4). Simply put, academic affairs focuses on “curriculum, faculty members, and scholarship” (Jones, Schuh, & Torres, 2017, p. 558).

The area has evolved over the years but, historically, “separate academic and student affairs did not exist and the contemporary work of senior student affairs officers and staff was done entirely by the faculty or academic administrators” (Colwell, 2006, p. 53). The blending of academic and student affairs seemed to be a trend that would last when it gained support in the 1937 *Student Personnel Point of View*. The 1937 SPPV declared that both faculty and staff should “regard personnel work as a major concern, involving the cooperative effort of all members of the teaching administrative staff and student body” (Roberts, 1998, p. 19). This idea was shortly lived when the 1949 SPPV was published. This updated version “represented a fundamental redirection that allowed student personnel workers and faculty to go separate ways that still undermine our ability to work collectively in the service of students” (Roberts, 1998, p. 20).

b. Relationship to the student affairs profession

There are mixed emotions when people talk about academic affairs and student affairs. The joining of academic and student affairs opens for the possibility of “creating a seamless learning environment that fosters student engagement by calling on those who work closely with students to collaborate in designing, implementing, and improving student learning” (Whitt, 2017, p. 361). Even with its potential to positively impact student engagement and learning, the joining of academic and student affairs could hold some challenges. For instance, the partnership could “fail as a result of competing assumptions about student learning and differing cultural assumptions” (Whitt, 2017, p. 363). In addition to competing assumptions, collaborations between academic and student affairs proves challenging because of “structural modifications that have hindered communication as well as the development of relationships and

cultural differences” (Kezar, 2003, p. 8). Although, despite the differences, the academic and student affairs partnership is, ultimately, considered beneficial because it allows for the “complementary strengths and weaknesses faculty and student affairs professionals to be brought to campus learning environments” (Price, 1999, p. 75).

2. Analysis of the functional area

a. Challenges and Success of the functional area in the past five years as described by the members of the organizations

i. Susan Ledlow: <https://youtu.be/4So00HUBW0w>

1. Susan Ledlow describes the different areas that fall under her position as Vice President of Academic Affairs and Planning. The six different, broad, areas provide a glimpse of the complexity and challenges of academic affairs.
2. Success is that she is collaborating with the Vice President of Student Affairs on the new student experience program.

ii. In an interview with Ron Wasserstein (2014), Ron attributed his success to incorporating “statistical thinking and when he took time to understand the different perspectives around the university (i.e. how economists, anthropologists, musicians, etc solve problems)”

b. Questions to explore:

i. Is this functional area providing services and programs that match the mission, purpose statements, or goal statements?

1. Academic Affairs, on a whole, can claim that its primary focus is “student intellectual and academic development” (Colwell, 2006, p. 54). That being said, it is clear that “all academic resources (classrooms, libraries) and activities (instruction) are about student learning” (Colwell, 2006, p. 54).

ii. Is this functional area accessible to students?

1. The accessibility to academic affairs should be a given for a student enrolled in college/university program. While academic affairs services are widely available, certain students may have difficulty accessing those services. For instance, students with disabilities may have a hard time meeting face-to-face with faculty members or advisors. The time constraints placed on non-traditional students who work full-time in addition to taking classes may prove challenging when it comes to accessing academic affairs services during working hours. Lastly, students just may not feel comfortable reaching out to academic affairs professionals regarding their academic needs.

iii. How does this functional area address diversity?

1. Nancy Shapiro (2007) discusses the changing demographics of higher education in her keynote address to the National Learning Communities Conference. She points out that “women have a higher college-going rate than men and by 2020, students of color will account for 46% of the nation’s total student population” (p. 1). By recognizing a more diverse student body, academic affairs services can make sure that all students have “access to instructors which, ultimately, increases student confidence and the likelihood that students will receive the necessary advising so essential to maintaining their access to campus services and assistance” (Frost et al., 2010, p. 43).
3. Conclusions: Trends & Issues
 - a. What are the trends impacting this functional area and what types of strategic direction would you recommend (supported with citations)?
 - i. Literature regarding academic affairs points to a trend of merging academic and student affairs. The main driving force behind this trend is to “integrate the academic, experiential, and practical, then ultimately retain students through to their completion of their educational goals” (Frost et al., 2010, p. 38). This became a focus because of the “failure of colleges to establish links between students’ out-of-classroom experiences and their academic endeavors” and the recognition that this oversight “impedes on both the students’ overall personal development and academic experience” (Frost et al., 2010, p. 38).
 - ii. Types of strategic direction:
 1. A change in attitude:
 - a. It is only when “everyone on campus—particularly academic and student affairs staff—shares the responsibility for student learning will we be able to make significant progress in improving it” (Colwell, 2006, p. 55).
 - b. From a student’s perspective, when academic and student affairs staff work together their view on learning changes because it suggests that “both faculty and student life staff are educators and that their learning in and out of class is all part of a single, whole, educational experience (Colwell, 2006, p. 62).
 2. A change in organization:
 - a. Adams University combined separate services under the umbrella of the “Student Success Center.” This center integrated academic support, peer mentoring, and advising. Ultimately, the center provided an “opportunity to clearly articulate a shared vision and philosophy for

student success” (Manning, Kinzie, & Schuh, 2014, p. 133). A common theme throughout the literature is the recognition that academic and student affairs have been operating, mostly, apart from one another. Part of the idea of an organizational change is restructuring reporting lines so the collaboration between the two groups can become more intentional.

3. A change in approach:

- a. Nancy Shapiro (2013) voices a common idea that institutions have an “obligation to support students in ways that will lead to their success” (p. 7). She suggests that we should turn to the “untapped potential of learning communities” (p. 7) because they have a “critically important role to play in addressing some of the most challenging and urgent issues facing higher education” (p. 10). Students who were involved in learning communities responded “positively and indicated that the learning community helped them connect with other students and inspired them to learn” (Frost et al., 2010, p. 42).

4. Connections to other functional areas

- a. The final part of the assignment will be to review all the functional areas and highlight connections between your selected area and at least three other functional areas
 - i. International Students: Similarly to an increasingly diverse student body, each institution must look for ways to adapt to international student needs and collaborations with international programs. International students have a wide range of challenges. Academically, international students may feel at a “disadvantage in a class amongst peers with fluent English” (Rasmussen, 2015, p. 55). Not only are the students challenged academically, they also face cultural challenges. The loss of a familiar support group in a new academic setting can create a lot of stress for international students initially (Rasmussen, 2015, p. 55). To reduce stress and create an environment where international students can thrive, it is important to provide access to “academic support skills to help them develop confidence and competence in English, academic writing, and computer and library skills” (Rasmussen, 2015, p. 57).
 - ii. Veterans/Military Students: According to the Department of Defense, their “off-duty voluntary education programs boast of an enrollment of over 400,000 students annually in both undergraduate and graduate courses” (Ford, Northrup, & Wiley, 2009, p. 62). Many of the active duty students have to enroll in a part-time basis and take advantage of

distance learning because of the unpredictability of their assignments (Ford et al., 2009, p. 62). The unpredictable nature of their assignments, academic affairs needs to focus on “creating flexible academic programs and support services to meet the demanding schedules of military students” (Ford et al., 2009, p. 67). Another consideration for academic affairs professionals is to actively participate in the collaboration between other campus departments in order to “provide seamless enrollment and transitional services” (Ford et al., 2009, p. 68).

- iii. Career Services: It is natural for faculty members to be involved in students’ career planning because of their expertise in a particular area of study; however, it is unlikely that “students will have regular extensive career planning discussions with a faculty member” (Colwell, 2006, p. 62). As a result, institutions have integrated “career planning as an important part of their academic advising” (Colwell, 2006, p. 63). In an effort to incorporate academic affairs with career services, Colorado State University developed the “College Career Liaison” (White & Kraning, 2001, p. 118). This model was effective in “bridging the gaps within student and academic fairs, maximizing dollars, providing a stronger method of job development, and producing strong collaborative ventures among colleges” (White & Kraning, 2001, p. 118).

5. Comments

- a. The comments need to include BOTH positive and constructive feedback regarding the information and what you learned about the functional area. This would also be a location to ask any questions you have about the specific functional area.
 - i. The research into the functional area of academic affairs was enlightening. Much of what I found tended to center around why it is important for academic and student affairs to work more closely together. There were a few causes for concern with the two areas working together (varying perspectives of what the focus of the institution should be, if a collaboration makes sense, long-held biases about the other’s work) but nothing that is beyond repair. I am actually pleased to see the trend combining the efforts of academic and student affairs. I think there will be some speed bumps along the way but, in the end, the students will benefit from the holistic approach to their personal and academic development.
 - ii. One of the most difficult pieces to this functional area was to track down more historical information. Apart from discovering the beginning of the National Academic Advising Association (1977—1979), I could not track down a specific document or event that lead to the formation of academic affairs. Student affairs has the Student Personnel Point of View

(1937) as a turning point in their history. I was hoping to find something similar for academic affairs but turned up empty handed.

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