

What Is the Foundation of Student Affairs?

Everyone knows that any building needs a strong foundation. Whether it is a small cottage or an immense skyscraper, each building must have a foundation designed to support the structure through years of inclement weather, heavy use, and natural disasters. Buildings without strong foundations will collapse and fall when faced with both anticipated and unanticipated stresses and strains. A strong foundation, however, can support a structure through time and is essential to the longevity and integrity of the building.

Professions also are built on foundations, although such foundations are not made with bricks, mortar, reinforcing rods, and pylons. The foundation of any profession is formed from a shared philosophy about what needs to be done, a shared understanding of the theoretical constructs that inform the practice of the profession, the application of the accumulated knowledge of the members to the tasks that need to be accomplished, and the ability of the practitioners of the profession to effectively link their theoretical knowledge, practical wisdom, and skills to larger organizations and society. Finally, a profession articulates standards by which its performance can be judged by those who are not members of the profession.

For example, consider the profession of medicine. It is a profession that has a shared philosophy, embodied in the Hippocratic Oath, of what needs to be done. Medicine also clearly has a vast

number of theoretical constructs regarding how the human body works, how disease manifests itself, how problems can be corrected, and how new cures might occur. Many of these theories have been tested, some are just evolving, and others have been discarded through careful review and rigorous examination in the laboratory and clinical trials. Medicine is not just a set of theories; it is characterized by skilled practitioners who are applying their accumulated knowledge of the field to the problem at hand in working with patients. Individual medical practitioners do not stand alone; they are linked with one another through professional organizations and a web of other caregivers. They are supported in their endeavors through a vast array of medical institutions. Finally, medicine promulgates and enforces standards, has established accreditation guidelines, has sanctions, and has a code of ethics. Although this may be a simplistic analysis of the medical profession, it provides an instructive framework for an examination of the profession of student affairs and the foundations that support that work.

Strong foundations do not occur by accident. They are the result of hard work, careful planning, examination of strengths and weaknesses, and provision of needed reinforcement at critical times. Student affairs, as a profession, has been characterized by internal debate regarding the “true” foundations of the profession. For some, the roots of the profession are in counseling and counseling theories; for others, the foundation of the profession is student development theory and practice; and for still others, the appropriate foundation for student affairs is based on organizational theory, administration, and management. With such divergent points of view within the profession, the foundation can at times feel like it is built on quicksand. The debate can become heated and is ultimately self-defeating for both practitioners and the profession. This chapter presents the point of view that although there are differences between and among student affairs professionals, there is a common foundation that supports the work of the profession. Over time, several key concepts have been embedded in both philosophical

statements and theoretical constructs. The chapter will present a discussion of the philosophical and theoretical building blocks that provide a common foundation for student affairs practice. Included will be key references to documents that have helped shape the profession to the present time. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the implications of this issue for graduate preparation programs and provide recommendations regarding the future of the foundation of student affairs.

Philosophical Foundations

“Student affairs is largely an American higher education invention” (Rhatigan, 2000, p. 5). The breadth and diversity of institutions of higher education in the United States are unique in the world. Institutions differ in terms of mission, size, type, affiliations, and scope. In addition, American students are among the most heterogeneous in the world, reflecting a wide range of backgrounds and purposes for attending institutions of higher education. The diversity of American higher education did not occur by accident. Higher education, in the United States, grew and changed to reflect the massive changes occurring in the greater American society, including, but not limited to, the abolishment of slavery, the emancipation of women, the civil rights movement, overseas conflicts, wars, and other factors. Readers are urged to review Thelin (2003), Rhatigan (2000), Brubacher and Rudy (1976), and Rudolph (1965) for a full discussion of the factors and issues that provide the context for the development of higher education and student affairs.

Student affairs also reflects the diverse nature of American higher education. Nuss reminds us, however, that two important concepts have characterized student affairs from the advent of the early deans of men and women to the present day, saying in part that “as you consider the history of student affairs, please note two enduring and distinctive concepts. The first is the profession’s consistent and persistent commitment to the development of the whole

person. In spite of the dramatic changes that have occurred in higher education, the profession's adherence to this fundamental principle should not be overlooked or underestimated. Second, student affairs was originally founded to support the academic mission of the college, and one of the characteristic strengths of American higher education is the diversity among the missions of these institutions" (Nuss, 2003, pp. 65–66).

The Pioneers

The early deans of women and deans of men were the true pioneers of the profession of student affairs. Rhatigan (2000) notes that without a prior history, definitive job descriptions, or set agendas, these men and women developed a strategy and an agenda for their work with students. In contrast to professionals today, all they had were their own experiences, education, values, personal skills, and leadership abilities (p. 8). It is clear, however, that these early pioneers laid the first foundation stones for the profession of student affairs. Even though time and history obscure much of what they did, these individuals made a difference. Whether their focus was on standards, or vocational development of students, or discipline, their professional activities clearly reflected both adherence to the concept of developing the whole person and supporting the unique mission of each institution where they served.

The work of these early pioneers, and those who came immediately after them, was informed by a variety of theories and perspectives emanating from sociology, psychology, educational psychology, vocational guidance, assessment, and mental health. The work of Scott, Strong, Thorndike, Watson, and others influenced the growing profession of student affairs. Often the overarching framework that led the efforts of these individuals was an acceptance of humanism as a guiding point of view (Rhatigan, 2000). This humanistic orientation provided a framework for much discussion and debate. One result was the 1937 document *The Student Personnel Point of View*, commissioned and approved by the American Council on Education (ACE).

The Student Personnel Point of View, 1937

This document has been a critical part of the foundation for student affairs. Although certainly not perfect, and reflecting the times in which it was written, the document focuses attention on the two elements identified by Nuss (2003): commitment to the development of the whole person and support of the mission of the institution. The document states in part that “personnel work is not new. Personnel officers have been appointed throughout the colleges and universities of this country to undertake a number of educational responsibilities which were once entirely assumed by teaching members of the faculty. They have also, because of the expansion of educational functions, developed a number of student personnel services which have but recently been stressed. The philosophy behind their works, however, is as old as education itself” (p. 51). This statement is a powerful affirmation of the role of student affairs within higher education and the philosophical underpinnings of the field.

The statement goes on to list a number of functions that should be of concern to the student affairs profession. In addition, it emphasizes the need to coordinate the work of student affairs within the institution, including coordination with the faculty and business administration. Research is an important agenda item from the 1937 statement and remains a current concern for the profession today. The enduring nature of these recommendations and suggestions make the 1937 statement one of the keystones of the foundation of the current work of student affairs.

After the upheaval of World War II, the subsequent enrollment surge of veterans, and the resulting expansion of the higher education enterprise, ACE commissioned another statement in 1949 on *The Student Personnel Point of View*.

The Student Personnel Point of View, 1949

The 1949 statement expanded the philosophy of higher education expressed in *The Student Personnel Point of View* (American Council on Education, 1937) to include emphasis on preparing citizens for

roles in public affairs and addressing social problems in a democratic society, and it forecasted the need for increased emphasis on aiding students with information focused on international understanding and cooperation. The statement reaffirms the commitment of student affairs to the development of the whole person, saying in part that:

The student personnel movement constitutes one of the most important efforts of American educators, to treat college and university students as individuals, rather than as entities on an impersonal roster. The movement, at the same time, expresses awareness of the significance of student group life in its manifold expressions from student residences to student mores, from problems of admission to problems of job placement. It has developed as the division of college and university administration concerned with students individually and in groups. In a real sense, this part of modern higher education is an individualized application of the research and clinical findings of modern psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology, and education to the task of aiding students to develop fully in the college environment [ACE, 1949, p. 24].

This part of the statement clearly recognizes the organizational role assumed by student affairs, the specialization needed within student affairs, and the multiplicity of the theoretical constructs that inform the professional practice of student affairs. For these reasons alone, this document should be considered another keystone in building the foundation of student affairs. Although the 1949 statement also reflects the issues and the language of the time in which it was written, it is inclusive and does not create an either-or approach to how student affairs professionals should approach their work.

A Perspective on Student Affairs

On the fiftieth anniversary of the 1939 publication of *The Student Personnel Point of View*, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) issued the document *A Perspective on Student Affairs* (1989). It focused on the assumptions and beliefs that shape the work of student affairs. Essentially, these assumptions and beliefs are statements of the philosophy that guides the work of student affairs. The document clearly states that “no one of these assumptions and beliefs is unique to student affairs. Indeed, they are held by many others in higher education. It is the combination of these assumptions and beliefs that is distinctive. Together, they define the special contribution of student affairs” (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 1989, p. 11).

The statement goes on to affirm the preeminence of the academic mission of the institution, the unique, whole nature of the student and how all their experiences influence learning. In addition, the statement focuses on the institutional environment and the value of the many communities contained therein. Finally, the statement concludes by honoring the paradoxical nature of the work of student affairs, saying in part that “as a partner in the educational enterprise, student affairs enhances and supports the academic mission. In addition, student affairs professionals must advocate for the common good and champion the rights of the individual, encourage intelligent risk-taking and set limits on behavior; encourage independent thought and teach interdependent behavior” (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 1989, p. 19). This is a challenging but essential set of tasks undergirded by a foundation that emphasizes both the whole student and the mission of the institution.

Enduring Principles and Values

Woodard, Love, and Komives (2000) examined these three statements and other works, including *The Student Learning Imperative* (ACPA, 1994) and *Good Practices in Student Affairs* (Blimling,

Whitt, and Associates, 1999). Their analysis resulted in the identification of a set of enduring values that have held true through time and embody the ideals of the student affairs profession. They indicate that all of these works, and others, hold a set of common beliefs rooted in the dignity, uniqueness, potential, and worth of each person and a strong belief in the development of the whole person. In addition, they found agreement in these statements that the “mission of student affairs flows from the mission of the institution” (p. 21). They also identified concurrence among the documents that they studied on a set of beliefs regarding learning occurring in diverse places and in diverse ways and that students are ultimately responsible for their own learning and behavior. Another set of beliefs identified by Woodard, Love, and Komives focused on civil discourse, communication, and diverse communities where assumptions and beliefs should be examined and questioned (p. 21). In addition, a focus is given to the administrative and management aspects of student affairs as underlying concepts that support the profession (p. 22). This perspective regarding the powerful potential role of student affairs within the learning community challenges the profession in profound and meaningful ways.

Ethics

The ethical dimensions of the work of student affairs are certainly one of the cornerstones of the profession. Both the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) have ethical statements that outline the duties and responsibilities for the ethical behavior of professionals. The work of Karen Kitchener (1985) provided a strong direction for the student affairs profession when she articulated five simple but powerful ethical principles for student affairs: respecting autonomy, doing no harm, helping others, being just, and being trustworthy. Those ethical principles can of course come into conflict with one another in the daily practice of student affairs, but they provide one of the strong foundations for further

exploration of ethical principles as professionals work with individual students, student groups, and institutions. The works of Brown (1985), Canon (1985, 1993), Fried (1995, 2000), and Meara, Schmidt, and Day (1996) have all advanced the ethical awareness of the student affairs profession.

Among the greatest skills of a student affairs administrator is balancing the individual rights of students and the common good of the educational enterprise. Understanding and applying ethical principles in daily decisions is an essential cornerstone of effective student affairs practice.

There has been consistency over time regarding the philosophy that guides the work of student affairs. Although organizational structures may vary across institutions, and the emphasis of the work of student affairs may differ from institution to institution, the profession has embraced the notion of both fostering the development of the whole student and providing service and support to the academic mission of the institution. At times, the profession has had internal debates on what the emphasis should be in the work of student affairs. Is it management or counseling? Is it student development or administration? Is the work of student affairs primary or secondary within the institution? Those debates have turned the focus of the profession inward, instead of on the students and institutions served by the profession.

Transitional Works

Four works, labeled *transitional* for lack of a better term, have profoundly influenced the work of student affairs whether the current group of practitioners realizes it or not. The first was presented by insiders in student affairs, Esther Lloyd-Jones and her colleague, M. R. Smith (1954). A second contribution was made by a psychologist, Nevitt Sanford, in 1962, as he and his associates reported on a massive study of American higher education. The third was the publication by Ernest Boyer (1990), a leader in higher education but not from student affairs. The fourth was written by a senior

student affairs officer, Gregory Blimling, and a faculty member, Elizabeth Whitt (1999). All have profoundly influenced the philosophical foundation of the profession of student affairs.

Student Personnel Work as Deeper Teaching

This book, written in 1954, provided yet another foundational building block for the work of student affairs. Lloyd-Jones and Smith stated a set of common beliefs that characterized professionals working in student affairs. This philosophy affirms the worth of the individual and states in part that “the common good can be promoted best by helping each individual to develop to the utmost in accordance with his abilities . . . the belief in the equal dignity of thinking and feeling and working; that these aspects are inseparable. Personnel work is interested in the *whole* person” (p. 5). The authors go on to say that for the student, “A stimulating and rich environment provides for the explanation of resources (relationships, who and what he is); and for the accomplishment of the developmental tasks appropriate for his age level” (p. 5). The influence of the person-environment interaction described in this volume and the developmental tasks were indeed the precursors for a number of theoretical constructs that inform the professional tasks of student affairs today.

The American College

During the 1950s and the 1960s, Nevitt Sanford and his associates conducted a major study of higher education in the United States. Two published works resulted from this study and contributed to the understanding of the collegiate experience of students and the roles and challenges faced by faculty and staff within those institutions. Focused on traditional age college students, who were the majority of those enrolled in the eras studied, *The American College* (Sanford, 1962) highlighted the effects of the collegiate experience on the total growth and development of students. It was followed by *Where Colleges Fail* (1967).

Both of these volumes reinforced the notion of the education of the whole person through both academic study and personal development. Sanford was both a critic and a supporter of higher education. Perhaps his greatest contribution was in describing what occurred within the collegiate environments while placing that description into a developmental framework.

Campus Life: In Search of Community

In 1990, Ernest Boyer helped all of higher education, and most particularly student affairs, understand the influence of communities in helping both the institution and individual students. He articulated characteristics of positive communities that assist with learning, growth, and development and reflect the principles of sound education. His six descriptors of positive educational communities have had a powerful influence on later works, both philosophical and theoretical, that have affected student affairs. He indicated that a learning community, such as a college or university, should be purposeful, open, just, disciplined, caring, and celebrative (1990). The explanation of these deceptively simple characteristics has had far-reaching implications for contemporary and future student affairs professionals. For example, the report describes a disciplined community as “a place where individuals accept their obligations to the group and well-defined governance procedures guide behavior for the common good” (p. 37). Or consider the statement that a just community rejects prejudice and affirms diversity in all aspects of the community and “is a place where diversity is aggressively pursued” (p. 35). Strands of each of the notions of collegiate communities, articulated by Boyer, can be found in many contemporary discussions within higher education and student affairs. Boyer’s work had the potential to help each professional focus on the individual, groups of students, and thus all the parts of the institutional community. His work provided a stronger voice for the work of some of the early theorists in person-environment interaction, including, but not limited to, Banning (1978), Parker (1978), and Hurst, Morrill, and Oetting (1980).

Principles of Good Practice in Student Affairs

Written by Blimling and Whitt and their associates (1999), the work provides seven principles that underpin the work of student affairs. These principles were articulated in a joint statement issued by ACPA and NASPA, *Principles of Good Practice in Student Affairs* (1997). Blimling and Whitt, however, provide a means to translate those principles into the daily work of student affairs. The principles are stated differently but are not new—they are grounded in the notions of development of the whole person and support of the institutional mission, which are foundational concepts of student affairs. The principles state that good practice in student affairs accomplishes the following: engages students in active learning, helps students develop coherent values and ethical standards, sets and communicates high expectations for learning, uses systematic inquiry to improve student and institutional performance, uses resources effectively to achieve institutional missions and goals, forges educational partnerships that enhance student learning, and builds supportive and inclusive communities (1999, pp. 14–20). The great value of this work is helping professionals understand the link between what they do on a daily basis with the learning and development of student and institutional goals.

All of these works did not arise by chance. Each referenced statement and publication was informed by the work of an eclectic group of theorists who both enhanced the understanding of the development of students and student groups and the organization of the higher education enterprise.

Theoretical Foundations

The function of theory is to describe, explain, and predict (Hoy and Miskel, 1978). Theories of assistance to student affairs practitioners come from a wide variety of disciplines, including psychology, sociology, and education. Two theory groups are important to student affairs. The first is a group of theories focused on the growth and development

of students and specific subgroups within the student cadre. The second is research that describes and explains organizations and the application of organizational theory to higher education.

A compendium of the research on the effects of the collegiate experience on students was compiled by Pascarella and Terenzini (1991, 2005) and provides a useful framework to identify the first set of theoretical foundations for the work of student affairs. Their work was preceded by volumes by Feldman and Newcomb (1969), Chickering (1969, 1981), Astin (1977), Bowen (1979), Pace (1979), and others, but Pascarella and Terenzini presented a classification system for pertinent research that is a useful way to organize a vast amount of material. Space does not permit a full discussion of each of these theoretical constructs, but it should be noted that each theory set has contributed to the foundation of student affairs in fundamental and profound ways.

Developmental Theories of Student Change

“Developmental theories and models seek to identify the dimensions and structure of growth in college students and to explain the dynamics by which growth occurs” (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991, p. 18). Four larger groups comprise the cluster of developmental theories of student change.

Psychosocial Theories

This set of theories involves the mastery of developmental tasks that vary with the individual's age and developmental status and the rate of mastery of those tasks. Erikson (1959) profoundly influenced the development of psychosocial theories. His concepts are that biological and psychological development is sequential, does not occur in isolation, and is influenced by the environment of the person. Further he posited that providing challenge and support to those facing developmental tasks or crises is extremely important. Finally, he stated that the dominant developmental task for traditional age college students, and other people of that same age, is identity formation.

Referencing both the work of Erikson and Sanford, Chickering presented seven vectors of development that differ from stages in that they have both direction and force. The vectors he identified are achieving competence, managing emotions, developing autonomy, establishing identity, freeing interpersonal relationships, developing purpose, and developing integrity (Chickering, 1969). In 1993, Chickering and Reisser reexamined the vectors of development and strengthened the concepts by placing additional emphasis on the relationship between autonomy, independence, and intimacy and the complexity of those interactions. Further they asserted that the capstone of autonomy was interdependence (Chickering and Reisser, 1993).

Douglas Heath (1968, 1978) presented a complex maturity model that differed from other developmental theories in that it focused on five dimensions of maturation, where movement toward maturation occurs within the self-systems of the person. Heath's work also is distinguished by its emphasis on relating the model to the tenets of a liberal education.

Other theorists also have contributed to the understanding of students from a psychosocial perspective, including, but not limited to, the following. Marcia (1966) posited a model of ego identity status. Cross's model of black identity formation (1985) and Helms's work (1990), which seeks to describe the developmental process whereby the individual becomes "black," also have made enormous contributions to an understanding of African-American students. The works of Cuyjet (1997), Howard-Hamilton (1997), and Wright (1987) have aided practitioners in translating the emerging theoretical perspectives about the development of African American students into practice.

Cognitive-Structural Theories

Perry's theory of intellectual and ethical development (1970, 1981) led the way in developing an understanding of how individuals construe knowledge, value, and responsibility. His theory is a complex

stage model and was based on a study of Harvard men. Kohlberg's work (1969) also is a stage theory, focused more narrowly on what must happen within the individual before moral choices and judgments are made. Much of Kohlberg's work focused on male populations.

Gilligan's model of a different voice (1977) identified differences between men and women, when applying Kohlberg's model. It states that Kohlberg's model does not accurately apply to women regarding their sense of self and the basis of their moral reasoning. Gilligan goes on to state that one theory of moral development is not "right" and another "wrong," but they are different perspectives on the same phenomena.

Kitchener and King (1981) have developed a reflective judgment model. Loevinger (1976) posits a theory of ego development. Both are stage models and have contributed to the understanding of the profession on how students grow, mature, develop, and make choices in life.

Typological Models

This set of models categorizes people into groups based on the distinctive characteristics that distinguish one group from another. These typological models describe stability in the differences of individuals over time. More descriptive in nature, these models do not attempt to explain the characteristics and processes of individual change but instead are helpful in focusing on the differences among students and how different students may react differently to the same perceived situation.

The Myers-Briggs Typology is perhaps the best known of these typological models and is used on many college campuses and organizations to determine the type of approach individuals take to problem solving and social interaction (Myers, 1980). Since the advent of the Myers-Briggs, a number of other theories related to the typology of persons have surfaced, but research has been scanty on those emerging theories.

Person-Environment Interaction Models

As noted earlier, person-environment interaction models are important to the foundation of student affairs. Such theories do not attempt to explain and predict the development of the individual but focus instead on the environment and how, through interaction, it influences the individual. Barker's work (1968) is the most fully developed theory of person-environment interaction.

Holland's work (1966, 1985) on vocational choice is among the best known of this group of theories and also blends some typological characteristics and psychosocial theories. Holland's work is differentiated by his conclusion that it is the interaction of the personality of the individual and the environment in which that person finds him- or herself that determines behavior. When there is congruence between the individual and the environment, there is a great likelihood of stability. When the individual experiences inconsistencies, change occurs within the individual or the individual leaves the environment.

The work of Moos (1979) provided a significant contribution when he applied person-environmental interaction theories to the work of higher education. Pace and Stern (1958) developed an environmental press model that is still in use today. Banning (1978) provided helpful translation of this set of theories to the work of student affairs.

The landmark work *Involving Colleges* (Kuh, Schuh and Whitt, 1991) helped the profession better understand what factors, including practices and policies, influence the learning, growth, and development of students in general and individual students in particular. Their observations and descriptions of many institutions over time have informed student affairs practitioners and institutions of strategies that are successful in helping students achieve educational goals.

Newest Theories

The greatest number of theoretical advancements in recent years have focused on theories about student subpopulations, including women, men, African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and

Native Americans and also on sexual orientation. Because these are the populations that are growing most rapidly in American higher education, these theories as they are tested and modeled should not be excluded from the foundation of student affairs. Theories related to women and African Americans have received the most attention, but recent work points to theories of student change and development related to other ethnic groups and sexual orientation. Space does not permit a full discussion of all of these theories, but they are important additions to the foundation of student affairs. The reader is referred to several volumes that can be useful to understand this growing and important branch of theory.

Identity Development of Diverse Populations: Implications for Teaching and Administration in Higher Education (2003) by Torres, Howard-Hamilton, and Cooper provides an excellent overview of identity development theories related to race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. It discusses the implications of those theoretical developments to administration and provides a broad overview for the student affairs administrators.

In *Working with Asian American College Students* (2003) McEwen, Kodama, Alvarez, Lee, and Liang provide both theoretical constructs and practical advice on working with Asian American students. The authors propose a model for Asian American student development and translate that model into practical ideas for student affairs administrators.

Anna Ortiz and her colleagues (2004) provide insight in *Addressing the Unique Needs of Latino American Students* by aiding practitioners in understanding the differences between and among Latino students as well as the role cultural identity plays in their growth and development. The volume includes a number of practical suggestions for putting these insights to work for student success.

Fox, Lowe, and McClellan (2005) provide understanding of the Native American student experience and help practitioners understand a different approach to learning and community. The role of the tribe and family in the success of students is explored in detail, as a different cultural approach to growth and development is presented.

These are but a few of the new voices that are contributing to the foundation of student affairs theory. Their voices must be included and the foundation of student development theories expanded if student affairs is to serve the new students entering our campuses.

Organizational Theories

Student affairs, as a profession, has paid much more attention to the individual growth and development of students than to the larger organization of higher education, where the profession must function effectively in order to succeed. Most of the debate, within the profession, has focused on organizational structures, reporting relationships, financial concerns, and other matters (see other chapters in this volume) rather than on understanding the complex dynamics of an institution of higher education.

Kuh (1989) identified four models of organizations that can influence the work of student affairs: the rational model, the bureaucratic model, the collegial model, and the political model. It is a useful way to discuss organizational theory and the influence those theories can have on the work of student affairs.

Rational Model

Kuh (2003) indicates that the rational model for organizations is appealing because it emphasizes qualities valued in the academy: fairness and objectivity in decision making, deliberate and purposeful action, and predictable outcomes. It is limited, however, because it makes an assumption that everyone in the organization shares the same goals, and the model relies on formalized regulations and supervision within the organization. In *Involving Colleges*, cited earlier in this chapter, Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, and their associates (1991) described several institutions where such a rational model exists. They are small and single focused (primarily on liberal education) and may be church related. Ambler (2000) indicates, however, that because it assumes such a shared mission

and goals, it has limitations in its application to large and complex institutions and systems.

Bureaucratic Model

Max Weber (1947) developed an organizational model that puts priority on hierarchical power, limits on authority, specialization of functions, technical competence, an impersonal orientation, efficiency, and standard operating procedures. The bureaucratic model is evident in colleges and universities, but it does not characterize the entire organization of the institution. Even though institutions may have standard operating procedures and organizational charts, pure reason and standard procedures do not work throughout the academy. For example, it is not unusual in a highly competitive Division I institution to have the salary of the head football or basketball coach exceed the salary of the provost or highest-paid faculty member. If the purpose of higher education is academic, such compensation packages clearly are not rational.

Further, Kuh indicates, “Some of the traditions of the academy, such as academic freedom and collegial governance, are incompatible with many bureaucratic principles of organizing” (1989, p. 217). Bureaucratic rules are a source of frustration for many student affairs administrators, who are used to dealing with the unexpected and unpredictable elements of the collegiate experience. Such rules can, however, provide a screening function for an administrator to reduce levels of interpersonal tension regarding a decision. Reliance on bureaucratic rules also can have unanticipated outcomes because such rules rely on minimal standards, and if they are constantly employed by an administrator, the minimums can become the maximum expectation for performance. In addition, the bureaucratic model of organizations neglects the informal organization—an organization can only be really understood if there is awareness of both the formal and informal patterns of communication and decision making within the organization. The bureaucratic model of organizations does not account for such variability.

Collegial Model

In a collegial model, there is an assumption of common goals and priorities within the institution or organization. This model is predicated on the assumption that participatory governance is the most appropriate way to pursue and meet institutional goals (Chaffee, 1983) and that assumption is reflected in all levels of the organization.

The tripartite assemblies that grew out of the campus unrest of the sixties are examples of the collegial model at work. Representatives of faculty, staff, and students met regularly to discuss issues and concerns common to everyone in the institution. The assumption was made that no matter what the topic, everyone had a right to state an opinion, and civil discourse could occur that would eventually end in a decision embraced by all.

Unionization, faculty loyalty to their disciplines rather than the institution, and a sense that the process was not really collegial at all undermined this model on many campuses. Changes in the external environment, including legal mandates for certain accommodations, practices, and policies resulted, at times, in the collegial model being ineffective. Many agendas could not be completely resolved within the context of the academy. In addition, the assumption of collegiality does not address the issues of conflict resolution within a campus community and does not provide methods for resolution of deeply held positions and philosophies by groups within the institution. The utility of the collegial model is questioned by many, for it presents an ideal rather than the reality of decision making, power and authority, and legal constraints faced by most higher education institutions.

Political Model

Kantor and Stein (1979) described politicized organizations as those existing under conditions where “environments press or need to be managed, when stakeholders are activated, when interests are strong” (p. 303). Their description is a fair and accurate one of most

institutions of higher education. A political view of higher education challenges the assumptions of other models.

Stakeholders in higher education come from both without and within the institution, and each stakeholder group has an agenda. Conflicts will invariably arise between and among stakeholder groups. For example, students may see a need for a new academic program, but that identified need is not a priority for the faculty. Or staff members feel they are not receiving adequate compensation, but parents and students want money spent on new recreational facilities. The list of potential and real conflicts between stakeholder groups within higher education is long and complex and the conflicts are not easily resolved.

Power becomes an important commodity in politicized organizations, and there are many forms of power. Appleton (1991) describes several types of power that can be exercised within an organization: positional power, referent power, coercion, personal influence, and expert power. The use of power in decision making is a cornerstone of the political view of organizations. Moore (2000) also describes other aspects of political organization that are particularly applicable to student affairs. He states, in part, that there are unique aspects of institutions of higher education that shape the political environment within the institution: goal diffusion, uncertainty of means to accomplish goals, dual control, structural uniqueness, limits of leadership, and the unique organizational culture of each institution.

Since Kantor and Stein (1979) described politicized organizations, a great many changes have occurred to increase politicization of institutions of higher education. For example, technology brings conflicts and debates that were once internal to the institution into the purview of others through Web pages, e-mail, and blogs. Funding has become more restricted and priorities of institutions have shifted and changed. These factors and others have contributed to greater political stresses within higher education. Still, many in student affairs are not comfortable with the notion that colleges and

universities are political organizations and that conflict might be resolved through political means rather than rational discourse and collegiality.

Other Models

A number of other theories and models also are useful in understanding the internal dynamics of any college or university organization.

Organizational Culture

Schein is particularly helpful in understanding and applying the theory of organizational cultures. He states in part that “the organizations that have survived and made important transitions over many decades seem to have a cultural core that was fundamentally functional—a commitment to learning and change; a commitment to people and all of the stakeholders in the organizations including customers, employees, suppliers and stockholders and a commitment to building a healthy, flexible organization in the first place” (Schein, 1992, p. 62). Although discussing business and industry, his words have direct application to higher education and student affairs. This view of organizations is less precise than some other perspectives, but it is a useful tool for the practitioner in higher education.

Organized Anarchy

Kuh (2003) indicates that the organized anarchy view of organizations “was developed specifically to describe six characteristics peculiar to colleges and universities” (p. 277). Referencing Baldrige (1971) and Cohen and Marsh (1972), Kuh describes these unique characteristics as ambiguity, conflicting goals, unclear technology, fluid participation, a highly educated workforce, and clients who participate in the governance of the institution. Any budget cycle at any institution reveals the issues of ambiguity and conflicting goals. For example, many worthy ideas are forwarded, but only a few can be funded due to scarce resources. Loose coupling refers to the strength of the relationships between and among parts of the

organization. Rather than being tightly controlled interactions, as described in other organizational theories, relationships between offices and agencies are random and are thoughtfully encouraged. To illustrate, recently an admissions officer indicated that she was unsure that her predictions regarding the size of the freshman class were accurate. Her uncertainty arose because the weekly report on housing applications and deposits forwarded by residence life showed far fewer applications for housing than might be expected at a specific point in time. When she inquired, however, the applications were in but had not been processed because a key staff member was out of the office. Her worry was for nothing and the residence life staff had been unaware that their delay in processing might have an influence on any other part of the organization. Although unsettling, organized anarchy can be an apt way to understand the organizational structures of institutions of higher education.

It is clear that no one organizational theory explains how colleges and universities are constructed and how decisions are made within those institutions. It is also clear that the informed practitioner should see organizational theory as one of the foundations for practice in student affairs.

Implications for Graduate Preparation Programs

For many years, there has been an internal debate in student affairs regarding the foundations of the profession. Those debates have been useful, but, at times, they have deteriorated into an acceptance of a certain point of view or orthodoxy as the only correct point of view. Graduate preparation programs have been characterized by curricula focused on one of three philosophical and theoretical points of view: counseling, student affairs, and administration. The complexities of the roles that new student affairs professionals must assume in complicated and ever-changing organizations require a new perspective on graduate education for student affairs professionals.

This analysis has confirmed Nuss's point of view (2003), that despite differences, there are two fundamental assumptions that guide the philosophy of student affairs: the development of the whole person and the support of the academic mission of the institution. Belief in those two concepts is not inconsistent with belief in a variety of student development theories, nor is it in conflict with prevailing organizational theories. The crux of the conflict seems to be on the concept of supporting the academic mission of the institution. Support of the academic mission does not mean that student affairs professionals have to be irresponsible and unquestioning—it just means that student affairs professionals need to understand the educational role of the institution and work to support the positive aspects of that role. Graduate education programs should support those principles.

It is also critical that ethics, and an understanding of ethical obligations of professionals in student affairs, should be an essential element in every graduate education program, whatever the particular curriculum emphasis. Too often, ethical behavior has been assumed and is not discussed in graduate education programs.

In addition, all graduate students in preparation programs should understand the two distinct theory strands that inform the work of student affairs. The first theory strand focuses on the development of individual students and their unique characteristics and those of the groups to which they may belong. The second strand focuses on the larger organization that student affairs is a part of in any college or university.

The foundations of student affairs are broad and deep, and graduate preparation programs also need to encourage students to examine both the history of higher education and the history of student affairs. Understanding the foundation of the profession will help graduate students make better choices about institutional and philosophical congruence in their future professional positions.

Finally, there are many roles to fill in student affairs and many ways to fulfill those roles that meet the philosophical, ethical, and

theoretical foundations of the student affairs profession. Just as everyone in student affairs does not have to be a vice president, neither do they have to be a counselor or a theoretician. They need, instead, to be active learners in their professional roles and to be very cognizant of their own knowledge and skill limitations in order to be successful.

The graduate faculty in student affairs needs to assume the leadership for broadening the scope and knowledge base of all preparation programs. The profession will be richer for it as will the students and the institutions the profession serves.

Suggestions for Action

The following suggestions are offered for consideration by the profession.

1. *Periodically reinforce the foundations of the profession.* Students change, institutions change, and so do advances in knowledge. The profession, through its professional associations, should periodically review the foundations of the profession and explicitly add additional building blocks as new knowledge and insights become available. In addition, all graduate education programs, regardless of emphasis, should focus on both student development and organizational theories. Failure to provide both theoretical perspectives to graduate students limits the knowledge that they need to work effectively within the larger context of higher education.

2. *Invest time on the foundations of the profession in staff development programs.* Often student affairs supervisors have assumed that there is a shared understanding of the foundations of the profession among their campus and professional colleagues. That is simply not the case. Staff members within a division of student affairs, as discussed elsewhere in this volume, come from a variety of academic and personal experience backgrounds. Discussion of the foundations of the profession helps develop understandings and support among

staff members, whose experiences and knowledge of theories are very diverse.

3. *Place an emphasis on ethics.* Professional associations, student affairs officers, and practitioners all need to place an emphasis on ethics in work and in their interactions with students, faculty, staff, parents, and colleagues. In a world where ethical behavior is sometimes not clear, it is more important than ever for student affairs professionals to be intentional about commitments to ethical behavior.

4. *Support and encourage graduate education programs that prepare student affairs practitioners.* Individual practitioners, as well as professional organizations, should find new and innovative ways to support graduate education programs related to student affairs. Many new professionals come to the field from this arena, and practice cannot be separated from the formal learning environment that such graduate students experience.

Consideration should be given to the creative development of joint degree programs between student affairs preparation programs and other academic programs, such as law, curriculum development, and business. In addition, the curriculum should reflect an emphasis on understanding the differences between and among different institutional types (community colleges, liberal arts institutions, small colleges, regional institutions, and comprehensive universities), with emphasis on the influence that institutional type can have on the development and implementation of student affairs programs and services.

Finally, skilled and knowledgeable practitioners should lend their expertise to graduate programs within their institution and in the surrounding area. Practitioners can help students who are grappling with new theoretical perspectives to translate theory into practice. Such collaborations can occur in formal teaching assignments or by providing support for internships, graduate assistantships, and other work opportunities for graduate students within the student affairs organization.

5. *Stop the arguments and test the theories.* At times, the debates in student affairs have focused on which set of theories or which philosophical statement best demonstrates a *specific point of view*. Assumptions are made, by some, that if persons find organizational theory useful and helpful in their work, they must not understand the value of developmental theory. Or if persons value developmental theory, they cannot understand the broader organizational context of higher education. Each set of theories should be tested and research encouraged on new perspectives in both developmental and organizational theories as they emerge. The theoretical foundations of student affairs focus both on students and on organizations. Both are valuable perspectives to practitioners.

Summary

We are a profession that now has the maturity to support multiple theoretical and professional practice approaches. The work of student affairs has expanded to include work with individual students, student groups, and the management of complex enterprises. Orthodoxy is not the answer! The informed and broadly prepared practitioner will be better equipped to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

In the future, student affairs will continue to grow and evolve. New perspectives and theories will emerge and inform professional practice. The foundation of the profession also will continue to be expanded.

