Critical Partnerships
Academic/Student Affairs

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In the beginning there was…
...the faculty who did everything that attended to student learning and personal development.

...World War II and the ascendancy of the research model changed all that.
And a new profession was born: Student Personnel/Student Affairs

And a new paradigm emerged that looked like this....
Faculty – attending to students’ intellectual development

Student Affairs – focusing on students’ social & emotional development

The results of this paradigm

- Bifurcation
- Out of sight/out of mind
- The residential student experience = an “auxiliary” enterprise
- Competition for resources
- Separate routes for graduate education preparation
The results of this paradigm

• Misunderstanding
• Mistrust
• Informal rather than formally integrated partnerships
• Second class citizenship for SA leads to drive for parity and understandable status concerns

The results of this paradigm

• Focus on territorial responsibilities
• Less focus on student success
• 1990-92 Recession—disproportionate cuts for SA
• 1994 Schroeder et al: “The Student Learning Imperative”
Fast Forward to the Present

The Present

• New student demographics
• Who is better prepared/inclined to work with these students?
• Hiring of professional staff now outpaces appointments of new faculty
• And proportion of full-time, tenure track/tenured faculty is decreasing
The Present

• Coupled with the academy’s obsession over costs and making money like other institutions in a capitalist society
• Plus greatly increased public policy pressure for degree completion
• Hence the “Completion Agenda”
• But are we asking “completion for what?”

Gives rise to the new focus on “student success” and some questions...
Student Success

• What does this mean?
• Whose responsibility is this?
• Is this a whole new profession? If so, where is it aligned? To whom does it report? What are its values? What is its training and pedagogies?
• Is this focus on student success influencing, shaping, redefining, the ways we organize our institutions to go about this work?

See the Gardner Institute blog, “A New Profession…?”
http://www.jngi.org/education-insights/a-new-profession/
While there are more things I am unsure about here than sure about, I am confident of the following:

- The new focus on “student success” requires an unprecedented amount of integration…and partnerships
- This is very threatening to some - and even more exciting to many...

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**Key Assumptions**

This broad definition of first-year student success is achievable only through partnerships.

- Academic Success/GPA
- Relationships
- Identity Development
- Career Decision Making
- Health & Wellness
- Faith & Spirituality
- Multicultural Awareness
- Civic Responsibility
- Retention – the baseline
Key Assumptions

• The greatest influence on new students is that of other students.
• Learning takes place anywhere there are students, faculty and staff members interacting.
• We are more likely to achieve student success through partnerships that integrate learning, both inside and outside the curriculum.
• The preeminent goal of partnerships is academic success.
Elements of Partnership

• A shared vision, jointly developed, for student success
• Shared resources – including personnel and money
• Joint reporting lines
• Functional integration; curricular/co-curricular integration
• A willingness to ask for and offer help
• A willingness to share responsibility, credit, and blame

Elements of Partnership

• A willingness to give up something you started when it needs to be institutionalized somewhere else
• Getting people to work together who ordinarily would not interact with each other
• A decided preference for collaboration over competition
Elements of Partnership

• Big picture thinking
• A capacity for organizational unselfishness
• A willingness to come together for what’s best for students, the institution, my unit, and others we serve
• A willingness to plant the seed and let others run with it (and even take credit)

Official, Formalized Components

• Formal agreements based on informal understandings
• A plan for public dissemination and assessment of partnership agreements
• A connection of the agreements to the institution’s mission statement and strategic plan
Practical Advantages of Partnerships

• More available resources – people and money
• Each unit gets the benefits of talents, skills, capacity and political support it wouldn’t have on its own
• Reduces or eliminates unnecessary duplication and waste of resources
• Is a model of best practice for illustration and emulation
• Teaches students by example
• Student success more likely to be the outcome