



# ENGAGEMENT WITH CAMPUS ACTIVITIES MATTERS: TOWARD A NEW ERA OF EDUCATIONALLY PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITIES

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AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES HAVE BEEN CONCERNED WITH THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE since their founding when *in loco parentis* was a *de facto* model of the student-institutional relationship. The nature of that relationship has changed over time but consistently demonstrated a concern and responsibility that colleges and universities had for the holistic student experience. This article will situate student affairs practice and campus activities in the evolution of higher education with an emphasis on how purposefully designing campus activities advance desirable learning and developmental outcomes for students.

## BUILDING ON HIGHER EDUCATION HISTORY

Since the founding of American higher education, students have found ways to organize themselves around their interests leading to a plethora of formal and informal organizations and experiences that include foci that are, for example, intellectual, social, recreational, cultural, political, humanitarian, and spiritual. Arminio (2015) notes one of the first such organizations was the Oxford Union, founded in 1823 to bring students together to debate the issues of the day. It eventually expanded to engage students in other interests including hobbies, literature, poetry, and various recreational activities (Arminio).

Soon, colleges began to address other student needs and interests including academic advising, personal counseling, mental health, physical health, orientation to the college experience, financing college, housing, self-governance, sports and recreation, and career planning and job seeking. Colleges also identified institutional needs to organize how they admitted students, held students accountable (i.e., conduct), and established necessary processes such as how students registered for courses. More recently colleges began addressing the intersectional complexity of students' identity (e.g., their race, nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, first generation, SES, religion), their alignment within the university (e.g., class year, academic major, enrollment status such as being part-time, commuter, distance learner, student employee), and their salient campus group identity (e.g., student-athletes, veterans, members of Greek-letter or cultural groups). Awareness of these intersections is essential to focus programs and other interventions to truly meet students' needs and address their distinct issues. This sensitivity is growing in the United States culture and is evident when seeking to understand international perspectives in post-secondary education and civic relationships as well.

As these complexities developed at the end of the 19th century, some faculty assumed roles as deans and admin-

istrators of various functions addressing critical needs. It is important to note that faculty have always been concerned with the student experience (Schetlin, 1969). Over 100 years ago, campuses began hiring additional staff to serve as educators and administrators of the out-of-classroom experience for students. These staff organized their work to benefit students and their institutions and various specialties in student affairs began to emerge. One of those professional focus areas that emerged has addressed students and their organizations and activities; the professionals in that field later organized as the National Association for Campus Activities (NACA) in 1960.

It is beyond the scope of this article to address the development of the broad student affairs field in detail, which includes foundational guiding documents like the 1937 Student Personnel Point of View (American Council on Education, 1937). Still, it is important to note the evolution of the out-of-classroom experience or the extra-curriculum that became the co-curriculum functioning in unity with the academic curriculum to address designated college outcomes.

## CAMPUS ACTIVITIES IN THE RECENT HISTORICAL CONTEXT

NACA has reshaped student activities work dramatically in the last fifty years. During this period, professional leaders realized that their work benefitted the whole campus and that faculty and staff members, alumni, and the community were often participants in campus events and programs. The focus of this reframing led to the naming of their work as *campus* (as broader than *student*) activities, signaling the broader mission.

Building on such essential functions as programming, contracting major events and being experts in entertainment, NACA leaders in the 1970s substantially raised expectations of activities advisors and activities staff toward higher levels of professionalism. In the context of the times, Chickering (1969) published his psychosocial developmental vectors; the holistic wellness model was promoted by the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point (Hettler, 1976) and became widely adopted; the promotion of intentional uses of student development theory stimulated intentional practices (Knfelkamp, Widick, & Parker, 1978; Miller & Prince, 1976); the advancement of a coordinated curriculum (Brown, 1972); and NACA and her sister association the Association of College Unions International (ACUI) reframed the nature and purpose of campus activities and programs. For example, in 1973, NACA leaders Kathy Allen and Margi Healy added a professional development track to their regional ACUI and NACA conference. They worked with others toward the eventual publication of the NACA guide to professional development, *Future perfect: A guide for professional development and competence* (Allen, Jillian, Stern, Walborn, & Blackstone, 1987) that promoted staff competencies to support a developmental curriculum for students engaged in activities experiences.

## CONTEMPORARY MISSION AND ROLE OF CAMPUS ACTIVITIES

Campus activities play a pivotal role in today's campuses in creating campus community and educating students through diverse co-curricular programming. The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) was co-founded by NACA in 1979 and NACA has been an active associational member ever since. Organized to create and advance standards and the self-assessment of programs impact on student learning and development, CAS currently is comprised of 41 higher education associations with 44 individual standards of practice approved by CAS Board representatives of all member associations. The CAS standard on Campus Activities Programs (CAP) identifies that the CAP purpose:

*... must be to enhance the overall educational experience of students through development of, exposure to, and participation in programs and activities that improve student cooperation and leadership while preparing students to be responsible advocates and citizens and complementing the institution's academic program. (CAS, 2015, p. 87)*

The CAS standard goes on to assert that:

CAP must provide opportunities for students to:

- participate in co-curricular activities;
- participate in campus governance;

- advocate for their organizations and interests;
- develop leadership abilities;
- develop healthy interpersonal relationships;
- use leisure time purposefully;
- develop ethical decision-making skills; and
- advocate for student organizations and interests (p. 87).

Typically in partnership with NACA, college unions frequently house campus activities offices and provide a venue for many of the activities promoted by campus activities staff and student groups. In *The Role of College Union*, ACUI notes the union is “a student-centered organization that values participatory decision making. Through volunteerism, its boards, committees, and its student employment, the union offers firsthand experience in citizenship and educates students in leadership, social responsibility, and values” (ACUI, 2014, para. 2). Fulfilling the purpose of campus activities requires both intentional design of programs and a physical space that can facilitate the learning – the union is often that space and a partner in campus programming.

### **Defining Engagement**

Campus activities units value student involvement and engagement. Campuses have long sought increased student participation in campus activities and leadership opportunities necessitating students invest time and energy in these areas. Increased participation matters as research consistently shows that involved students have long been known to achieve higher grades and persist at higher rates.

Scholar George Kuh (2009) advanced a definition of “engagement” as the time and effort students “devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities (Kuh, 2001, 2003, 2000)” (p. 683). Such a perspective mandates the active role of the campus in designing educationally purposeful activities and reaching out to students to ensure their meaningful involvement to the mutual benefit of the student and the campus community. Quayle and Harper (2014) caution that one can be involved but not engaged. Engaged students expect a return on their investment of time and effort leading them to accomplish the goals of those purposeful activities more successfully. As a beneficial result, engaged students often possess a stronger sense of belonging to their campus.

### **Scope of Activities**

The scope of specific activities varies by institutional type, size, and location. A rural faith-based institution would have different activities than would an urban community college or a doctoral-granting research university. Smaller campuses may have a surprisingly broad array of activities often coordinated by very few professional staff. A rural institution may have to provide comparable opportunities for involvement on campus with limited community resources, while an urban institution may offer fewer big events since their students can already attend large-venue opportunities in the cities in which they are located. The 2015 CAS standard notes a taxonomy of activities that exist to some degree or other based on institutional characteristics. For example, these activities include major speakers, cultural events, clubs and organizations, leadership programs, service learning, and campus media.

## **STUDENT DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES WITHIN CAMPUS ACTIVITIES**

In the 1990s and first decade of the 21st century, campus activities staff continued the earlier emphasis on student learning and developmental outcomes delineated by many professional associations and educators. During this period, general college outcomes were advanced by the American Association of Colleges & Universities, CAS, the inter-association project of NASPA and ACPA that produced *Learning Reconsidered* (2004), NACA, the National Association of College Employers (NACE), and most disciplinary based accrediting associations. An overview of these outcomes noted below shows the remarkable convergence on what is expected for student learning and development.

### **CAS Outcomes**

CAS asserts that the purposeful educational mission of campus activities should address institutional learning

and developmental goals, CAS learning and developmental outcomes, and contribute to the campus community while creating a sense of belonging for community members particularly students. The taxonomy of CAS learning and developmental outcomes was informed by the work of *Learning Reconsidered* (NASPA & ACPA, 2004). Built on the research of numerous scholars, this set of outcomes includes six domains and makes it clear that these outcomes are developed both through curricular experiences (e.g., classroom projects, labs) as well as co-curricular experiences (e.g., student media, peer leadership roles, service learning). Table 1 summarizes the CAS learning outcomes and includes sample campus-wide experiences associated with them noted within the original *Learning Reconsidered* document.

Table 1. *Overview of General Student Learning and Developmental Outcomes.\* Integrating CAS Outcomes and Learning Reconsidered (2004)*

Student Outcome Domain	Dimensions of Outcome Domains	Brief Examples of Learning and Development Outcomes	Sample Developmental Experiences for Learning and Development**
<b>Knowledge acquisition, construction, integration, and application</b>	Understanding knowledge from a range of disciplines; Connecting knowledge to other knowledge, ideas, and experiences; Constructing knowledge; Relating knowledge to daily life.	Possesses knowledge of human cultures and the physical world; possesses knowledge of one or more subjects. Uses experience and other sources of information to create new insights. Recognizes one's own capacity to create new understandings from learning activities and dialogue with others. Makes connections between classroom and out-of-classroom learning. Provides evidence of knowledge, skills, and accomplishments resulting from formal education, work experience, community service, and volunteer experiences, for example in resumes and portfolios.	Majors, minors, general education requirements, certificate programs; laboratories; action research; research teams; service learning; group projects; internships; jobs (on/ off campus); career development courses and programs; living-learning communities; Web-based information search skills; activities programming boards (e.g. film, concerts); drama, arts, and music groups; literary magazines; special teams and activities (e.g. solar car, Model UN, Innovation Lab).
<b>Cognitive complexity</b>	Critical thinking; Reflective thinking; Effective reasoning; Creativity.	Identifies important problems, questions, and issues; assesses assumptions and considers alternative perspectives and solutions. Uses complex information from a variety of sources including personal experience and observation to form a decision or opinion; rethinks previous assumptions.	Classroom teaching, readings, and discussions; campus speakers; problem-based learning; action research; study abroad; learning communities; living-learning communities; campus newspaper and media; cultural advocacy groups; LGBT awareness programs; diversity programs; group work in diverse teams; judicial board involvement.
<b>Intrapersonal development</b>	Realistic self-appraisal, self-understanding, and self-respect; Identity development; Commitment to ethics and integrity; Spiritual awareness.	Assesses, articulates, and acknowledges personal skills, abilities, and growth areas; articulates rationale for personal behavior; seeks and considers feedback from others; critiques and subsequently learns from past experiences; recognizes and exhibits interdependence by environmental, cultural, and personal values; Incorporates ethical reasoning into action; exemplifies dependability, honesty, and trustworthiness; critiques, compares, and contrasts various belief systems; explores issues of purpose, meaning, and faith.	Identity-based affinity groups; personal counseling; academic/life planning; roommate dialogues; individual advising; support groups; peer mentor programs; religious life programs and youth groups; student-led judicial boards; paraprofessional roles (e.g., resident assistants, peer tutors, sexual assault advisors, peer mentor programs); disability support services; student employment; classroom project groups; classroom discussions; religious youth groups; service learning.
<b>Interpersonal competence</b>	Meaningful relationships; Interdependence; Collaboration; Effective leadership.	Establishes healthy, mutually beneficial relationships with others; treats others with respect; Seeks help from others when needed and offers assistance to others; shares a group or organizational goal and works with others to achieve it; Works cooperatively with others, including people different from self and/or with different points of view; seeks and values the involvement of others; Demonstrates skill in guiding and assisting a group, organization, or community in meeting its goals.	Identity based affinity groups; roommate dialogues; support groups; peer mentor programs; student led judicial boards; paraprofessional roles (e.g. resident assistants, peer tutors, sexual assault advisors, peer mentor programs); disability support services; student employment; classroom project groups; classroom discussions.

<b>Humanitarianism and Civic Engagement</b>	Understanding and appreciation of cultural and human differences; Global perspective; Social responsibility; Sense of civic responsibility.	Understands one's own identity and culture; seeks involvement with people different from oneself; identifies systematic barriers to equality and inclusiveness, then advocates and justifies means for dismantling them; Understands and analyzes the interconnectedness of societies worldwide; Recognizes social systems and their influence on people; appropriately challenges the unfair, unjust, or uncivil behavior of other individuals or groups; Demonstrates consideration of the welfare of others in decision-making; engages in critical reflection and principled dissent.	Engages with diverse membership of student organizations; inter-group dialogue programs; service learning; community-based learning; cultural festivals; identity group programming (e.g., LGBT); ally programs; programs on world religions; study abroad; interdisciplinary courses; curriculum transformation; Various student governance groups like student government/ resident hall government/ commuter student assoc.; sports teams; community-based organizations (e.g., PTA, neighborhood coalitions); emerging leader programs; leadership courses; open forums; teach-ins; activism and protest; community standards codes; involvement in academic department/ major; identity with campus community.
<b>Practical competence</b>	Pursuing goals; Communicating effectively; Technological competence; Managing personal affairs; Managing career development; Demonstrating professionalism; Maintaining health and wellness; Living a purposeful and satisfying life.	Articulates and makes plans to achieve long-term goals and objectives; Conveys meaning in a way that others understand by writing and speaking coherently and effectively; listens attentively to others and responds appropriately; Demonstrates technological literacy and skills; Exhibits self-reliant behaviors; manages time effectively; Recognizes the importance of transferrable skill; Accepts supervision and direction as needed; Engages in behaviors and contributes to environments that promote health and reduce risk; Acts in congruence with personal identity, ethical, spiritual, and moral values.	Campus recreation programs; food service and health center programs; drug and alcohol education; career development courses and programs; financial planning programs; club sports and recreation programs; senior council transition programs; personal counseling; academic/ personal advising; portfolios; senior capstone course.

\*This Council for the Advancement of Standards document is an adaptation of *Learning Reconsidered* (2004) and the CAS Student Learning and Developmental Outcomes, and Kuh, Douglas, Lund, & Ramin Gyurmek (1994); George Mason University Critical Thinking Assessment Report (2006). The reader should note the domain column was shortened substantially for this table.

\*\* Adapted from *Learning Reconsidered* (2004).

### National Association for Campus Activities Outcomes

In 2009, NACA adopted a taxonomy of core competencies for student leadership outcomes to be developed through purposeful engagement in campus activities, notably student organizations. The document identified suggested initiatives and evidence of achievement for each of these ten core competencies.

- Leadership Development
- Assessment and Evaluation
- Event Management
- Meaningful Interpersonal Relationships
- Collaboration
- Social Responsibility
- Effective Communication
- Multicultural Competency
- Intellectual Growth
- Clarified Values

Most recently NACA (2017) has adopted a set of competencies that intend to achieve the association's core value of inclusivity through knowledge and practice, culture, engagement and composition, and advocacy and social justice.

### **National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Career Readiness Outcomes**

Colleges and employers are concerned that graduates leave college ready to assume meaningful roles in careers and society. NACE (2016) defined career readiness as, “the attainment and demonstration of requisite competencies that broadly prepare college graduates for a successful transition into the workplace.” A NACE study of employers (2016) identified eight student competencies for employment:

- Critical Thinking / Problem Solving
- Oral / Written Communications
- Teamwork / Collaboration
- Digital Technology
- Leadership
- Professionalism / Work Ethic
- Career Management
- Global/Intercultural Fluency

The congruence of these employer goals with those of CAS is encouraging and suggests the connections between productive student development goals and attaining effective career outcomes.

### **Disciplinary-Based Accrediting Associations**

Professional associations exist for every degree-granting discipline in higher education. Co-curricular experiences in campus activities directly support the outcomes desired by those who accredit many campus academic majors. Many of these associations assert learning and developmental outcomes for students engaged in these majors. Seemiller and Murray’s (2013; see also Seemiller, 2013) study of the competencies for student learning in these associations identified eight clusters of competencies that directly support campus activities outcomes, including leadership outcomes. These clusters and sample competencies include:

- Learning and Reasoning
- Self-awareness and Development
- Interpersonal Interaction
- Group Dynamics
- Communication
- Civic Responsibility
- Strategic Planning
- Personal behavior

### **A Personal Reflection**

Researching and writing this article vividly reminded me that I personally benefitted from the perspectives my sorority and campus activities educators shared with me during my undergraduate years fifty years ago at Florida State University – namely that the skills I was learning and practicing in my co-curricular experiences were applicable in my future, particularly regarding my professional success. After serving as a graduate assistant in residence life in my master’s program, I initially sought full-time positions in that area. I accepted an entry-level hall director position at the University of Tennessee and was called a few weeks later to see if I would be interested in applying for the newly created Area Coordinator position. When I interviewed for the Area Coordinator position, one of the interviewers noted, “We see that you have not held a full-time position nor supervised other professional staff; why do you think you can handle this position?” I loved that question and said “I have several related experiences I want to share. Please let me start with the experience of being a rush chair for my sorority when over 2,000 first-year women went through the rush process in a week. I had to lead my chapter in everything from our skirts, the budget, and the complexities of member selection ....” I got the job. That college experience was clearly foundational to my belief that I could be successful in this new position. Our goals in campus activities should be that any engaged student would feel the same and know how to articulate their experience.

## **WHAT CAMPUS ACTIVITIES EXPERIENCES MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

Experiences that promote a growth-producing impact have been labeled “high-impact practices” (HIPs; Kuh,

2008). Kuh's (2008) research shows that HIPs commonly share the following elements:

- Significant time and effort allocation
- Meaningful interactions with faculty and peers
- Exposure to different others and different viewpoints
- Frequent feedback
- Opportunities to reflect on learning
- Application of learning to real-world contexts
- Demonstration of competence
- High expectations

These pedagogical elements can inform campus activities educators on the intentional design of involvement opportunities to accomplish desired outcomes.

Examples of HIPs identified in the National Study of Student Engagement (NSSE) research include writing intensive courses, diversity experiences, learning communities, study abroad, community service, and first-year seminars (Kuh, 2008). While the HIP's identified by Kuh are primarily within academic based experiences and hybrid programs, research has found that these characteristics are present in a number of leadership based activities and through the engagement offered through campus activities. Student experiences identified in the Multi-institutional Study of Leadership as high-impact including holding positional leadership roles, participating in community service, engaging in socio-cultural issues discussions with others, involvement off-campus, and receiving mentoring that contributes to leadership self-efficacy and leadership capacity (Dugan, Kodama, & Correia, 2012; Dugan & Komives, 2010; see leadershipstudy.net).

### **Campus Activities Matter**

The tremendous learning experiences available through engagement with activities, clubs and organizations, and student government have long served as key opportunity points in support of the growing emphasis on student college outcomes (see Table 1). For example, research conducted almost 50 years ago affirmed that engagement with campus activities contributed to future career and leadership success (see AT&T study; Bray, Campbell, & Grant, 1974).

### **College Environments**

Researchers in the late 1980s (e.g., Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 1991) became interested in the characteristics of colleges that were known for highly engaging their students, and by extension, contributing to their growth and development in holistic ways both inside and outside the classroom. This seminal national study identified five critical characteristics of "involving" colleges:

- A clear, coherent mission and philosophy;
- Campus environments with human-scale attributes that use their location to educational advantage;
- Campus cultures that value student involvement;
- Policies and practices consistent with the institution's mission and students' characteristics; and
- Institutional agents who acknowledge the contribution of learning outside the classroom to achieving the institution's educational purposes.

Subsequently, NSSE (Kuh, 2008) findings affirm that from the perspective of student experiences, more variation exists within an institution than between types of institutions. Campus activities provide rich experiential opportunities for student learning and development *if* students take advantage of them and get involved.

College involvement has benefits that can be measured in alumni. For example, according to the Gallup-Purdue inaugural post-college alumni report (2014) on employee engagement at work, graduates are 1.8 times more likely to be engaged if they were heavily involved in extra-curricular activities in college.

Findings like these illuminate the learning and developmental outcomes colleges and their programs have long claimed to develop in their students (e.g., *Student Learning Imperative*; ACPA, 1996). As the student learning outcomes emphasis grew in the 1990s, campus activities provided venues that contributed to campus climate,

sense of belonging, and the development of specific learning outcomes particularly for those students involved in leadership roles.

### A Plethora of Research Findings

The assessment movement in higher education and research in the 1990s and 2000s demonstrated specific ways of engaging students in campus activities that contributed to desired learning outcomes. Phenomenal compilations of this research have been chronicled in the three volumes of *How College Affects Students* (e.g., Mayhew et al., 2016; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The most recent edition affirms that establishing a *normative culture* of engagement (i.e., where high expectations and structures exist for a depth of student engagement) in campus activities matters:

*Environments that promoted persistence and degree completion among all students were those in which: (1) students felt that faculty and the broader institution cared about them and their well-being, (2) having on-campus friendships and attending campus activities were normative, (3) graduation and graduate school attendance rates were high, and (4) racial discrimination and prejudice on campus were infrequent. (Mayhew et al., 2016, p. 540)*

Mayhew and colleagues (2016) recent review of 21st-century research on college students highlighted key findings related to campus activities observing that not all experiences make a positive impact; some experiences can even have negative outcomes. The findings presented in Table 2 largely affirm the positive developmental impact of the co-curriculum through campus activities engagement.

Table 2: Select Recent Research Findings on Campus Activities\*

Area of Engagement	Summary of Findings
<b>Athletics</b>	In general, participation in intercollegiate athletics was negatively associated with learning and cognitive development. However, athletes also fared better than non-athletes on several outcomes, including degree completion, civic values, community orientation, social self-confidence, and interpersonal skills. (p. 555)
<b>Community Service</b>	Community service participation ... appears to contribute to student outcomes, including increases in various domains of religion/spirituality, leadership capacity, civic/community values, and orientation toward female-dominated careers; the evidence is less clear for political engagement and social justice learning. (p. 556)
<b>Events Attendance</b>	...[C]ultural event attendance predicts increased understanding of arts and humanities. (p. 556)
<b>Fraternity or Sorority Membership</b>	The strongest conclusions were that fraternity or sorority membership negatively affected racial/ethnic attitudes and openness to diverse ideas and people. In contrast, affiliation was positively related to students' development of interpersonal skills, community orientation, and commitment to civic engagement. Other findings varied over time- the negative effects on knowledge acquisition and critical thinking seemed to dissipate after the first year, and the greater engagement in binge drinking disappeared after college graduation. (p. 555)
<b>Interpersonal Diversity Engagement</b>	[T]he most impressive and consistent findings for any form of interpersonal involvement occur for interpersonal diversity including those in general education knowledge, academic competence, intellectual ability, cognition, racial identity and consciousness, religious/spiritual identity, positive masculinities, leadership capacity, self-authorship, well-being, personal/social development, civic and political attitudes, gender-role progressivism, LGB attitudes, artistic orientation, ecumenical worldview, and need for cognition (with mixed findings for career development). ... This list of positive findings is more impressive than that for general peer interactions, which suggests that the benefits of diversity experiences extend beyond simply those associated with peer engagement. (p. 553)
<b>Leadership Training</b>	Leadership training appears to succeed in promoting leadership capacity and civic values... (p. 556). [T]he more students engage diversity, the better prepared they are as leaders. (p. 209). Institutional effects on leadership identity and skills, as well as proclivities for socially responsible leadership, are generally trivial in comparison to within-college effects [Dugan, Kodama, & Gebhardt, 2012; Dugan & Komives, 2010]. (p. 189)
<b>Peer Interactions</b>	... [O]verall peer interactions (regardless of with whom these interactions occur) ... are positively related to general learning, cognition, racial identity, intellectual/academic self-concept, autonomy well-being, moral development, retention/graduation, and expected career outcomes (with equivocal findings for the need for cognition). (p. 553)
<b>Religious and spiritual engagement</b>	Religious and spiritual engagement is associated with increased well-being and civic outcomes, and spiritual development may lead to higher grades, degree aspirations, leadership, and self-esteem. These forms of engagement are also positively related to gender-role traditionalism and religious/social conservatism. (p. 555-556)
<b>Student Employment</b>	Employment had a clear nonlinear effect on educational attainment, such that working more than 15 to 20 hours a week was associated with a greater likelihood of attrition. ... working a small number of hours or doing so on campus was positively related to persistence and completion. (p. 555). Employment is positively related to autonomy, citizenship, moral formation, and post-college earnings. (p. 556)



<b>Student Government and Activism</b>	...[P]articipating in organized demonstrations and student government ... support the development of civic values (e.g., influencing the political structure, influencing social values helping others who are in difficulty, becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment, developing a meaningful philosophy of life, participating in a community action program, helping to promote racial understanding). Student government effects are small compared to the strong impact of participating in protests (Rhee & Kim, 2011) (p. 279).
<b>Student Organizations</b>	Overall engagement in student organizations is positively associated with retention/graduation and the development of leadership skills, intellectual and academic self-concept, and positive masculinities (although the evidence for cognitive outcomes is mixed). Participation in ethnic student organizations specifically contributes to some of these same outcomes as well as racial identity development (p. 555).

\* All findings are direct quotes from: Mayhew, et al., (2016). *How college affects students: 21st-century evidence that higher education works* (Vol. 3). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

## PREPARED CAMPUS ACTIVITIES EDUCATORS

Especially since the publication of *Future Perfect* (Allen, et al., 1987) and continuing through the complexity of today's times, campus activities professionals must meet substantial expectations for their professional work. Since 2007, NACA has assisted professionals in planning their development by providing a comprehensive statement of 46 competencies organized into three primary categories: general knowledge and skills, interactive competencies, and self-mastery (See <https://www.naca.org/Resources/Pages/CampusActivitiesProfessionals.aspx>).

When I was a senior student affairs officer, I expected professionals in each functional area to be experts in the domain of their learning and developmental environment for students. I expected campus activities educators to be campus experts in: (1) building and sustaining a socially just community, (2) creating a climate of inclusive engagement and belonging, (3) advancing leadership and followership capacities in students, (4) assessing the role of engagement in outcomes, (5) scaffolding learning experiences over a four year cycle, and (6) administering ethical and quality project management functions. Today's educators also need to be scholar-practitioners who inform their practice by related theory, models of practice, and research to best accomplish the learning and developmental outcomes that are desired by their campus, division of student affairs, and campus activities office.

## CALL TO ACTION

The launch of *The Journal of Campus Activities Practice and Scholarship* (JCAPS) is an important development to further the professionalism of campus activities and to student affairs practice. As a scholarly outlet for critical research, JCAPS will bring timely inquiry into the focused awareness of activities professionals and lead to enhanced, intentional educational practice. The following calls to action may advance these objectives.

### **NACA Research Agenda**

Essential to the success of this journal is that professionals in the field engage in original research on topics of importance to the field. It is laudable that the NACA Foundation supports Advancing Research through Campus Activities Grants. NACA can further promote this momentum with the identification of a research agenda that targets key and compelling questions that need to be addressed in the field.

### **Mentoring through the JCAPS Submission Process**

I have been pleased to see the JCAPS editorial board members construct processes that will serve in mentoring professionals for effective writing that leads to successful publishing. We need more scholarship in the field of campus activities, and I encourage NACA to provide support (e.g., financial, conference program slots, webinars, podcasts) to advance research and publishing.

### **Honor Outstanding Research**

NACA awards should be expanded to honor and acknowledge outstanding research, including outstanding dissertation recognition to further support the importance of research to the association.

## Address Underserved Populations

Campus activities professionals are truly engaging all students in educationally purposeful activities. Such engagement requires revisiting comprehensive aspects of current programs to determine which students may not benefit in ways they could and are therefore underserved populations. Activities professionals need to conduct more scholarship and better connect practices regarding these groups to that scholarship. Particular attention needs to be devoted to:

- *Online learners:* All groups of students learn online, and for some, it is their only mode of connection to the college. They must not be overlooked. Reaching them may be enhanced perhaps through podcasts, live streaming of campus programs, creating on-line organizations, and facilitating how campus-based groups can engage on-line members either in the short term like when studying abroad or on an internship or long-term as a new category of membership. For example, the University of Arizona wisely moved online and distance education into the division of student affairs as a way to ensure this happens.
- *Adult learners:* Campuses have long known they have many adult students, including graduate students, but too often continue to act (and program) as if all students are traditional age undergraduates living on campus. Activities professionals must not only make programs accessible to adults and commuter students but must address adult developmental needs through programming such as on issues of succeeding at work, planning for retirement, their children's development such as raising teenagers and managing adult parents. Developmental needs of adult learners must be addressed.
- *All students' social identities:* In the last 30 years colleges have become exceptionally supportive of needs/issues based on students' social identities and the intersections among those identities. However, there are issues of equity and parity in attending to these needs and many students whose identities are not addressed effectively in many places, such as trans\*students, international students, conservative students as well as movements that demand attention by campus activities educators such as those presented in #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter. It will be a continuing need and challenge to research and educate the campus around these issues and needs and others as they emerge in the US societal context.

## Contemporary Challenges

Activities educators have long had to address such challenges as free speech, large group behavior, and issues presented by institutional size and location. Related contemporary challenges include addressing hazing, promoting cultural appreciation, balancing the potentially competing needs for free speech and culturally inclusive environments, and providing responsive support for an increasingly diverse student population. Campus activities educators also possess opportunities and challenges in forming meaningful academic partnerships. Potential opportunity points include co-curricular programs such as entrepreneurialism and innovation labs, academic clubs, and academic honor societies. Activities educators are also increasingly asked for assistance and support when other campus units look to expand their offerings in specialty areas, such as leadership development in recreation programs.

## CONCLUSION

The title of NACA's historic document, *Future Perfect* (Allen et al., 1987), is still a timely one at this point in NACA's history, especially in the context of the founding of JCAPS. Although perfection will never be reached, the quest to be professionals striving for more effective practice to benefit *all* students and our institutions is the right thing to do. Advancing research and engaging in evidence-based practice broadens the pathway toward that more perfect future.

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