

Student Affairs at Duke University: A Strategic Plan

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Revised Summer 2009

The future for Student Affairs at Duke is bright, challenging and varied. Our efforts over the past few years have positioned the Division to be critically engaged in all aspects of students' lives and to collaborate with students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents and many others in the delivery of key services and support to students and other key stakeholders. We are organizationally and fiscally sound, comprised of intelligent and caring leaders and practitioners and well regarded among colleagues and constituents.

Simply stated, our mission remains **to support the optimal growth and development of our students and to provide services and support that will enhance their intellectual, social, cultural and physical development.** In reality, however, our mission is much more complex than that. An oft-used phrase to depict work such as ours is that we 'comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable'. We do the former by caring for the ill, demanding accountability for behaviors and offering advising and mentorship. The latter half of this statement – to disturb the comfortable - represents the more subtle and, perhaps, challenging part of our work and requires that we, in partnership with faculty and others, encourage students to reflect on and establish passions, ambitions and goals.

Our mission is also guided by the values we express in word and deed:

- Students are whom we educate and serve and our achievements, both as teachers and administrators, is expressed as a function of their achievements as learners and consumers.
- Student Affairs is best defined as an integrating organization that works best when it 'connects the dots' among the variety of services and functions that make up the University. We prefer collaboration to isolation.
- We promote an ethical and compassionate view of the world and thus, act with and teach honor and empathy.
- We acknowledge the diversity of identities and means that are represented by our community and seek to support and bridge these distinctions. We aspire to see privileges more equally distributed.
- We are committed to the wellbeing of students, faculty and staff and promote healthy work habits, transparency and reasonableness in performance expectations and freedom of opinion and expression.

We will face numerous challenges in the coming years, some relatively predictable and others quite unexpected. This, too, serves as a hallmark of our work – maintaining the

flexibility to adjust and adapt as needed and sustaining the pride and pleasure we take from our achievements despite shifting landscapes and environments.

As we go forward in the coming months and years, we must be mindful of several important principles. The first is that **each member of the Student Affairs staff is valued and valuable**. We have much to learn from each other and whether new or 'seasoned', every member of the Student Affairs team has an important role to play. Second, **we are obligated to act with integrity and with ethical conviction**. Our behaviors speak louder than our words and students will be quick to model our best behavior, but quicker to model our worst. Third, **we require inspiring reward and acknowledgement systems, clear expectations and effective communications**. A fourth principle is that **we are more effective in collaboration with others than we are as a collective of individuals**. That there are individual obligations and opportunities is undeniable, but more often than not, we are most effective when we work in concert with others. Fifth, **organizational structure is an administrative convenience and not an inalterable feature**. We are most productive when people and units are interdependent, when organizational boundaries are permeable and when collaboration crosses these boundaries. Sixth, **we require assessment and evaluation methods and processes that will validate learning outcomes and programmatic effectiveness in meeting our goals**. Finally, we must recognize **that change is inevitable and when accommodated, invigorating and productive**.

The primary guiding instrument for our work is "Making a Difference", Duke's new strategic plan. As President Brodhead notes in his introduction to the plan:

"While Duke will continue to embrace the essential aspects of specialized research, teaching and learning, the university will build on its special strengths in collaboration and connection of knowledge to real-world problems. More than ever, we will prepare students to approach issues with creativity, flexibility and a curious mind. Engagement across lines of race, ethnicity, religion and national culture will become more important as training for an increasingly interconnected world."

This plan expresses Duke's commitment to a form of education that emphasizes real world application of knowledge, promotion of confidence and inquisitiveness and a global perspective among our students. These values should guide our work for the future and will be the basis for the development of measure of success of our departmental and divisional efforts. In particular, "Chapter 4 - Academic Goals and Strategies to Build Distinction", will guide much of our work with particular focus on Goal 2: Strengthen the Engagement of the University in Real World Issues, Goal 4: Foster in Undergraduate Students a Passion for Learning and a Commitment to Making a Difference in the World, and Goal 5: Transform the Arts at Duke. Improvements to our facilities will be substantially influenced by "Chapter 5 - Transforming the Campus: Central, West, and East."

The University's Strategic Plan notes in particular four broad goals for undergraduate education that will frame our particular contribution to student life. They are to:

- Establish inquiry-based and interdisciplinary learning as the distinctive signature of undergraduate education at Duke University
- Use our developmental model as a method for integrating and evaluating curricular and co-curricular initiatives
- Create increased opportunities for experiential learning and civic engagement
- Develop programs to improve campus culture

It is expected that each member of the Student Affairs staff will be familiar with these goals and with the educational objectives they represent.

We are indebted to our Strategic Plan Thematic Analysis (SPTA) team for conveying the following principles in their recent work and for identifying themes relevant to our work for the coming year. In summer 2008, the Senior Leadership group of Student Affairs met at retreat to review the SPTA report and we agreed that the report captured well the strengths of our Division as well as the challenges before us. We are further indebted to the Division Strategic Learning Outcomes (DSLLO) group that completed its work in spring 2009. Their recommendations were endorsed by the Senior Leadership group of Student Affairs in July 2009. What follows below, then, is the sense of the work ahead for Student Affairs at Duke University.

The SPTA report offered five goals that we have adopted as our roadmap for the foreseeable future. The DSLLO report identified learning outcomes for each goal. These learning outcomes provide direction for the Division's assessment plan.

Student Affairs Strategic Goals and Learning Outcomes

1. *Facilitate the translation of learning.*

It is particularly appropriate that this theme be noted first. Learning, both formal and informal, represents the fundamental purpose for Duke students and our role in Student Affairs is to support all forms of learning. At the undergraduate level, we can anticipate more opportunity for and expectation of partnerships with the Dean of Undergraduate Education and colleagues in Trinity College, the Pratt School, the Nicholas School and other academic programs. Similarly, we should anticipate and embrace growing expectations and needs from graduate and professional students. Thus, it will be essential that we forge alliances with faculty, academic departments and interdisciplinary centers to support and complement their efforts. The residence halls, student organizations, cultural communities, internships and more all provide critical opportunities for practice of and reflection on classroom instruction.

Learning outcomes for this goal are:

- Students exhibit connection and application of knowledge developed across classroom, co-curricular, residential and other learning environments.
- Students demonstrate integration of academic, social, cultural and personal developmental progress through increasingly autonomous navigation of Duke University.

Specific objectives for the Division include:

- a) Align our programs and services to optimize Duke's educational goals as articulated in the University's strategic plan, "Making a Difference".
- b) Increase our communications and partnerships with faculty, academic departments, interdisciplinary centers, deans and schools.
- c) In particular, collaborate with the academic community to provide seamless models of advising and mentoring including academic, personal and career guidance. Take advantage of the residences where appropriate to deliver advising and mentorship support.
- d) Support the alignment of the residential experiences to optimize students' formal and informal learning.

2. Shape and sustain inclusive and supportive communities committed to each individual's sense of belonging.

We support both individual and community development and often we find these two needs in conflict with each other. In the foreseeable future, we will experience a somewhat different Duke, especially at the undergraduate level. We are already seeing record numbers of minority and international students. The pluralism of the student body is reflected by the numbers of men and women we admit, by the presence of lesbian gay, bisexual and transgendered students. We have remarkable religious diversity and have both the challenges and opportunities associated with worldwide religious difference. We have legacy structures that distribute privilege in an uneven way and we have communities struggling to be recognized as legitimate. Our task will be to help develop a community of communities, each comprised of individuals with multiple identities and interests, even as we promote the "Big D", comprehensive, Duke student identity.

Learning outcomes for this goal are:

- Students seek and engage in at least one deep friendship or group experience that has a sustained impact on the student's understanding of their own identity and their connectedness to others.
- Students learn and practice knowledge, attitudes, and skills that reflect an expanded understanding of culture and its influences.

Specific objectives for the Division include:

- a) Review the roles and functions of our identity-based efforts and the development of models of intervention, support and engagement that reflect the evolving demographics of our campus and the need for both inter and intra-group support and activities.

- b) Strengthen our partnerships with the various religious communities at Duke, their ministries as well as with the Chapel and its interfaith efforts.
- c) Expand our focus on Duke's globalization agenda by enhancing support for international students, expanding efforts to educate US students about international issues and cultures and creating opportunities for international and domestic students to interact.
- d) Ensure that no opportunities are limited by socio-economic difference.

3. Cultivate ethical and engaged citizens dedicated to serving their local and global communities.

Every decision made is framed as an expression of our ethical perspective and so it is for our students as well. As we engage with students, it is increasingly important that our values be evident and that we teach respect, honesty and compassion as core expressions of the values we hope to instill in our students. Our efforts must offer students opportunities to reflect on the consequences of their decisions and outcomes of their actions.

We write and read these words even as global strife and warfare appears to be at its worst. If ever we need to graduate young men and woman committed to the welfare of local, national and global interests, the need is now. Our efforts in the foreseeable future must contribute to the development of graduates globally focused, locally engaged, competent and committed to the sustenance of our world. Our opportunities will include the environmental, political and spiritual arenas and we will require fundamentally new approaches to fostering the stewardship values of our students.

Learning outcomes for this goal are:

- Students display heightened social responsibility and move towards active citizenship.
- Students integrate an ethical perspective into their personal decision-making process.
- Students use a comprehensive view of leadership to identify and advance their personal leadership domain(s) within the Duke community and society at large.

Specific objectives for the Division include:

- a) Partner with programs that emphasize engagement with the world beyond Duke's campus boundaries such as Duke Engage. Collaborate with the Nicholas School and other appropriate schools and centers to promote environmental literacy and commitment.
- b) Ensure that processes of accountability for student behaviors are fair, consistent and expeditious. Provide ample opportunity for student participation in these processes. Expand partnerships with schools and centers (e.g. Kenan Institute) to promote ethics and integrity.
- c) Broaden opportunities for students to hear from and interact with people (especially alumni) representing varied perspectives on local, regional, national and international issues. Refine parent and family programs to provide appropriate (but not excessive) opportunities for their engagement in the lives of their children.

- d) Take seriously the role of student self-government, peer and paraprofessional participation and while providing appropriate advisory functions, provide significant opportunity for student decision-making. Expand and enhance leadership (and followership) development efforts including more immersion experiences (such as the Beaufort Retreat and Common Ground) as well as broad-based efforts to reach many students.

4. *Advance the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of university community members.*

The physical and mental health needs of our students are often the subject of professional discourse and casual conversation. Though we know more than ever about manifestations of health (and of illness), we inevitably are confronted by students who behave as if in denial of their own health needs. In the foreseeable future, we will need to uncover new forms of health promotion, treatment, access and affordability. We are fortunate to have the strength of one of the world's preeminent health systems at our disposal and we will need to forge new and creative partnerships with health care providers in the Duke Health System.

Learning outcomes for this goal are:

- Students develop the capacity to identify and appropriately use resources available for achieving and sustaining physical, emotional and spiritual health.
- Students develop emotional competence and authenticity in relation to self and others.
- Students progress towards congruence between internal values and beliefs and external behaviors.
- Students initiate conversations, activities, and relationships that encourage healthy behaviors and reduce unhealthy behaviors.

Specific objectives for the Division include:

- a) Enhance the overall quality of our health promotion initiatives and partner with faculty and medical practitioners who have expertise in adolescent and post-adolescent development on research and activities that will. In particular, expand our collaboration with the Duke health system with particular focus on Pediatrics, Psychiatry and Integrative Medicine (e.g. meditation and other non-traditional forms of health care).
- b) Develop a new model for student health insurance that will provide adequate coverage to all students at affordable rates.
- c) Substantially expand various modes of stress relief and mental health intervention with a focus on peer, para-professional and community support models.
- d) Expand and enhance our partnerships to promote the availability and consumption of more nutritious foods and to provide effective opportunities for organized sport and exercise.

5. ***Channel resources wisely to strengthen our ability to meet emerging student needs.***

In the foreseeable future, our needs will undoubtedly grow faster than our means. Thus, we will face the challenge of prioritizing needs and investing our resources thoughtfully and productively. As noted earlier, our most valuable resources are our practitioners and we will need to provide appropriate support and investment in our people. Our financial resources will be strained to meet all our goals and we'll need to make smart choices as directed by the work noted above.

Specific objectives for the Division include:

- a) Expand and enhance staff development activities for all levels of divisional employees; Focus competency development such that staff can do what's asked of them with a balanced work and home life; Foster an atmosphere of flexibility, innovation and creativity among all staff and reward exemplary achievements.
- b) Advocate and support essential facility improvements particularly for residence halls, student community spaces (e.g. West Union, Bryan Center and East union) and the Career Center.
- c) Ensure effective use of technologies that enhance our services but sustain appropriate human intervention.
- d) Take optimal opportunity of institutional investment vehicles to ensure proper management of assigned resources and deploy a restructured development role to ensure stewardship of existing supporters and the development of new prospects and donors.

The objectives identified above are clearly not exhaustive of all we do. No one person or department is charged with promoting the variety of life skills including conflict resolution, negotiation skills, problem solving, time management, and communications skills. Yet these, too, will find their way into departmental plans and goals.

I look forward to the next phase of our journey. Let's proceed into the foreseeable future with conviction, humor, optimism and courage. We'll need all these traits and more to meet and exceed our objectives, but I can't imagine doing so with a better group of colleagues.

Larry Moneta, January 3, 2008

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