

May 21, 2003

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Dr. Helen Mamarchev
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Dear Helen,

Enclosed is the comprehensive program review team report on the Vice President's office at Illinois State University. If you have any comments regarding the findings or would like revisions made prior to public viewing, please let me know within the next week, if possible.

I very much appreciated the opportunity to visit Illinois State and be part of this review. The team members are to be commended for excellent work and insight into both the role of the Vice President's office and the delivery of student affairs programs and services.

Best wishes for a restful summer. Again, thank you for the opportunity to be part of this very enjoyable process.

Most sincerely,

Edward G. Whipple
Vice President for Student Affairs

Enclosure

c: Dr. Brent Paterson Review team members

Illinois State University
Student Affairs Comprehensive Program Review
April 6-8, 2003

I. Overview of Visit

The Illinois State University's Office of Student Affairs conducted a comprehensive program review April 6-8, 2003 based on a self-study conducted fall semester. Team members included:

Dr. Edward G. Whipple, Chair
Vice President for Student Affairs
Bowling Green State University

Ms. Denice Ross-Haynes
Graduate Student
Illinois State University

Ms. Sonja Reece
Director of Business Development
BroMenn Regional medical Center
Bloomington, Illinois

Dr. Joseph Rives
Director of University Planning
Illinois State University

Ms. Arleen Hosea
Associate Director, Campus Dining
Illinois State University

Ms. Barbara Todd
Director of Alumni Services
Illinois State University

The Review Team visited with a variety of individuals on campus regarding the role and functions of the Office of Student Affairs. These individuals included Student Affairs staff, students, faculty, and administrators. Information was also gleaned from program information and materials. While the specific charge to the review team was to evaluate the Office of Student Affairs program delivery and services, it quickly became apparent that those programs were actually the entire organization. Thus, the relationship and "connectedness" between the office and the various departments were central to the review. What was occurring between and among programs and services impacted significantly the role of the Office of Student Affairs. Thus, the Review Team looked at the entire Division of Student Affairs, based on the self-study, the interviews and additional information, to determine the effectiveness of the Office of Student Affairs in relation to the overall University role and scope. Goals of the review were to:

- Identify future directions, needs and priorities
- Respond to strengths and weaknesses of programs and services
- Assess departments' relationships with each other and outside the division

- Provide recommendations to strengthen and improve certain programs and services with the intent of better serving students

Criteria used in the process were the quality of programs and services, availability of programs and services, the adequacy of administrative, professional, and classified staff, and the availability of facilities in relation to desired program and service delivery. There were a number of questions team members posed during their interviews. Question included:

Who are the current students? Are there opportunities for other kinds of students? Does the current program and service delivery provide for adequate student development activities?

Are programs, services and activities appropriate given the institution's core mission? Are they adequate given the available fiscal and human resources?

Is there an adequate system of assessment in place?

Is there an adequate delivery of professional development? Are there opportunities for staff to reach "the next level" professionally?

What are the limiting factors in quality and future growth and development of Student Affairs?

How appropriate are the short and long term goals within the context of a strategic plan?

In this final report the team has organized its findings into the following areas:

- Structure
- Dean of Students position and office
- Staff
- Role of the Bone Student Center
- Role of Student Affairs in engaging students

The team's findings are recommended for vice presidential action. In addition, the review team also highlights excellence (referred to as "commendation") in a variety of areas.

Findings:

1. *Structure*

The organizational structure of Student Affairs has remained intact since the current Vice President assumed the position in 2000. The senior leadership of the Division (Vice President, Associate Vice President, Assistant Vice President, and the Associate Dean), known as the GROUP, are committed to the mission, values, goals, and priorities of *Educating Illinois*. The Group also implemented a new planning, budgeting, and assessment process across the 14 departments in the Division of Student Affairs.

Within the Division, some of the interviewed staff expressed concern regarding the inequity of workload among members of the GROUP. Others expressed concerns related to duplication of efforts (i.e., multiple members of the group attending the same meeting) and if there was perceived favoritism within the GROUP. There also was concern that the GROUP spends too much time on daily operations that should be entrusted to the Directors. It should be noted that it was not apparent to all members of the Review Team that all members of the GROUP fully embodied the vision of the Division of Student Affairs. To be successful there must be a shared vision, trust, communication, and collaboration across the GROUP.

Within the Office of Student Affairs, there is need to change the name of the Office of Student Affairs to be consistent with the other Vice Presidents' offices. There is also the need to define the roles and responsibilities of support staff and to develop and implement centralized filing (computer and hard copy) filing systems.

Commendations

- The Vice President's office has initiated a new process of assessment, strategic planning, and resource allocation that is consistent with the University's vision, values, goals, and priorities. Furthermore, it has improved the efficiency and quality of the services provided by the division.
- According to visits with other institution executive officers, including the Vice President for Finance and Planning, Student Affairs has used efficiently its current fiscal resources.

Recommendations

- Establish a task force of faculty, staff, and students to review, within three months, the current organization and structure with the goal of recommending a parsimonious organizational structure that best meets the needs of students. Priority should be given to implementing a Dean of Students Office (see recommendation #2) and to creating any new positions by internal reallocation rather than funding new positions.
- Improve the Vice President's office efficiency by clarifying support function responsibilities and implementing centralized filing systems.
- Better define and authorize the role of the office manager in the central office. Charge this individual with planning and implementing organization of files and other relevant/necessary tasks.
- Change the Vice President's office to the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs to be consistent with other vice president offices on campus.
- GROUP should strive for most effective use of its time. For example, three GROUP members at some meetings appears to be overkill.
- Continue to nurture support staff through regular meetings and professional development activities.

2. Dean of Students position and office

The University lacks a Dean of Students. This position is essential for an institution committed to putting the learner at the center of teaching and research. The Dean's role should be the "expert on students" which allows the Vice President to spend more time in the role of an institution executive officer.

Several functions, which could be in a Dean's office, already exist within Student Affairs (i.e. student life, discipline, etc.). The Review Team believes that synergy and efficiency of combining units can be achieved by an internal reorganization.

Commendations

- The staff is committed to augmenting the educational experience of students by maximizing formal, out-of-classroom experiences.

Recommendations

- Create a Dean of Students position and office. Responsibilities for day-to day "student life" operations should be transferred from the Vice President to the Dean of Students.
- Expand the Office of Student Life under the umbrella of a Dean of Students, possibly incorporating discipline, legal services, commencement, Grad Days, and the Minority-in-Residence program, plus any other functions that are "general" in nature.

3. *Staff*

As with any large organization, there are varying leadership styles and years of experience. The Student Affairs Council (SAC) is certainly no different. In addition, there are varied perspectives on the how the University should or does work. While this kind of composition can be healthy and certainly drive positively the program and service focus on Student Affairs, continued emphasis must be on effective communication delivery. Some staff expressed concern about the relevancy of meetings, while other staff was quite comfortable with meeting format and agenda. The challenge is to find the appropriate role for the SAC, both at the Division and institution levels. Meetings should be substantive and focus on policy and issues affecting students at all levels.

During tight budget times, staff members become increasingly concerned about their own funds and their future. There was some confusion about how budgeting priorities were set and the mechanisms in place regarding possible budget reductions.

There appeared to be some inconsistency with job titles and how they related to functions. This can be somewhat disconcerting to staff, but more importantly, can be confusing to students.

Staff development is critically important. Excellent efforts have been made to provide opportunities for staff to learn and grow in their jobs. Some discussion centered, however, on the relevancy of programs for certain staff groups.

Commendations

- Progress in assessment, strategic planning, and budget allocation has been made, as evidenced by directors wanting more responsibility, autonomy, and accountability in the budget setting process.
- Division leadership is to be commended on the recognition of the value of professional development by devoting resources to a staff committee, frequent sessions open to all staff, and conference attendance opportunities.

Recommendations

- Restructure SAC staff meetings to encourage more discussion and work group opportunities to avoid simply “reporting.” One option is to have different directors be responsible for each meeting.
- Staff at all levels of the Division need to understand the critical importance of “bridge building” across campus.
- Continue the necessary training for directors to successfully and fully implement the assessment, strategic planning, and budget allocation process. Develop a growth model that demonstrates implementation phases following assessment and benchmarking.
- Retool the professional development committee to better meet the needs and interests of staff. Include with invitations to staff development sessions, information on how to put the knowledge gained in context with the work of the Division.
- Work in consultation with Human Resources to ensure consistency with titles, not only within the Division, but also across other administrative areas at the University.

4. *Role of Bone Student Center and the Student Services Building*

Many positive changes have been made in the Bone Student Center, including the addition of the Faculty/Staff Commons, Brewster’s, Barnes and Noble, and the display of flags. However, there was not a clear articulation from staff or students on the mission and purposes of the Bone Student Center and how these differ from the programs, services, and opportunities provided in the Student Services Building.

Student Affairs should decide and articulate the role of the Bone Student Center, recognizing that the building is currently trying to fulfill multiple missions (student, campus, community). Students acknowledged they want a gathering place. The Bone Student Center can be an effective and successful environment for student engagement if concerted efforts are made to develop programming that meets student interests.

Also, there was student dissatisfaction with the events scheduled at Braden Auditorium. Finally, the students questioned why Redbird Arena did not have concert programming.

Commendations

- The establishment of a committee to review the Bone Student Center acknowledges the realization of the Division that changes should be made. Staff throughout Student Affairs appears to accept the need to provide a better focus for the Bone Student Center.

Recommendations

- Clearly define the role and scope of both the Bone Student Center and the Student Services Building.
- Find and implement ways to move the Bone Student Center from a “destination” to a “source” for students — consider the development of a “living room” concept (for example, changing the furniture in the Prairie Room to small groupings of couches and chairs with a large screen TV).
- Focus on ways to increase student activity and student engagement within the Bone Student Center and the Student Services Building.
- Determine and incorporate traffic generators (for example, moving the Student Government Association and other essential student-focused administrative offices to the Bone Student Center.)
- Consider moving non-student focused administrative offices out of the Bone Student Center. For students, access to other student organization offices and meeting space, in a student union or center, is central to a successful facility for students.

5. External Collaboration

With new Student Affairs leadership there appears to be campus-wide increase of credibility, high visibility, and acknowledgment of Student Affairs “being a player at the University table.” There is great potential for Student Affairs to increase collaborative activities.

Commendations

- Student Affairs has made great strides in building bridges with the academic community. Specifically, the Vice President understands the important relations with the deans and the senior academic officer of the University. In addition, a strong connection has been made with College Student Personnel curriculum which benefits both student and academic affairs. Other excellent examples of external collaboration include working with University Advancement on the improvement of Homecoming and collaborative efforts with Finance and Planning to deal with serious budget issues.
- Student Affairs has contributed successfully to enhancing the University relationship with the town of Normal.

Recommendations

- Partnerships that have already been established should be taken to the next level. For example, assist Athletics in building student support in attending athletic events. The students interviewed expressed many ideas about how to increase student participation. Additionally, partner with the town of Normal in planning for meeting students’ recreation and transportation needs.

- Evaluate opportunities to work with the University College and other first- year experiences to further enhance student engagement early in their careers. Likewise, staff in the Career Center should work with academic departments and schools in increasing student participation in internships, externships, service learning, volunteerism, and other forms of experiential education.
- Create new partnerships between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs. Examples include curricular relationships between Campus Dining Services and the Dietetics program, Student Legal Services and Criminal Justice Sciences, and Student Dispute and Resolution Services and Politics and Government to name a few.
- Continue collaborating with the School of Kinesology and Recreation on a new, multipurpose Wellness Activity Center.
- Increase philanthropic efforts that support the goals of *Redefining “Normal,”* which includes the development and implementation of a new Leadership Institute.

6. *Role of Student Affairs in engaging students*

As an executive officer of the University the Vice President’s job is to assist the President and the other senior level administrators run the University. While there was tremendous efforts on the part of staff to engage students in the life of the institution, there appeared to be a lack of understanding of “whose job is it.” With the present organizational model, much of the responsibility for student engagement seemed to fall on the Vice President’s office. Staff seemed to lack a clear understanding of the central role of the senior Student Affairs officer’s responsibilities in relation to institutional priorities.

Commendations

- The office has made student engagement a priority for Student Affairs.

Recommendations

- Provide educational opportunities for staff to learn more about the role of the vice president as an institution leader.
- Work with staff to help them understand their responsibilities to engage students in the life of the University.
- Evaluate the assistant dean title to allow more opportunities to develop student engagement.
- Evaluate and further develop engagement opportunities for transfer students.