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Student engagement represents a critical benchmark of educational effectiveness for graduate as well as undergraduate students. This chapter presents seven principles for good practice in engaging and connecting graduate and professional students to the larger campus community and provides examples of exemplary programs.

Principles for Good Practice in Graduate and Professional Student Engagement

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Since the introduction of the National Survey of Student Engagement in 2000, faculty and administrators have devoted increased attention to determining the extent that students are engaged in educationally purposeful activities, both inside and outside the classroom. Subsequently, student engagement data have been used to rethink institutional practices and priorities, benchmark educational effectiveness among peer institutions, broaden public perceptions of collegiate quality, and ultimately improve undergraduate education and student learning (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2004). Kuh (2001) suggested that student engagement is a measure of institutional quality. Therefore, the more engaged that students are, the better the institution is. Similarly, Pascarella (2001) asserted, “An excellent undergraduate education is most likely to occur at those colleges and universities that maximize good practices and enhance students’ academic and social engagement” (p. 22). Furthermore, Pascarella noted that several individuals and institutions have launched initiatives to identify excellence in education in response to public calls for accountability in higher education. Although graduate and professional students were 13.9 percent of all students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities in 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2004), conversations and subsequent efforts to achieve educational excellence regarding student engagement have focused almost exclusively on undergraduates.

In this chapter, we maintain that a parallel commitment should be made to identify excellence in graduate education. To this end, we offer a set of principles for good practice in graduate student engagement to serve as standards by which institutional effectiveness can be measured. We begin by considering the effects of misperceptions regarding the needs of graduate and professional students, as well as persistence trends among this population. The focus then shifts to introducing two sets of preexisting principles for good practice in undergraduate education and student affairs that served as models in the development of our principles. Following a brief synthesis of existing published evidence on the gains and outcomes associated with student engagement, we present seven principles for good practice in graduate education.

Misperceptions and Persistence Trends

Many postbaccalaureate degree programs, academic departments, and graduate and professional schools offer various services and resources for students. However, divisions of student affairs, especially those at large research universities, typically focus on undergraduate students, and hence devote less effort to engaging the graduate and professional student population. This trend is best explained by four factors: (1) undergraduate student enrollments often exceed those of graduate and professional students, (2) undergraduate student development arguably requires more attention and resources, (3) there is a belief that academic programs and departments already meet the needs of graduate students, and (4) the assumption is that graduate students, having experienced higher education as undergraduates, understand how to navigate institutional bureaucracies, thus warranting less attention than current undergraduates (Fischer and Zigmond, 1998).

These misperceptions and assumptions conceal several important issues. First, actual numbers of graduate students can be substantial, even if relative percentages are low in comparison to undergraduate enrollments. For instance, the University of Florida enrolled 14,299 graduate and professional students in 2004 (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Although graduate students represented less than one-third of the total student body, they were a sizable population that likely needed specialized engagement efforts that should not be overlooked. This point is especially salient for institutions like Stanford University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Harvard University, which enroll more graduate and professional students than undergraduates (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

Another often neglected issue is that graduate students have specific needs and face developmental challenges that may differ from, but are as important as, those experienced by undergraduates. While many academic departments provide some support for graduate students, they often suffer from a building-bound silo effect that isolates them from the larger university. Academic units usually lack the human resources to adequately address many basic issues such as housing, counseling and wellness, and career

development, let alone sponsor opportunities for engagement in educationally purposeful activities that reach beyond the department.

Finally, previous experience in higher education does not translate to graduate and professional experiences because of differences in graduate and undergraduate education, as well as variations in institutional types (Hartnett and Katz, 1977; Jorgenson-Earp and Staton, 1993; Lovitts, 2001; Pruitt-Logan and Isaac, 1995). For instance, an alumna from Spelman College, which enrolls 2,186 students (U.S. Department of Education, 2005), will likely find the Ohio State University quite different from and more challenging to navigate than her undergraduate institution. It would be misguided to conclude that support services and engagement efforts are unnecessary for this graduate student simply because she previously attended another postsecondary educational institution.

Recent examinations of doctoral student attrition have emphasized the roles that student affairs divisions can play in better supporting graduate and professional students (Council of Graduate Schools, 2004; Golde, 2000; Lovitts, 2001). While master's degree seekers, especially those in professional schools, tend to have higher retention rates, approximately 50 percent of doctoral students nationally leave their institutions before earning their degrees (Bowen and Rudenstine, 1992; Golde, 2000; Lovitts, 2001; National Research Council, 1996). Not only do schools lose talented and qualified students, they also forfeit enormous amounts of time and money invested in students through assistantships, fellowships, and professional development initiatives (Anderson and Swazey, 1998; Etzowitz, Kemelgor, Neuschatz, and Uzzi, 1992; Smallwood, 2004). Why does this level of attrition exist among doctoral students who, in theory, represent the best and brightest students on university campuses?

Contrary to the popular belief that academically ill-prepared students are weeded out, no correlation has been found between attrition and Graduate Record Exam scores, undergraduate grade point averages, and previous institutions from which bachelor's degrees were earned (Bair and Haworth, 1999; Golde, 1998; Lovitts, 2001). However, prior socialization to graduate school, student-faculty advising relationships, student engagement, and peer interaction correlate positively with persistence to degree. Lovitts (2001) found that students who received teaching assistantships were two times more likely, and those with research assistantships were almost three times more likely, to persist through degree attainment than were students who received fellowships. Lovitts attributed the difference to socialization and engagement: research assistants and teaching assistants work with and share office space with peers and have more opportunities for meaningful interactions with faculty and staff than do fellowship recipients. Astin (1993) found similar persistence trends for undergraduates who work part time on campus.

The effects of student engagement and socialization on graduate student persistence suggest that student affairs professionals can, and should, play significant roles in supporting and reaching out to graduate students.

While departments can provide clearer performance expectations and appropriate academic advising (Boyle and Boice, 1998; Council of Graduate Schools, 2004; Nerad and Miller, 1996), student affairs divisions should offer timely information and relevant campus services, and collaborate with departments to create supportive communities for graduate and professional students. Such efforts have proven effective in creating and sustaining excellence in undergraduate education.

Preexisting Models of Good Practices

Two widely read documents served as models for the principles presented later in this chapter. First, Chickering and Gamson's "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education" (1987) offered a framework for institutional improvement based on years of evidence regarding educational effectiveness. The authors noted that the principles "rest on 50 years of research on the way teachers teach and students learn, how students work and play with one another, and how students and faculty talk to each other" (p. 3). Chickering and Gamson's seven principles have since guided student engagement dialogue, research, and practice. In fact, Kuh (1997) posited that the list of principles "is one of the most widely disseminated documents in American higher education" (p. 72).

Chickering and Gamson maintained that good practice in undergraduate education entails the following:

1. Encourages contact between students and faculty
2. Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students
3. Encourages active learning
4. Gives prompt feedback
5. Emphasizes time on task
6. Communicates high expectations
7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning

Chickering and Gamson (1987) suggested that the actualization of these principles depends largely on the manipulation of campus environments. Accordingly, educators and administrators have the power to shape environments that promote "a strong sense of shared purposes; concrete support from administrators and faculty leaders for those purposes; adequate funding appropriate for the purposes; policies and procedures consistent with the purposes; and continuing examination of how well the purposes are being achieved" (p. 6). Furthermore, the authors maintained that the seven principles, when taken together, employ six powerful forces in education: activity, expectations, cooperation, interaction, diversity, and responsibility. These seven principles continue to serve as guidelines for determining institutional effectiveness in undergraduate education (Chickering and Gamson, 1999; Kuh and others, 2005) and have influ-

enced the creation of good practice principles in other areas, such as student affairs.

The document *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs* served as a second model for this chapter. In 1996, leaders of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) convened a study group of student affairs practitioners and faculty to construct a set of principles by which effectiveness in student affairs practice could be determined (ACPA and NASPA, 1997). According to Blimling and Whitt (1999), “The principles of good practice for student affairs are intended to build consensus on the actions associated with creating high-quality undergraduate experiences, thereby reinforcing a common agenda for student affairs—fostering student learning. . . . The principles are designed to be incorporated into our daily work and to shape how we think about our responsibilities, communicate our purposes, and interact with students” (pp. 203–204). To this end, good practice in student affairs:

1. Engages students in active learning
2. Helps students develop coherent values and ethical standards
3. Sets and communicates high expectations for student learning
4. Uses systematic inquiry to improve student and institutional performance
5. Uses resources effectively to achieve institutional missions and goals
6. Forges educational partnerships that advance student learning
7. Builds supportive and inclusive communities

In this chapter, we maintain that graduate and professional students would benefit from a corresponding set of principles to create quality experiences for, and enhance outcomes with, the population. The continued absence of such standards sustains a long-standing disconnect between these students, their academic programs and departments, and campuswide student affairs divisions. Taken together, student engagement is the primary emphasis of the principles offered by Chickering and Gamson (1987) and the ACPA/NASPA Study Group (1997). When we actualize the principles and engage students in learning, powerful gains and outcomes accrue (Kuh and others, 2005).

Gains and Outcomes Associated with Engagement

Based almost exclusively on undergraduate students, researchers have found that purposeful engagement, both inside and outside the classroom, positively affects a wide array of gains and outcomes that includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Cognitive and intellectual skill development (Anaya, 1996; Baxter Magolda, 1992; Kuh, 1995; Ory and Braskamp, 1988; Pike, 2000)
- College adjustment (Cabrera and others, 1999; Delvin, 1996; Kuh, Palmer, and Kish, 2003; Paul and Kelleher, 1995)

- Moral and ethical development (Evans, 1987; Jones and Watt, 1999; Liddell and Davis, 1996; Rest, 1993)
- Persistence (Berger and Milem, 1999; Braxton, Milem, and Sullivan, 2000; Milem and Berger, 1997; Peltier, Laden, and Matranga, 1999; Tinto, 1993)
- Practical competence and skill transferability (Harper, 2005; Kuh, 1995; Kuh, Palmer, and Kish, 2003)
- Psychosocial development and positive images of self (Bandura, Peluso, Ortman, and Millard, 2000; Chickering and Reisser, 1993; Evans, Forney, and Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Taylor and Howard-Hamilton, 1995)

While it can be assumed that similar outcomes may be associated with active engagement for graduate and professional students, a set of guidelines for assessing the effects of such engagement is both lacking and necessary.

Seven Principles for Good Practice in Graduate Student Engagement

In this section, we offer a set of philosophical principles to guide student affairs efforts to foster graduate and professional student engagement and learning. We intend these principles to serve as a set of standards by which excellence in graduate education could be benchmarked and assessed. Using Chickering and Gamson (1987), the ACPA/NASPA Study Group (1997), and the large body of evidence related to the positive effects of student engagement, we crafted the seven principles presented below in response to the issues articulated by authors of other chapters in this volume. Regarding the engagement of graduate and professional students, we maintain that a student affairs division is most effective when it addresses these efforts:

1. *Continually strives to eradicate marginalization among underrepresented populations.* Good practice in graduate student engagement occurs when student affairs divisions offer support groups, special-interest student organizations, and mentoring programs for students in departments that lack racial/ethnic and gender diversity, as well as those in academic disciplines that typically enroll few students. The provision of such resources creates safe spaces in which the loneliness, cultural taxation, and feelings of discrimination that often characterize these students' experiences can be shared and processed (Patton and Harper, 2003). Efforts should be made to identify agents, both on campus and externally, who can offer culturally responsive support and advising to these students, especially those from smaller, racially homogeneous, and overwhelmingly male academic programs.

2. *Provides meaningful orientation to the institution beyond academic units.* Offering a coordinated and multiple-day series of orientation activities for new students and programs for prospective students that present the realities of graduate education constitutes good practice in graduate student

engagement. The importance of orientation for first-year undergraduate students is well understood: those who participate adjust more smoothly to the institution, are more familiar with campus resources, build more friendships earlier, and are more likely to persist than those who do not participate (Tinto, 1993). An effective student affairs division recognizes these same gains and outcomes as important for graduate and professional students. Although many academic schools and departments offer their own graduate orientations (typically a half-day or full day), they tend to emphasize only the norms, expectations, regulations, and resources within that respective unit (Boyle and Boice, 1998; Golde, 2000; Poock, 2002; Tierney and Rhoads, 1993). Furthermore, opportunities to form early relationships with others outside one's academic home are few. A well-conceived university-wide orientation introduces graduate and professional students to resources beyond their academic programs and departments, including campus offices, student organizations, and support outlets for underrepresented students; relies on advanced students to provide input on the content and format during the planning process, as well as leadership and mentorship during the actual orientation; and ultimately increases graduate student understanding of, and enthusiasm for, the institution.

3. *Invests resources in communication with graduate and professional students.* Good practice in graduate student engagement hinges on the timely distribution of important materials, announcements, and information to students. Exemplary student affairs divisions invest resources in the creation of brochures, newsletters, and Web sites for graduate and professional students. These divisions also partner with academic units to compile and disseminate information to graduate students about out-of-class engagement venues, leadership opportunities, campus resources, and upcoming events and deadlines, to name a few. Divisions ensure that graduate students are well represented as voting members on all relevant campus policy committees. Students perceive themselves to be knowledgeable about relevant aspects of the institution both within and outside their academic departments.

4. *Facilitates opportunities for community building and multicultural interaction across academic units.* Student learning is enhanced by planning, executing, and participating in purposeful campus activities, both educational and social (Kuh, 1995). Students learn best when they interact across difference (Chang, 1999; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and Gurin, 2002; Villalpando, 2002). Thus, good practice in graduate student engagement offers support and encouragement for students to build campuswide community through activities and organizations, especially those that emphasize cross-cultural interaction. The presence and availability of vibrant communities of difference confirm for students that they have networks of culturally diverse peers on whom they can rely for support, friendship, and value-added learning experiences beyond the classroom. Furthermore, as a side effect, the planning and execution of activities that lead to the advancement

of community often produce the outcomes associated with active student engagement. Student affairs divisions partner with academic units to offer support, incentives, and resources (financial and otherwise) for graduate and professional students to create their own communities of engagement and support.

5. *Partners with academic schools and departments to create engagement plans for students.* Cooperation, meaningful dialogue, and strategic planning among student affairs professionals, faculty, student services staff within academic schools, academic affairs administrators, and students typify good practice. Engagement could, and should, be at the core of these conversations. Each stakeholder recognizes that the extent to which graduate and professional students are engaged in educationally purposeful experiences should not occur by happenstance. Thus, they collaboratively develop plans and strategies for connecting students to the larger campus community and positively affecting learning and outcomes beyond the classroom.

6. *Enhances career and professional development.* Good practice in career and professional development engages graduate and professional students in preparation for future roles. Effective career development centers expand their foci to include more outreach, workshops, services, counseling, and career fairs for graduate and professional students. Exemplary student affairs divisions, in cooperation with academic units and the graduate school, offer financial support for conference travel, especially for students who are presenting papers, workshops, or symposia. Institutional effectiveness can be easily ascertained by the credentials of its graduates. Those with impressive résumés and curriculum vitae that enable them to compete successfully for the most desirable opportunities after graduation are often beneficiaries of institutional investments.

7. *Systematically assesses satisfaction, needs, and outcomes.* Good practice in graduate student engagement involves ongoing data collection and analysis. Individual interviews and focus groups, as well as questionnaires and surveys, aid student affairs professionals in determining the affective dispositions of current and former graduate students toward campuswide programs and services. Assessments of how students change, what they learn outside the classroom, and the various ways in which they apply what they have learned through enriching educational experiences are deemed important and worthy of investigation. Data are shared within the division and with faculty, staff, and administrators in the various academic schools on campus. Findings shape future programming and interventions.

Conclusion

The purpose of the principles outlined above is to challenge and guide practitioners in expanding the role of student affairs to engage graduate students in educationally purposeful activities both inside and outside

the classroom. This new role means that divisions of student affairs must expand their focus beyond undergraduates and incorporate the needs of graduate students.

Reexamining how student affairs engages graduate students means that existing services need to be modified and new programs created. By serving this new population, student affairs opens itself up to a wealth of opportunities for collaboration with academic affairs and graduate departments. While departments can do more to support their students, student affairs is positioned to engage graduate students across departments, provide improved campus services, and foster a campuswide graduate community.

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