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# The Impact of Faculty Perception of Student Affairs Personnel on Collaborative Initiatives: A Case Study

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The Impact of Faculty Perception of Student Affairs Personnel  
on Collaborative Initiatives: A Case Study

by

Matthew Stuart Peltier

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of  
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska  
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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(Educational Leadership & Higher Education)

Under the Supervision of Professor James O'Hanlon

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The Impact of Faculty Perception of Student Affairs Personnel  
on Collaborative Initiatives: A Case Study

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University of Nebraska, 2014

Advisor: James O'Hanlon

Sandeen (1991) and, later, Winston, Creamer, Miller, and Associates (2001) describe the primary role of student affairs personnel as being educators. They further identify collaboration between student affairs and the faculty to be a key way in which this educational role is to be accomplished. However, there exists bifurcated understanding of student development, with faculty being responsible for intellectual development and student affairs professionals being responsible for psychosocial development.

Much attention has been given to the relationship between academic and student affairs, the role of each, and the potential that collaboration between the two offers in the achievement of developmental goals and student learning outcomes. Yet despite a seeming consensus on the need for integration and collaboration, even a cursory review of journals and trade publications in the field of student affairs will yield clues that all is not well in the relationship between faculty members and student affairs personnel on many campuses. A common theme expressed in this literature is a concern on the part of student affairs personnel is that they are not viewed as serious and legitimate participants, or educators, in the learning process by the faculty (for example: King, 1993; Kuh, 1996; Miller & Bender, 2009).

This study explores, using a single-site case study methodology, faculty perceptions of the role and function of student affairs personnel, focusing on the educator role of student affairs as described by Sandeen (1991) and, later, Winston et al. (2001). The environment of a small college in the southeastern United States was used as a context to depict, qualitatively, the day-to-day experiences and perceptions of faculty members with regard to the role and functions of the student affairs personnel. Using that qualitative depiction, this study then examines the scope and nature of the relationship between the academic affairs and student affairs units, with a particular focus on issues and challenges to collaboration, and offers recommendations to address those issues and challenges.

## DEDICATION

*“All of us have special ones who have loved us into being. Would you just take, along with me, ten seconds to think of the people who have helped you become who you are, those who have cared about you and wanted what was best for you in life. Ten seconds of silence.”*

~ Fred McFeely Rogers  
*Emmy's Lifetime Achievement Award  
Acceptance Speech  
1997*

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction to the Study

#### Introduction

Institutions of higher education are complex and dynamic systems comprised of various subsystems or operational units. Over the past 15 years, the researcher has had the privilege to work in a variety of roles in higher education including instructional technology, library services, academic affairs administration, and student affairs administration. The researcher's general experience, and one that the literature confirms (e.g., Baxter Magolda, 2003; Blimling, 1993; Colwell, 2006; DiGregorio, Passi, & Diamond, 1996; Magolda, 2005; Schuh & Whitt, 1999), is that various operational units on most college campuses tend to operate in silos. That is to say the various offices, departments, and divisions that make up the organizational chart of the typical college or university often pursue their assigned tasks and departmental mission with great zeal and passion—and with a great ignorance of what is being done in other units. Cross-training, interdepartmental communication, and shared vision are lacking. The divisions that seem to make so much sense to those in higher education administration often have little or no meaning to the average student. However, those divisions have the potential to affect the learning environment and experience of the student significantly.

All the while, there is little argument that higher education faces many challenges. Significant among them is the education of undergraduates. The United States Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education (2006) issued a report that stated, "as other nations rapidly improve their higher education systems, we are disturbed

by evidence that the quality of student learning at U.S. colleges and universities is inadequate and, in some cases, declining” (p. 4). This report joins the chorus of those calling for a return to a primary focus on student learning, particularly student outcomes, at institutions of higher education (Schuh & Whitt, 1999). As Schroeder observed:

These reports persistently question the rapid rise in college costs; low retention and graduation rates; the primacy of research over teaching; greater gaps between ideal academic standards and actual student performance; lack of service and institutional commitment to local communities and states; and deteriorating public trust in the higher education enterprise. (1999, p. 6)

Two key units within higher education institutions are academic affairs and student affairs. While, as Arminio, Roberts, and Bonfiglio (2009) note, “student affairs educators and faculty share responsibility for creating and sustaining optimal learning environments for students, a purpose that has been advocated since the inception of American colonial colleges” (p. 20), both student affairs and academic affairs divisions have separate and distinct roles and ethos, and there is a long-standing separation of the curriculum from co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Magolda (2005) describes the traditional approach, “in which institutions artificially impose separate curriculum and in-class experiences, which are the purview of academic affairs units, from the cocurriculum and out-of-class experiences, which are overseen primarily by student affairs units” (p. 17). Kuh and Hinkle (2002) likewise observe, “out-of-class experiences are all but ignored by many faculty members and academic administrators when planning and delivering academic programs” (p. 311). However, there are often opportunities for cooperation and collaboration in the accomplishment of institutional mission and in meeting the developmental goals of both the institution and individual members of the

faculty. Shushok, Henry, Blalock, and Sriram (2009) suggest that “engaging students in cocurricular activities and settings is also a way to model the idea of a community of learners in which students, faculty, and student affairs educators engage in serious inquiry, learning with and from one another” (p. 13).

This separation of the curriculum from the co-curriculum is a somewhat recent phenomenon, occurring in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The establishment of student affairs as a major campus unit was driven by efforts to restore to the academy a concern for the development and welfare of students during the early to mid-1900s. Philpott and Strange (2003) note that,

while once those who taught and those who administered in the academy were one and the same, and where students learned and where they lived were indistinguishable, perhaps the legacy of American higher education in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been an institution somewhat divided in both purpose and personnel. (p. 77)

In speaking of the history and evolution of student affairs, Rhatigan (2000) observed, “no one knew for sure what needed to be accomplished, or how, but only that needs were present” (p. 7).

During these formative decades, there was a convergence of three key campus roles: dean of men, dean of women, and student personnel worker, into a single operational unit led by a dean of students (Rhatigan, 2000, p. 7). Later, at many institutions, the recognition and acceptance of this unit as a major part of the institution was acknowledged by the appointment of a vice president of student affairs. The student development movement during the 1960s accompanied this convergence and rise of student affairs units (pp. 9-13). According to Evans, Forney, and Guido-DiBrito (1998),

the term student development has been used to describe a process (the changes or growth that occurs in a student during the college experience), a philosophy (thinking of education as being related to the whole person), programs (activities undertaken to encourage change or growth), and a theory or body of research (studies focusing on late-adolescent or early-adulthood) (pp. 4-5). Functionally, the student affairs unit at most institutions is responsible for student activities, including intramurals, clubs, and other organizations; Greek life (fraternities and sororities); orientation; residence life; multicultural affairs; career development; counseling; campus ministry; student conduct management or judicial services; community service and service-learning; and, in some instances, safety and security. Within these areas, the student affairs unit designs programs and services to serve student needs and to engage students in personal growth and development, both socially and intellectually. Schroeder and Hurst (1996) further note that, “a greater emphasis on creating and enhancing learning environments is a unique opportunity and responsibility of student affairs professionals in the 1990s and beyond” (p. 174).

### **The Role of Student Affairs – A Conceptual Framework**

One might then ask, what is the current role of student affairs, as a part of an institution of higher education? In describing the role of the Chief Student Affairs Officer (CSAO), Sandeen (1991) identified three primary or principal roles: leader, mediator, and educator. He states, “student affairs has often been viewed by others within the college or university as a peripheral or adjunct service, but in the past twenty-five years, many CSAOs have helped to move student affairs into the main educational arena of the



campus” (p. 9). He posits that, of the various roles and responsibilities of student affairs administrators, their most important role is that of educator, asserting that “student affairs administrators can be good managers and problem solvers, but if they are not actively engaged in advancing the education of students, then they have abandoned their most important obligation as professionals” (p. 151).

Winston et al. (2001) continued to build on the work of Sandeen (1991), describing the professional student affairs administrator as educator, leader, and manager. Of these roles for the professionals that make up the student affairs division Winston et al., like Sandeen, hold educator to be primary, stating, “the student affairs division must become an integral part of college students’ quest to integrate, make meaning of, and apply classroom learning; to remediate academic deficits and acquire new skills; and to address personal and social development issues” (p. x). They further identify collaboration between student affairs and the faculty to be a key way in which this educational role is to be accomplished, “the fundamental domain of student affairs administration as it enters the twenty-first century is education, carried out in an integrated and collaborative manner with faculty and staff members from other major institutional organizational units” (Creamer, Winston, & Miller, 2001, p. 8).

Baxter Magolda (2001) observes that student affairs personnel have a long history of being engaged in the holistic development of students. However, this effort has been “largely in the areas of personal and social development, leaving intellectual development to the faculty” (p. 287). More recently, the emphasis has shifted to a more integrated and collaborative approach. Increased collaboration between academic and student affairs

units presents an opportunity to reinvent undergraduate education with an approach that recognizes and addresses the interrelatedness of what occurs in the classroom and what occurs outside of it (Terenzini & Pascarella, as cited in Schroeder, 1999, pp. 12-13).

Colwell (2006) further suggests that,

this partnership means more than working as allies or occasional collaborators; they [academic affairs and student affairs divisions] must be colleagues with shared values, goals, and language, committed to creating a single cohesive educational environment and experience for each student. (p. 53)

This concept of learning places emphasis on the importance of context and experiences as central to cognitive development and in moving beyond knowledge acquisition to knowledge construction. As Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) observe, “the greatest impact [on student learning] appears to stem from students’ *total* level of campus engagement, particularly when academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular involvements are mutually reinforcing and relevant to a particular educational outcome” (p. 647).

Given this, it then becomes imperative that the educational experience be one in which students are aided and encouraged, by both the faculty and student affairs personnel to, as Kuh observes, “use their life experiences to make meaning of material introduced in classes, laboratories, studios, and to apply what they are learning in class to their lives outside the classroom” (as cited in Schuh & Whitt, 1999, p. 1). It is this understanding of the role and responsibilities of student affairs personnel that serves as the framework for this study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There exists bifurcated understanding of student development, with faculty being responsible for intellectual development and student affairs professionals being

responsible for psychosocial development. Calls for a return to renewed focus on student learning reinforce the notion that learning is a holistic, integrated process. As Baxter Magolda observed,

[Students] cannot be expected to connect the cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions of their adult lives if their education has led them to believe these dimensions are unrelated. It is clear . . . that our current approach of bifurcating the cognitive and affective dimensions of learning does not work. (as cited in Schuh & Whitt, 1999, p. 1)

As Kuh (1996) notes, “not all faculty members recognize the important learning outcomes that can accrue through experiences beyond the classroom, on or off campus” (p. 139). Many theorists and researchers would argue that this divided mentality fails to serve students (e.g., Baxter Magolda, 2003; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Papish, 1999). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) in their work, *How College Affects Students*, conclude, “the holistic nature of learning suggests a clear need to rethink and restructure highly segmented departmental and program configurations and their associated curricular patterns” (p. 647).

Much attention has been given to the relationship between academic and student affairs, the role of each, and the potential that collaboration between the two offers in the achievement of developmental goals and student learning outcomes (e.g., Baxter Magolda, 2003; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Papish, 1999; Sandeen, 1991; Winston et al., 2001). As Sorum Brown (1997) asserts, “to become learning organizations and learning oriented practitioners, faculty and student affairs professionals must develop an individual and collective sense of what matters most within the student learning paradigm” (cited in Papish, 1999, p. 45).

Yet despite a seeming consensus on the need for integration and collaboration, even a cursory review of journals and trade publications in the field of student affairs will yield clues that all is not well in the relationship between faculty members and student affairs personnel on many campuses. A common theme expressed in this literature is a concern on the part of student affairs personnel is that they are not viewed as serious and legitimate participants, or educators, in the learning process by the faculty (for example: King, 1993; Kuh, 1996; Miller & Bender, 2009). Sandeen (1991) writes “much of the early history of student affairs consisted of defensive efforts on the part of its practitioners to convince others (mainly the faculty) that their work had educational value” (p. 152). However, there has been little empirical research done that explores faculty perceptions of student affairs personnel. Why might faculty need convincing that the work of student affairs has educational value and what perceptions drive those opinions?

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to explore, using a single-site case study methodology, faculty perceptions of the role and function of student affairs personnel, focusing on the educator role of student affairs as described by Sandeen (1991) and later Winston et al. (2001), at a small liberal arts college. As Creswell noted, “in qualitative inquiry, the intent is not to generalize to a population, but to develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon” (2005, p. 203). This study will explore the environment of a small college and then use that environmental information as a context to depict, qualitatively, the day-to-day experiences and perceptions of faculty members

with regard to the role and functions of the student affairs personnel. Using that qualitative depiction, this study will then examine the scope and nature of the relationship between the academic affairs and student affairs units, with a particular focus on issues and challenges to collaboration, and offer recommendations to address those issues and challenges.

### **Grand Tour Question**

How do the faculty members at the case study institution perceive the student affairs personnel and how does that perception impact collaboration between faculty members and student affairs personnel at that institution?

### **Research Questions**

1. How do faculty members define/categorize their role? i.e., what is their job on campus?
2. How do faculty members define/categorize the role of student affairs personnel? i.e., what is their job on the campus?
3. Is there overlap in these definitions?
4. Do faculty members perceive student affairs personnel as legitimate participants in the educational enterprise with a significant role to play in the development of college students?
5. What, in the perception of the faculty, are the student development roles of student affairs personnel?

6. What is the faculty's understanding of the interrelatedness of the curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular experiences and how do they see both themselves and student affairs personnel in the context of that understanding?
7. What barriers, if any, exist to collaboration between faculty members and student affairs personnel?

### **Definition of Terms**

*Co-curricular Learning*—activities, programs, and events that occur outside of the classroom that complement, enhance, or reinforce classroom instruction. As noted in *Powerful Partnerships: A Shared Responsibility for Learning* (American Association for Higher Education, et al., 1998), “much learning *takes place informally and incidentally*, beyond explicit teaching or the classroom, in casual contacts with faculty and staff, peers, campus life, active social and community involvements, and unplanned but fertile and complex situations” (p. 12).

*Faculty Members*—Faculty members are those employees whose primary responsibility to the institution is to provide classroom instruction.

*Learning Experience*—Kuh and Hinkle (2002) identify two areas, based on research, that comprise the learning experience on college campuses. Those include “engag[ing] students in many types of effective educational practices during their studies so that they will benefit in the desired ways” (p. 312) and “faculty and student affairs staff—must work closely together to arrange students’ in-class and out-of-class experiences, consistent with the research on college student development and effective educational practices” (p. 312).

*Small College*—Hotchkiss (2002) notes that “it is the nature of its community, and not its size alone, that defines a small college” (p. 401). More specifically noted is an ethos that is often derived from the college’s relationship to the church, its foundation on the liberal arts, and the residential nature of the campus (Hotchkiss, 2002, p. 401). For the purposes of this study, a small college is defined using the classifications of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The site selected was an independent, private, co-educational, four-year college located in the southeastern United States. It is classified as *S4/HR: Small four-year, highly residential*, meaning “fall enrollment data show FTE enrollment of 1,000–2,999 degree-seeking students at these bachelor’s degree granting institutions. At least half of degree-seeking undergraduates live on campus and at least 80 percent attend full time” (Carnegie Foundation, n.d.).

*Student Affairs Personnel*—Those employees who work in student services units, generally student activities (incl. fraternity and sorority advisement), residence life, counseling, career development, advisement, student health, orientation, student conduct, and campus ministry.

*Student Development*—According to Evans et al. (1998), the term student development has been used to describe a process (the changes or growth that occurs in a student during the college experience), a philosophy (thinking of education as being related to the whole person), programs (activities undertaken to encourage change or growth), and a theory or body of research (studies focusing on late-adolescent or early-adulthood) (pp. 4-5).

*Student Learning*—“Learning is fundamentally about *making and maintaining connections*: biologically through neural networks; mentally among concepts, ideas, and meanings; and experientially through interaction between the mind and the environment, self and other, generality and context, deliberation and action” (American Association for Higher Education, et al., 1998, p. 4).

### **Target Audiences**

The primary audiences for this study are senior college administrators, faculty administrators, student affairs administrators, and faculty members in higher education administration programs. An understanding of faculty perceptions of student affairs personnel will allow administrators to understand more fully the relationship between the two units on their own campus, take steps to correct incorrect or inaccurate perceptions, and to address issues and challenges related to collaboration between the two units. This study will also help faculty members and students affairs personnel to gain better self-understanding. In addition, it will be useful to those studying in preparation for careers in higher education administration.

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

Delimitations narrow the scope of the study (Creswell, 1994). The study was narrowed to the small, liberal arts college setting and then further narrowed to one specific institution. The single site case study approach was selected because it is the desire of the researcher to explore the impact of faculty perceptions of student affairs personnel on student development and it is felt that this can best be accomplished through full immersion in a single site while documenting the culture of collaboration at that site.



However, as Merriam (2009) notes, “every study, every case, every situation is theoretically an example of something else. The general lies in the particular; that is, what we learn in a particular situation we can transfer or generalize to similar situations subsequently encountered” (p. 225). It is hoped that the results of this single site case study will yield useful results that can be transferred to other similar sites/situations. The overall size and scope of responsibilities among various offices and personnel are much different in the small college setting than at regional universities or research institutions. However, it is possible that some of the findings will be also be generalizable to those settings as well.

Exploration of faculty member perceptions of student affairs personnel does present some challenges. The variety of organizational and reporting systems, political structures, and staffing models deployed on different college and university campuses makes comparison and generalization difficult. In addition, each individual brings his or her own experiences and biases to any relationship, making each situation or opportunity for collaboration unique. Further, personal definitions of functions and roles may differ.

### **Significance of the Study**

There has been little research done that explores faculty perceptions of student affairs personnel, particularly in the setting of a small liberal arts college. The research that has been conducted has been quantitative in methodology (e.g., Hardwick, 2001). Thus, this study presents an opportunity for a qualitative exploration of how faculty members perceive student affairs personnel and how that perception impacts collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs within the context of a single

institution. An increased understanding of this relationship can then be used to identify ways to develop increased collegiality on campus and to strengthen opportunities for collaboration that will ultimately benefit student development.

## Chapter 2

### A Review of the Literature

A review of the literature produced articles related to the relationship between academic affairs and student affairs, and collaborations between the two units, written from both the academic affairs and student affairs perspectives. The literature is replete with opinion pieces, summaries of successful and unsuccessful programs, discourse about the perceived importance of improving the relationship between the two units, and suggestions as to how to develop and improve the relationship between the two units. There is much less, however, in the way of empirical research—either quantitative or qualitative—that studies the relationship between academic affairs and student affairs in a systematic manner using established research methodologies. This is particularly true in the area of role identification and the perceptions that faculty have of student affairs professionals. This review of the literature yielded two broad areas addressed by research on this topic: student learning/development outcomes and the relationship between academic affairs and student affairs.

#### **Student Learning/Development Outcomes**

One area identified in reviewing the literature is the relationship between academic and student affairs relative to the role of each, and the possible collaboration between the two, in the achievement of student development or student learning outcomes.

Papish (1999) developed the *Student Learning Goals Inventory* to assess how student affairs personnel and faculty rate specific student-learning goals. Other

instruments, such as the *Institutional Goals Inventory* focused on institutional goals rather than student-learning goals. Using a purposeful sample of randomly selected faculty and the entire student affairs staff at a large research university, t-tests were used to compare the means of faculty and student affairs importance ratings for each item identified on the inventory. A total of 97 undergraduate teaching faculty, representing less than 10% of the total undergraduate teaching faculty at the institution, and 73 student affairs professionals, representing 75% of the student affairs professionals at the institution, fully completed the survey and were included in the sample. Frequency data were used to attribute responsibility for each item to faculty, student affairs, both /shared or neither. Of the 40 items on the inventory, 18 were identified as having shared responsibility by more than 50% of the faculty and student affairs personnel. Eleven items yielded significant differences between faculty and student affairs as to who had primarily responsibility. Among the 11 were developing critical thinking skills, developing effective communication skills, developing sound quantitative skills, developing skills needed to establish intimate relationships, and experiencing a smooth transition from high school to college. These findings, from a large research university, may not necessarily be applicable across all types and sizes of institutions due to the considerable variation in resources, both human and fiscal, at different institutions.

Baxter Magolda (2003) proposed a framework for making the concept of identity central to learning and suggested that student affairs assume a lead role in this educational transformation. Her research analyzed longitudinal stories (narratives) from participants in college, graduate, and professional schools and employment and yielded

her framework for the promotion of what she terms *self-authorship*. She suggested that if academic and student affairs personnel coordinated their efforts then students “would receive a consistent message that who they are and who they are becoming is central to success in learning, career decisions, understanding diversity, and interacting peacefully with others” (p. 244). She acknowledged the challenge related to the implementation of such a model, but contended, convincingly, that her longitudinal research supported partnerships and the collaboration of the curricular and co-curricular in the education of the whole student.

Data from the third edition of the *College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ)* was analyzed by Hu and Kuh (2003) in their test of a learning productivity model. A sample of 44,238 full-time undergraduates from 120 four-year colleges and universities completed the questionnaire, which uses self-reported data from students to assess what they are contributing and receiving from their college education. Both student-level and institution-level variables were standardized as *z*-scores and the authors’ proposed model was tested using hierarchical linear modeling. The authors concluded, “some colleges and universities are more efficient than others in promoting student learning” (p. 198). They further concluded, “student affairs has an important role to play in creating campus environments that affirm and support students to put forth effort in educationally purposeful activities and attain their educational objectives at the highest possible levels” (Hu & Kuh, 2003, p. 198).

Three studies, presented in one paper by DiGregorio et al. (1996), explored the role of faculty in improving student outcomes. The results of their research were then

used to propose ways that student affairs personnel could collaborate with faculty to enhance student learning in an environment in which it is widely acknowledged that substantial student learning occurs outside of the context of the classroom.

DiGregorio et al. (1996) posed research questions related to the out-of-classroom interaction of faculty and students. Using maximum variation sampling, students were selected based upon their responses to a question on out-of-classroom interaction with faculty on a national study of student learning. Data collection then consisted of three to four qualitative interviews with participants. The data were transcribed and coded. Three themes emerged: points of contact, student characteristics, and faculty characteristics. DiGregorio's conclusion was that while students are typically the initiator of out-of-classroom interactions, faculty behaviors and attitudes played a key role in the occurrence of such interactions.

Passi (DiGregorio et al., 1996) posed four research questions:

- 1) Does frequent informal student-faculty interaction have a positive impact on college outcomes?
- 2) What perceptions and expectations do college students have concerning faculty?
- 3) How does residence arrangement affect college outcomes?
- 4) How effective is a freshman advising program?" (p. 16)

Data from freshman surveys were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. Results indicated that, overall, informal student-faculty interaction did yield improved student outcomes.

Diamond's (DiGregorio et al., 1996) research focused on returning adult undergraduate students, specifically on the issues of *involvement* and *mattering*, using a mixed-methods approach. Questionnaires were used to solicit both quantitative and

qualitative data from students in programs at three baccalaureate programs serving adult students. Using multiple regression analysis, the author concluded that “involvement predicts mattering, which, in turn, influences the extent to which students are likely to be satisfied with and intend to persist in their programs” (p. 36).

DiGregorio et al. (1996) then collectively used the results of their research to pose questions related to the role and responsibility of student affairs personnel in encouraging informal student-faculty interactions. The authors viewed collaboration between faculty and student affairs professionals as being key in facilitating such encouragement and in influencing student outcomes.

Lundberg (2003) looked specifically at the influence of several factors, including faculty/administrator relationships, in adult student learning using a sample of 4,644 undergraduate participants in the *College Student Experiences Questionnaire* during the 1998-1999 academic year. Adult students (age > 23 years) were oversampled as the focus of the study. Descriptive statistics and a path analysis were used to test the effect of variables in four domains: (a) effort in reading and writing; (b) frequency and quality of relationships with peers and faculty; (c) time-limiting characteristics; and (d) background characteristics (pp. 671-672). The author’s findings indicated the “quality of relationships with administrators was a strong predictor of learning for all students in this study, but it was strongest for students 30 years and older” (p. 682). She concluded that student affairs personnel could affect student learning by promoting interaction with faculty and administrators and, as administrators themselves, providing exemplary service to adult students.

In a longitudinal study of student development during the freshman year, Thieke (1994) sought to validate Chickering's (1981, cited in Thieke, 1994, p. 1) Theory of Student Development. Among his research questions were the effects of faculty-student interactions and extra-curricular involvement on student development. The population studied consisted of the freshman class (n = 194) at a small, selective, religiously affiliated Carnegie Classification Comprehensive II College (p. 6). Data were collected using three instruments: a self-developed questionnaire, the *Student Development Task and Lifestyle Inventory (SDTLI)*, and the *College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ)*. Thirty-six variables were derived from the assessment instruments and statistical analyses (using an alpha level of .05) were conducted. The author found that "informal interaction with faculty was found to significantly impact affective student development variables in two of the five models studied" (p. 17). The author concluded that as a result of the findings of his research, academic and student affairs administrators should collaborate in the development of activities and experiences that would promote informal faculty-student interactions and, therefore, positive student development.

Blackhurst and Pearson (1996) also studied freshman students to ascertain their perception of the emphasis of cognitive and affective goals by faculty and student affairs administrators in a freshman seminar course. Their sample consisted of a random sample of 180 students from the freshman class, with equal numbers of males and females assigned to 1 of 9 sections of the seminar course—three taught by faculty, three taught by a student affairs administrator, and three co-taught—at an independent, coeducational college in the Midwest. Data were collected using an Instructor Self-Assessment Form



and Student Assessment Form, each consisting of Likert-type scales to assess self-reported perception of emphasis on cognitive and affective goals. In addition, the *Student Development Task and Lifestyle Inventory (SDTLI)* was used. Means and analyses of variance were conducted to determine if significant differences existed. The authors' conclusions were: (a) students reported student affairs administrators emphasized both cognitive and affective goals more than faculty; (b) faculty and student affairs administrators reported emphasizing cognitive goals to the same degree; (c) student affairs administrators reported emphasizing some affective goals to a greater degree than faculty; and (d) pairing faculty and student affairs professionals did not maximize goal emphasis (p. 64). This study is limited in its scope but does present interesting findings that should drive further investigation as to how cognitive and affective goals can best be accomplished by faculty and student affairs personnel.

Using a self-designed instrument, the *LLC Experiences Questionnaire*, Shushok and Sriram (2010) designed a study to explore the impact of living-learning communities on engineering and computer science students. Two groups of engineering and computer science students were selected with care taken to ensure that each group was comparable in the areas of race, gender, classification, major, and academic abilities. One group of students were then invited to be a part of the first cohort of a new residential community with "facilities and programs designed to integrate academic and social activities, such as meals with faculty, group discussions, guest lectures, and social gatherings with faculty present" (p. 72). The other group of students did not participate in the residential community. After administration of the *LLC Experiences Questionnaire*, the researchers

found four areas of statistically significant differences between the participant and non-participant groups. In all instances, the participant group was more likely to respond favorably to: (a) meeting informally or socially with a faculty member outside of class or faculty office; (b) discussing academic issues with a faculty member outside of class or faculty office; (c) meeting in an organized student group or informally with other students to prepare for an academic assignment; and (d) expressing satisfaction with his or her overall experiences where he or she currently lives. The overall findings of this study suggest that informal interactions and encounters with faculty members yielded positive results with students. While this study did not specifically address the involvement or role of student affairs, specifically the residence life staff, in the living learning program, the researchers suggest that their results, “reveal the powerful impact of an academic and student affairs partnership in student development” (p. 76).

### **The Relationship Between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs**

The review of literature revealed two issues related to the relationship between academic affairs and student affairs: models of partnership or collaboration and the relationship of role identification to collaboration.

The topic of partnerships between academic and student affairs has received much attention. In 1998 a Joint Task Force on Student Learning issued a document, *Powerful Partnerships: A Shared Responsibility*, which stated, in part, “people collaborate when the job they face is too big, is too urgent, or requires too much knowledge for one person or group to do alone” (cited in Highum & Lund, 2000, p. 35). In exploring the relationship between partnerships and relationships, Highum and Lund (2000) analyzed

different programming partnerships at four institutions of various types. Their analysis included a small Jesuit institution in the east, a small Lutheran college in the Midwest, an urban Jesuit university on the west coast, and a community college in the Southwest. In their summary, the authors observed that “relationship building lies at the heart of successful initiatives” (p. 42) and that effective partnership requires an investment of resources and time.

A key factor to collaboration is the model that is used for implementation. Kezar (2003) conducted a study based on a subset of data from a national student survey that “sought to provide a national picture of the change process related to academic and student affairs collaboration” (pp. 144-145). The research goal was to explore the model most likely to yield success in collaboration and to explore the impact of institutional characteristics on success. Three models related to successful strategies for academic and student affairs collaboration—Kuh’s five strategies (cross-institutional dialog, common vision development, common language development, systemic change, and generate enthusiasm) (p. 147), planned change and restructuring—were combined for analysis consisting of descriptive statistics, hypothesis testing, and cross tabulation and Pearson Chi-Square tests. The author found that a blended model that combines strategies from Kuh and planned change is most successful and that few institutional characteristics significantly influenced the model needed for success.

Pace, Blumreich, and Merkle (2006) describe the results of an initiative, using intergroup dialogues, a technique based on a conflict resolution model, to increase interaction and communication between faculty, staff, and students at Grand Valley State

University in Allendale, Michigan. In response to national calls for change in higher education to meet the needs of future students, the researchers

believed that a campus-wide discussion of the meaning of a liberal education would contribute significantly to refocusing the institution on its liberal education mission, better align faculty and student expectations, increase academic rigor and student learning, and increase collaboration between academic and student affairs. (p. 304)

The researchers convened 18 groups, each of which met three times, for structured conversations based on a set of provided readings. After the third meeting, a feedback form was used to collect data, including recommendations for the institution, from participants. Numerous themes emerged from the feedback received from participants and “all of the themes included recommendations that required greater collaboration between academic and student affairs” (p. 309). The researchers note the effectiveness of the use of the intergroup dialog approach in helping different groups, such as faculty and student affairs staff, understand the perspectives and responsibilities of the other; build a common understanding of concepts, such as liberal education; and establish consensus and buy-in for initiatives and strategies.

One common area for collaboration between academic and student affairs is in the development and administration of orientation programs. Greenlaw, Anliker, and Barker (1997) explored the organizational placement of student orientation programs and the perception of the orientation director as to the advantages and disadvantages of its placement. Data were collected using a survey sent to 137 large universities across the United States. They found that, of respondents, 66% had programs that were the responsibility of student affairs, 16% had programs that were the responsibility of

academic affairs, 6% had programs with shared academic and student affairs responsibility, and 12% at which responsibility was in a division or unit other than academic or student affairs. Credibility on campus was a key factor identified as a weakness in orientation programs that are the responsibility of student affairs and a strength of those that are the responsibility of academic affairs. The authors concluded that effective collaboration across campus units was more important than the formal administrative placement of the orientation program.

Another area of possible collaboration between academic and student affairs is in student assessment. Peterson and Augustine (2000) conducted a study to gain empirical evidence regarding the ways that institutions of higher education promote and support the use of student assessment data in the academic decision-making process. In reviewing the literature, they found that “most institutions have adopted limited approaches to student assessment—focusing primarily on cognitive rather than affective or behavioral assessment (Coward, 1990; Johnson et al., 1991; Patton et al., 1996; Steele & Lutz, 1995; Steele et al., 1997)” (p. 24). The researchers used the *Institutional Support for Student Assessment (ISSA)* instrument and surveyed 2,524 institutions of postsecondary education in the United States. Descriptive and comparative statistics were used to observe approaches and patterns. The authors found that student assessment has only a marginal influence on academic decision-making (p. 44). However, their research did find that involving student affairs personnel in student assessment was likely to result in the increased use of assessment data in academic decision-making.

Ott, Haertlein, and Craig (2003) conducted qualitative research during the planning and implementation of a collaborative health assessment and intervention initiative at a large urban university. They found that collaboration between academic and student affairs personnel yielded positive synergies because of the reciprocity of skills in the areas of data collection and analysis (faculty), access to grant funding (faculty), access to student groups (student affairs), and knowledge into the needs of students (student affairs). Their conclusion was that collaboration is useful if both faculty and student affairs professionals are “reciprocally respectful and that each participant relinquishes some power and control to empower participants” (p. 260).

A critical element in the relationship between academic and student affairs concerns the roles each party views themselves as playing as well as the role each party perceives the other to be playing. Blimling (1993) eloquently wrote about this role identification dynamic. His conclusion was that while both are concerned about the education of students, their view of one another and their approach to the task differ. However, while his writings and conclusions make sense and have face validity, they lack an empirical research basis. This review of the literature yielded few studies that approached this dynamic from a research basis but a seemingly endless supply of articles that were written from various cognitive, constructivist, and affective viewpoints.

Philpott and Strange (2003) conducted a qualitative analysis over a period of 15 months at a Midwestern university while faculty and student affairs worked on the creation of a learning experience. Participants included two campus administrators, two full-time faculty, and two student affairs staff members. Data collection consisted of

multiple, face-to-face, interviews with the participants. Interviews were recorded and transcribed and data were categorized. In discussing their research findings, the authors observed, “it was easy to discern, at any given point during the collaborative process, who was a faculty member and who was a student affairs administrator, because they, in fact, spoke very different dialects of the same language” (p. 90). The conclusion of the authors was that collaborative partnerships might be best created through the actions of an external entity because of the entrenched perspective of those in each group.

A study of the perceptions held by student affairs personnel, specifically chief student affairs officers, was conducted by Reger and Hyman (1989). Their objective was to determine whether student affairs personnel view themselves primarily as administrators or educators, to identify how student affairs personnel felt faculty perceived them, and to assess opportunities available to student affairs personnel in developing partnerships with faculty (p. 65). Their study consisted of nine open-ended questions that were posed to the chief student affairs officers at a random sample of one third of the private and public institutions listed in the NASPA Region IV West Directory. Participants were allowed to respond via phone or mail. The authors found that most CSAOs felt that their approach to student development contributed to the overall educational mission of their institution. However, there was not uniform agreement over the appropriate roles of student affairs personnel and titles and their corresponding functions varied widely. The authors also found that an image problem existed with faculty, as perceived by student affairs personnel.

Despite the confusion over roles and perceived image problems with faculty, a study of the implementation of management techniques by Owens, Meabon, Suddick, and Klein (1981) among academic, student affairs, and business officers found that student affairs officers had the highest level of implementation of management principles. The study, which consisted of a survey of a stratified random sample of 320 two- and four-year private and public institutions, also found that the management profiles of student affairs and academic affairs officers were most alike. The authors concluded,

since student affairs officers are at the forefront in the implementation of management techniques in college and universities when compared with their counterparts in academic and business affairs, they should be in a good position to adequately propose, explain, and defend their programs and services at the institution bargaining table. (p. 20)

Part of developing a common understanding of the role of student affairs personnel involves understanding the key traits necessary for success. A meta-analysis of the skills and competencies necessary for success as a student affairs administrator was conducted by Lovell and Kosten (2000). The authors collected 23 empirical studies related to the skills and competencies required of student affairs professionals. Using a coding scheme, the authors analyzed each article to form aggregate quantitative data. The authors found that “to be successful as a student affairs administrator, well-developed administration, management, and human facilitation skills are key” (p. 566).

Related to management techniques, skills, and competencies necessary for success, status for student affairs personnel, as with many others in the field of academia, is related to academic preparation. Townsend and Wiese (1992) conducted a study using a random stratified sample of 695 presidents, academic affairs officers, and student



affairs officers from 2-year and 4-year colleges across the United States. Each participant was asked their feelings about the doctorate in higher education as an appropriate credential for administrative positions and in comparison to doctorates in academic fields. The research results indicated that a large percentage of academic administrators (34%) lack enough knowledge about the doctorate in higher education to provide meaningful responses. In comparison with other academic degrees, the researchers found that 41% felt a degree in an academic discipline was preferable while 27% felt the higher education degree was preferable (p. 55). When grouped by position, the researchers found that student affairs officers are most likely to value the higher education degree, and are also the most likely to hold it. This introduced the question of whether student affairs officers are afforded a second-class status because of their lack of doctoral preparation in an academic discipline.

The studies by Owens et al. (1981) and Townsend and Wiese (1992) both looked primarily at the role of the chief student affairs officer. Rosser and Javinar (2003), in contrast, studied midlevel student affairs professionals. Using a subset of 2,160 participants drawn from a national sample of 4,000 midlevel leaders, the researchers modified a previously administered morale and departure survey for data collection. The variables selected to study were work life, morale, and intent to leave. The authors found that there was an inverse relationship between tenure at an institution and morale yielding a greater intent to leave. They also found an inverse relationship between level of pay and tenure but without the resulting greater intent to leave. The authors also noted that a key impact on intent to leave related to external relationships, such as those formed with

faculty, senior administrators, and students, finding that student affairs leaders tend to value highly their role as liaisons.

There is much more in the literature relating to role, and role ambiguity, among student affairs professionals when exploring the relationship between academic and student affairs than about faculty roles. However, Singleton (1987) does address issues related to role ambiguity among department chairs in her study of 46 educational administration department chairpersons. Using a questionnaire developed by combining items from several previously administered instruments, the author sought to explore role conflict, job satisfaction, tension, anxiety, propensity to leave, and responsibilities of academic department chairs (pp. 42-43). Correlational analyses were used to identify significant relationships in the data collected. The author found a correlation between decreased job satisfaction and increased anxiety on the job. One of the key roles that yielded ambiguity and uncertainty for department chairs was in dealing with student affairs. This finding is interesting in light of Blimling's (1993) assertion that many faculty perceive themselves as capable of dealing with student affairs issues.

In a qualitative case study, Wawrzynski, Jessup-Anger, and Yao (2011) explored faculty meaning making of their experiences working in a residential college setting. This study, which combined semi-structured interviews, observation, and document analysis, sought to understand the experiences of faculty members who were part of a newly established residential college within a large research institution in the Midwest. They found three dominant themes within the experiences of faculty members: difficulty prioritizing the opportunities that came with the affiliation with the residential college,

both excitement and gratitude in the collegial relationships they were a part of due to their involvement in the residential college, and a sense of accomplishment in collaborating to develop the new initiative. The researchers noted, with interest, the lack of any mention of any relationship with student affairs administrators on the part of the faculty members interviewed in the study. It was suggested by the researchers that “to partner more effectively with faculty it is vital that student affairs educators understand the learning outcomes of the subject matter and position themselves to advance those outcomes” (p. 67). The researchers also suggest that student affairs professionals need to challenge their existing assumptions regarding how faculty members value the co-curricular and should assume the burden for reaching out to faculty and seeking to collaborate.

Ellett and Schmidt (2011), in their interpretive, qualitative study, sought to explore faculty perceptions of community development in the context of living-learning communities at a private, research institution. The study relied on focus group conversations with residence life staff and faculty members involved in the living-learning community. Their findings included eight themes related to the building of community in residence halls. Of note was a finding relating to the work of Philpott and Strange (2003). Ellett and Schmidt (2011) suggest that “Philpott and Strange (2003) emphasized frequent fragmentation between student affairs and faculty approaches to work” (p. 35), with each having different operational paradigms, whereas their own research indicated that, “faculty participants who were motivated to be involved in the residence halls were invested in collaborative approaches to building community,

specifically noting the importance of connecting meaningfully with RAs” (p. 35). The essence of the conclusion and recommendations of this study were that effective collaboration, while not always easy, is achievable.

In a quantitative study, Haynes and Janosik (2012) explored the intrinsic and extrinsic benefits gained from faculty and staff involvements in living-learning programs. They conducted a survey with 268 respondents, of which 47.8% were faculty and 52.2% were student affairs staff, which consisted of questions regarding the intrinsic and extrinsic benefits of working with a living-learning program, as well as demographic questions. Survey results found that respondents received intrinsic benefits more frequently than they received extrinsic benefits. Further, the researchers found that, among intrinsic benefits, faculty were significantly more likely to have conversations with students about outside topics and have shared research interests while staff were significantly more likely to act in a consulting role for community issues and projects. Most of these significant differences were attributed to the differing roles of the respondents and their self-assessment of whether something that was part of their day-to-day role would be considered a benefit. For example, student affairs staff members regularly engage students about outside topics so it was, in the opinion of the researchers, less likely that they would judge such conversations to be an intrinsic benefit of their involvement in the living-learning community. The findings of this study confirmed the work of Wawrzynski et al. (2011) suggesting that faculty involved in living-learning programs experience an increased sense of community with colleagues, including student affairs staff. The researchers noted,

faculty reported experiencing increased interaction with student affairs faculty and staff in departments other than their own (85.16%), becoming more aware of a greater sense of community within the institution (70.31%), working with veteran faculty and staff (60.94%), and having increased interaction with faculty from disciplines other than their own (54.64%). (p. 41)

This study suggests that the greatest benefits to faculty and staff involved in collaborative efforts, such as living-learning programs, are intrinsic, rather than extrinsic.

### **Doctoral Dissertations**

There have been previous dissertation studies that have explored various aspects of the relationship between academic affairs and student affairs.

Dye (1970) conducted an empirical investigation using role theory to explore the perceptions of the role that the division of student affairs at a university was playing as well as any possible incongruence between those perceptions and the expectations. The studied population consisted of 363 faculty and administrators at the State University of New York at Buffalo. Dye found, based on data analysis that included analysis of variance, Scheffe post-hoc pairwise comparisons and *t*-tests that there was agreement among respondents about their perception of the role of the division of student affairs and that there did exist congruence between that role and their expectations of the division.

The dynamics of faculty and student affairs partnerships were explored using a survey methodology by Olson (2001). Olson's analysis revealed that intrinsic factors were more important than extrinsic factors in motivating partnerships. He also discovered that the educator role of student affairs personnel was rated more positively by student affairs staff and less positively by faculty.

Hardwick (2001) used a non-experimental descriptive survey to explore faculty perceptions of the roles of faculty and student affairs staff in student learning at liberal arts colleges. The population surveyed included faculty who teach at member institutions of the Collaboration for the Advancement of College Teaching and Learning, a consortium of public and private colleges in the upper Midwest. In his study, Hardwick developed a survey instrument that sought to explore

roles of faculty and student affairs in student learning; collaborative practices of faculty and student affairs staff to increase the integration of in-classroom and out-of-classroom learning; faculty and institutional definitions for student learning goals; and institutional barriers for integrating student learning. (p. 18)

The quantitative approach was chosen, while the potential for missing meaningful data was acknowledged, because the researcher sought input from faculty at multiple institutions. The results of Hardwick's study yielded that faculty generally perceived themselves as classroom instructors and research supervisors while they perceived student affairs staff as residential advisors, personal counselors, and judicial officers. Faculty perceived the roles of career development and extra-curricular advisors to be shared. Other findings included a high interest in faculty-initiated out-of-classroom learning, moderate support of involving faculty in developing learning goals and linking the curriculum to the co-curriculum, and moderate agreement on some common barriers to collaboration including faculty familiarity with out-of-classroom activities, faculty workloads, and familiarity with the work of student affairs staff (pp. 125- 128).

Participants from four southeastern universities were surveyed and interviewed in a mixed-methods study by Sousa-Peoples (2001) that sought to gain insight into the occupations status of student affairs personnel by key institutional stakeholders. She

found that, while those working in student affairs perceived themselves to be in a profession, key stakeholders “perceive student affairs to be a professional enterprise but not a profession by the criteria of occupational sociology” (p. 168). She also found that key stakeholders “perceive the role of student affairs to be more administrative than educational, with a priority on handling crisis situations in terms of policy enforcement and counseling efforts” (p. 168).

Beodeker (2006) conducted case study research to identify factors that supported or inhibited collaboration between faculty and student affairs staff. The case study was conducted at a large, multiple-campus, single-gender catholic institution and included three broad groupings of individuals: administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals. Six factors and/or strategies that positively influenced collaborative initiatives were identified: “senior administrative leadership; personal relationships; promoting the principles of a learning organization; dialogue; collaboration as a process; and intentionality” (p. 240).

### **Summary and Proposed Study**

This literature review reveals that, on the topic of the relationship between academic and student affairs, there exist quantitative and qualitative studies that explore student learning/development outcomes and models for partnership. There are some, although notably fewer, empirical studies that explore issues related to role identification. One voice that is lacking is that of the faculty and their perception of student affairs professionals, particularly at small colleges. Reger and Hyman (1989) included data on how student affairs professionals think faculty members perceive them but no empirical

study of faculty perceptions was identified. Hardwick (2001) explored faculty perceptions in his doctoral dissertation at the University of Minnesota through a quantitative study. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the impact of perception of faculty at a small college on collaborative initiatives in a qualitative fashion, exploring the perceptions of faculty at a single site, using complementary qualitative analyses to establish a context for those perceptions, and seeking to identify key themes.



## Chapter 3

### Research Methodology

Within higher education in America, there exists a bifurcated understanding of student development, with faculty being responsible for intellectual development and student affairs professionals being responsible for psychosocial development (Philpott & Strange, 2003). As Kuh (1996) noted, “not all faculty members recognize the important learning outcomes that can accrue through experiences beyond the classroom, on or off campus” (p. 139). It is the contention of the researcher, as well as other researchers, (e.g., Baxter Magolda, 2003; Kuh & Hinkle, 2002), that this divided mentality fails to serve students. This study explored the environment of a small college, using that environmental information as a context to depict, qualitatively, the day-to-day experiences and perceptions of faculty with regard to the role and functions of the student affairs personnel. This study then examined the scope and nature of the relationship between the academic affairs and student affairs units, with a particular focus on issues and challenges to collaboration, to offer recommendations to address those issues and challenges.

This study made use of case study methodology. Merriam (2001) notes that “a case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation” (p. 19).

### **Rationale for the Choice of a Single Site Case Study**

The single site case study approach was selected because it was the desire of the researcher to explore the impact of faculty perceptions of student affairs personnel on student development and it was felt that this could best be accomplished through full immersion in a single site while documenting the culture of collaboration at that site through analysis of institutional documents, interviews with faculty members, and observational field notes. Merriam (2009) states, "a single case or small, nonrandom, purposeful sample is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many" (p. 224). The interviews specifically explored how faculty members perceived the student affairs personnel at the case study institution and allowed them to discuss their experiences with collaboration – which ranged from minimal interest in collaboration to descriptions of failed or challenged collaborations to descriptions of successful collaborations – in their own words. The literature describes the virtues of academic affairs-student affairs collaboration (e.g., Baxter Magolda, 2003; Kuh, 1996) and, generally, laments the lack of collaboration. This single site case study allowed the researcher to explore and describe the level of collaboration at one institution, looking specifically at how faculty perception of student affairs personnel has impacted that collaboration.

### **Sampling Selection**

Purposeful sampling was used in identifying both the case study site and the interview participants at the case study site. According to Creswell (2005), "in purposeful

sampling researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (p. 204).

**Site selection.** In selecting a site, it was the goal of the researcher to select a typical small college, defined using the classifications of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The site selected is classified as *S4/HR: Small four-year, highly residential*, meaning “fall enrollment data show FTE enrollment of 1,000–2,999 degree-seeking students at these bachelor’s degree granting institutions. At least half of degree-seeking undergraduates live on campus and at least 80 percent attend full time” (Carnegie Foundation, n.d.). This site was selected due to its representativeness of the type of institution that the researcher wanted to study. Yin (2009) identified representativeness as one rationale for the choice of a single-site case study. McFeely College (pseudonym) is an independent, private, co-educational, four-year college located in the southeastern United States. With a student enrollment of approximately 2,000 students, the college offers 34 majors in arts, science, and business. There are approximately 120 full-time, tenure-track faculty members. The cost of tuition is just over \$30,000. The college is accredited by a regional accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (McFeely College, n.d.c).

In addition to generally representing the small, private college in the United States, McFeely College was also identified as a desirable case study site because of its publically stated interest and commitment to collaborative learning. The mission and vision statements of the college indicated its commitment to “integrated learning.” The Strategic Plan of the college identified, as its first two goals:

1. Be recognized for excellence in integrative learning.
2. Create a student-centered culture built upon openness and collaboration between faculty, staff, students and alumni. (McFeely College, n.d.a)

Thus, as described in its public documents, McFeely College articulated a commitment to student learning, specifically integrated learning, and to faculty-staff collaboration.

The researcher first initiated contact with McFeely College during summer, 2009. Initial contact was made with the President and with the Dean of the College. The researcher's inquiry was routed to the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) for response and follow-up. The VPSA became the primary point of contact throughout the study. Upon first receiving the inquiry from the researcher, the VPSA indicated his willingness, as well as that of the Dean of the College, for the researcher to conduct a case study of the institution.

**Participant selection.** To gain the perspective of the faculty members at the case study institution, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews while on-site. The primary contact at the case study institution was the Vice President for Student Affairs and the researcher worked with him to develop a list of potential interviewees. In identifying participants, typical sampling, defined by Creswell (2005) as, "a form of purposeful sampling in which the researcher studies a person or site that is 'typical' to those unfamiliar with the situation" (p. 204), was employed by the researcher. This involved the researcher working with the identified gatekeeper, the Vice President for Student Affairs at the case study institution, to identify a group of typical faculty members. In selecting interview participants, the researcher worked with the gatekeeper to ensure that the group, as much as was feasible based on individual willingness and

availability, represented a range of variability in terms of gender, academic discipline, tenure at the institution, and tenure in the professoriate.

Names and contact information of potential participants were obtained through working with the Vice President for Student Affairs at the case study institution. Participants were invited to participate in the study via email from the researcher prior to the researcher's visit to the case study site. In the initial invitation to participate, potential participants were advised that their participation was voluntary. Further, they were notified that they would be presented with a formal informed consent form prior to the beginning of the interview. A copy of this correspondence is located in Appendix D. As faculty members responded, an interview schedule was developed for the researcher's time on campus.

In keeping with Merriam's observation that,

the best rule of thumb is that the data and emerging findings must feel saturated; that is, you must begin to see or hear the same things over and over again, and no new information surfaces as you collect more data. (2009, p. 219)

the researcher conducted interviews until a point of redundancy or saturation was achieved. While most of the interviews were set up by the researcher with the interview participants via email prior to the researcher's visit to the case study institution there were some interviewees that were not identified and interviews that were not scheduled until the researcher was on site. This flexibility was important. As Merriam (2001) observed, "the researcher usually does not know ahead of time every person who might be interviewed, all of the questions that might be asked, or where to look next unless data are analyzed as they are being collected" (p. 155).

## Data Collection

This single site case study employed a multi-method triangulation approach that included analysis of documents, semi-structured interviews, and observations. According to Yin (2009), “a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence” (pp. 114-115).

**Document analysis.** Prior to the on-site visit, documents were reviewed to establish an understanding of the institution and its context. These included three key documents related to the case study institution that were publically available: the Statement of Purpose (which includes the Mission, Vision, and Purpose statements); the Strategic Plan; and the Philosophy of Education, entitled *Liberation to Lead: A Liberal Arts Education at McFeely College [pseudonym]* as well as the college web site, academic catalogue as posted online, and institutional fact book, as made available online. The analysis of these documents served to orient the researcher to the institution, provide some descriptive statistics about the institution, establish an understanding of how the institution choose to state and present its own conception and orientation toward student development publically, and to identify areas for further exploration during interviews.

After the researcher’s time on-site, documents were also used in the analysis of interview data and the identification of themes. This involved a comparison of words and phrases used by the administrators and faculty members interviewed with language found in institutional documents. The researcher also looks for alignment or misalignment

between the published philosophy and core values of the institution and the philosophy and core values as articulated by the faculty members interviewed.

**Interviews.** While on campus, the researcher conducted interviews with two administrators: the dean of the college and the dean of students, as well as ten members of the faculty. The two administrators were interviewed together at the beginning of the researcher's time on campus and this interview helped to clarify some basic contextual questions, to discuss logistical issues, and to gain the insights and perspectives of two key administrators prior to meeting with faculty members. Since the focus of this study was on faculty perceptions of student affairs personnel, rather than on how student affairs personnel felt they were perceived or perceived their own role, the dean of students was the only non-faculty member interviewed.

The researcher used a semi-structured interview format. In describing the semi-structured interview format, Merriam (2009) states,

the largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic. (p. 90)

The focus of the interviews was to give the interviewees the opportunity to share their perceptions of student affairs personnel, relate their experiences in working with student affairs personnel, and to discuss their understanding of and experience with collaborative initiatives at the institution.

***Informed consent protocol.*** Prior to the beginning of the interview, each participant was advised of the following: (a) taking part in this study is voluntary; (b) the

participant may not benefit directly as a result of taking part in this study, but knowledge may be gained that might benefit others; (c) the participant is free to withdraw from the study at any time without affecting his or her relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; and (d) leaving the study will not cause a penalty or loss of any benefits to which the participant is otherwise entitled. The participant was then asked to review the informed consent form, any questions from the participant were answered by the researcher, the participant was then asked to sign the informed consent form, and a copy of the informed consent form was provided to that participant. A copy of the informed consent form is included in Appendix B.

***Interview protocol.*** An interview protocol was developed and pilot-tested during a mock interview with a faculty member at the researcher's home institution. Creswell (2005) notes that "an interview protocol is a form designed by the researcher that contains instructions for the process of the interview, the questions to be asked, and space to take notes of responses from the interviewee" (p. 222). Interview questions were developed based upon a review of the literature, including use of the findings of the quantitative study by Hardwick (2001). All interviews were audio recorded for later transcription and analysis. The researcher developed an interview form that was used to guide the interview, capture key words and phrases during the interview, and to provide a mechanism for capturing the observations of the researcher during the interview that was non-obtrusive. This form is included in Appendix C.

***Real-time data analysis.*** During the course of the on-site visit, ongoing, real-time data analysis helped guide and direct the interview process. During each interview, the



researcher gained additional understanding on the unique context of the case study institution and was able to employ that understanding when asking questions. Further, this understanding yielded some institution-specific questions that were asked in subsequent interviews to assist the researcher in more fully understanding the context of the institution.

**Observations.** While on-site, the researcher kept field notes that documented observations and interactions. Creswell (2005) defines observation as “the process of gathering open-ended, firsthand information by observing people and places at a research site” (p. 211). The researcher’s field notes were used to help provide context and descriptive information that will add meaning to the interview transcripts and the document analysis. Merriam (2009) notes, “observations are also conducted to triangulate emerging findings; that is, they are used in conjunction with interviewing and document analysis to substantiate the findings” (p. 119). Field notes also provided a mechanism for recording unscheduled interactions.

The researcher was able to secure lodging in an on-campus guesthouse, allowing easy access to the campus at various hours of the day. While on campus, the researcher spent time each day walking and observing the campus. This provided the researcher with some opportunity to note informal interactions between students, faculty, and staff. The researcher also was mindful about noting other artifacts such as flyers and advertisements posted in hallways and bulletin boards in academic buildings and social spaces. The researcher had opportunity to make use of the campus library as both a workspace and another place to observe interactions between members of the campus community. The

researcher was purposeful about choosing to eat some meals in campus dining facilities to allow further observation. During the researcher's time on campus, an intercollegiate volleyball match was scheduled thus yielding yet another opportunity to observe part of the life of the campus.

### **Data Confidentiality**

Any information obtained during this study that could identify participants was kept confidential. The data were stored on the password-protected laptop computer of the researcher or in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. Data were viewed only by the researcher. Audio files were stored on the researcher's password-protected computer and were heard only by the researcher, who personally completed the transcriptions.

Participants are not personally identified in these written materials. The researcher may publish the results of this study; however, he will keep participant's names and other identifying information private. The audio files will be deleted after the study has been completed.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis occurred both during and following the on-site visit. As Merriam (2001) notes, "a qualitative design is emergent . . . the process of data collection and analysis is recursive and dynamic" (p. 155). During data collection, analysis was ongoing. Interview recordings, field notes, and documents were reviewed between data collection activities, with time for this activity built in the researcher's daily schedule, so that the results of this ongoing analysis could be used to inform the next collection of data. Merriam (2009) emphasizes the importance of beginning analysis during data

collection, “without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed. Data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating” (p. 171).

**Data management.** Following the on-site visit, the researcher began data management. Documents and the researcher’s notes on those documents were gathered and filed. Interview recordings were transcribed by the researcher, which allowed him to spend time with each interview and to know it well. Field notes were organized. An inventory of all data was developed and back-up copies of all data files were created and stored in a secure location.

After all of the data were assembled, the researcher began systematic analysis and interpretation. As Merriam (2009) observes, “data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data. And making sense out of the data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read—it is the process of making meaning” (pp. 175-176). In describing the process of qualitative data analysis, Creswell (2005) instructs, “this analysis initially consists of developing a general sense of the data, and then coding description and themes about the central phenomenon” (p. 231).

Initially, transcripts were reviewed multiple times in their entirety to help the researcher get an overall sense of the meaning and content of each interview. The researcher also reviewed key institutional documents that had been reviewed prior to the on-site visit to the case study institution.

After transcription was completed and the researcher had become familiar with all of the transcripts, coding began. According to Creswell (2005), “coding is the process of segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions and broach themes in the data” (p. 237). The researcher followed the coding process recommended by Creswell (2005, pp. 238-239): each transcript was read and initial notes were made using the Weft QDA qualitative data analysis software; specific text segments were marked and a code, describing the meaning of that text segment, assigned; after coding the text, a list of all codes assigned was made with similar codes being grouped and redundant codes eliminated; this process was then repeated for each transcript. The result was a preliminary list of themes based on the interview data.

Using the list of preliminary themes as a foundation, the researcher continued to review and analyze institutional documents and observational notes. The use of multiple sources of data led to some modification of these as the overall phenomenon, as captured in the documents, researcher observations, and words of the interview participants became clear. Final themes were identified based on the codes from all of the analyzed data. Creswell (2005) notes that themes are best identified by “examining codes that the participants most frequently discuss, are unique or surprising, have the most evidence to support them, or those you might expect to find when studying the phenomenon” (p. 239).

### **Validity, Reliability, and Researcher Bias**

As Merriam (2009) observes, “all research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner” (p. 209). It was the intention of the researcher

to conduct and present this study in an ethical manner and make reasonable attempts to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings.

**Validity.** Validity is defined by Merriam (2009) in terms of the congruence between the research findings and reality. She further notes, “one of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured as in quantitative research” (p. 213). In this study, steps were taken to ensure the validity of the findings, including triangulation and the use of an external audit.

Creswell (2005) defines triangulation as, “the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research” (p. 252). In this study, triangulation was accomplished through conducting interviews, until the point of saturation, with numerous faculty members at the case study institution and by using three methods of data collection: document analysis, interviews, and observations.

The opportunity for verification of validity through member checking was also incorporated into the study. Merriam (2009) states, “the process involved in member checks is to take your preliminary analysis back to some the participants and ask whether your interpretation ‘rings true’” (p. 217). During informed consent, participants were asked to provide an email address so that the researcher could contact them during the process of data analysis to obtain their input on the analysis or to seek clarification, if needed.

A final method for ensuring validity was the use of an external audit. According to Creswell (2005), an external audit is a process “in which a researcher hires or obtains the services of an individual outside the study to review different aspects of the research. The auditor reviews the project and writes or communicates an evaluation of the study” (p. 253). An external auditor was used to validate the findings of the researcher after the collection and analysis of the data. The audit included:

1. A review of all IRB-related documents to ensure researcher compliance with the established and approved research protocols
2. A review of random sample of transcripts (sample determined by auditor)
3. A review random sample of audio files to ascertain accuracy of transcripts (sample determined by auditor)
4. A review of a draft of the study to assess consistency in purpose, methodology, and analysis as well as compliance with IRB-related documents.

The attestation of the external auditor is included in Appendix F.

**Reliability.** Reliability, according to Merriam (2009) deals with the repeatability of the research findings. She further notes,

replication of a qualitative study will not yield the same results, but this does not discredit the results of any particular study; there can be numerous interpretations of the same data. The more important question for qualitative research is *whether the results are consistent with the data collected.* (p. 221)

In this study, the use of an external audit serves to ensure the reliability, as well as the validity, of the research findings.

**Researcher bias.** As noted by Strauss and Corbin (1998), “analysts, as well as research participants, bring to the investigation biases, beliefs, and assumptions.” Merriam (2009) states that, “investigators need to explain their biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding the research to be undertaken” (p. 219). The researcher in this study has worked in higher education, in the small college environment, for 15 years and has held positions in library services, academic affairs administration, and student affairs administration. It is this experience, particularly having worked in both academic affairs and then, later, student affairs, that prompted the researcher’s interest in the topic of faculty perceptions of student affairs personnel. This experience also frames the researcher’s knowledge, opinions, and assumptions about collaboration between faculty members and student affairs personnel regarding student development. Merriam (2009) suggests that, in addition to triangulation—the use of document analysis, observations, and interviews—researchers can minimize bias using other strategies such as engaging in the data collection process until saturation is achieved and making use of peer examination. While on-site at the case study institution, the researcher conducted interviews until a point of redundancy or saturation was achieved. Further, throughout the coding and data analysis portion the researcher engaged in informal peer examination through conversations with colleagues. In addition, feedback about data analysis and the resulting themes and conclusions was provided to the researcher by his dissertation advisor.

**Transferability**

It is hoped that the results of this single site case study will provide information and insights that will have applicability outside of the case study institution. The single site case study approach was selected because it was the desire of the researcher to explore the impact of faculty perceptions of student affairs personnel on student development and it was determined that this could best be accomplished through full immersion in a single site while completely documenting the culture of collaboration at that site. However, as Merriam (2009) notes, “every study, every case, every situation is theoretically an example of something else. The general lies in the particular; that is, what we learn in a particular situation we can transfer or generalize to similar situations subsequently encountered” (p. 225). The overall size and scope of responsibilities among various offices and personnel are much different in the small college setting than at regional universities or research institutions. However, it is possible that some of the findings will also be generalizable to those settings as well.

**Summary of Research Activity**

A summary of the research activities for this study is provided in Table 1.



Table 1  
*Research Activity Summary*

Step	Description
Identification of general topics of interest for the study	The researcher has worked in a variety of roles in higher education including instructional technology, library services, academic affairs administration, and student affairs administration. This experience led to his interest in exploring faculty perceptions of student affairs personnel and the impact of that perception on collaborative initiatives.
Review of the literature	A review of the literature produced articles related to the relationship between academic affairs and student affairs, and collaborations between the two units, written from both the academic affairs and student affairs perspectives. The literature is replete with opinion pieces, summaries of successful and unsuccessful programs, discourse about the perceived importance of improving the relationship between the two units, and suggestions as to how to develop and improve the relationship between the two units. There is much less, however, in the way of empirical research—either quantitative or qualitative—that studies the relationship between academic affairs and student affairs in a systematic manner using established research methodologies.
Development of grand tour and research questions	Working with his advisor and supervisory committee, the researcher drafted and revised the research questions that would guide the study.
Decision to use qualitative, single-site, case study approach	The single site case study approach was selected because it was the desire of the researcher to explore the impact of faculty perceptions of student affairs personnel on student development and it was felt that this could best be accomplished through full immersion in a single site while documenting the culture of collaboration at that site through analysis of institutional documents, interviews with faculty members, and observational field notes.
Development of preliminary methodology	The researcher began to read and develop a detailed research methodology for the study including the work of Strauss & Corbin (1998), Creswell (2005), Merriam (2009) and Yin (2009).
Identification of potential case study institution (including preliminary review of publically available institutional documents)	The researcher began exploring possible case study institutions. Criteria included meeting the definition of <i>small college</i> with preference given to institutions indicating some interest, initiatives, or commitment to collaboration. The researcher's attention was drawn to the case study institution when an article in <i>Campus Activities</i> magazine highlighted the campus life program at that institution and made mention of its desire to offer and integrated educational environment. This led the researcher to seek more about the institution via its web site and the information and documents made available online.

Table 1 continues

Step	Description
Initial contact with case study institution	After securing the approval of his advisor, the researcher made initial contact with the potential case study institution. Initial contact was made with the President and with the Dean of the College. The researcher's inquiry was routed to the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) for response and follow-up.
Affirmative response from case study institution	The Vice President for Student Affairs indicated his willingness, as well as that of the Dean of the College, for the researcher to conduct a case study of the institution.
Application to and approval from the Institutional Review Board	The researcher, with the assistance of his advisor, prepared and submitted the necessary documentation to gain the approval of the Institutional Review Board of the University of Nebraska. Application to complete the study was also submitted to the Institutional Review Board of the case study institution. Approval was granted by both IRBs for the study. A copy of the IRB approval is included in Appendix A. A copy of the informed consent form provided to participants is included in Appendix B.
Initial document analysis	<p>Prior to the on-site visit, documents were reviewed to establish an understanding of the institution and its context. These included three key documents related to the case study institution that were publically available: the Statement of Purpose (which includes the Mission, Vision, and Purpose statements); the Strategic Plan; and the Philosophy of Education, as well as the college web site, academic catalogue as posted online, and institutional fact book, as made available online. The analysis of these documents served to orient the researcher to the institution, provide some descriptive statistics about the institution, establish an understanding of how the institution choose to state and present its own conception and orientation toward student development publically, and to identify areas for further exploration during interviews.</p> <p>The researcher captured each document into a locally stored file, read through each document multiple times, and made notes and annotations with each reading.</p>
Identification of dates for researcher to visit case study institution	Working with the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs at the case study institution, the researcher identified a one-week period during mid-fall 2010 to visit the site and conduct interviews. Arrangements were made to stay in on-campus guest housing.
Identification of potential faculty members to interview at the case study institution	The researcher worked with the Vice President for Student Affairs at the case study institution to identify a group of typical faculty members. In selecting interview participants, the researcher worked with the VPSA to ensure that the group, as much as was feasible based on individual willingness and availability, represented a range of variability in terms of gender, academic discipline, tenure at the institution, and tenure in the professoriate. An initial list of names and contact information was provided by the Vice President for Student Affairs.

Table 1 continues

Step	Description
Invitation of faculty members to participate in the study	Participants were invited to participate in the study via email from the researcher prior to the researcher's visit to the case study site. A copy of this correspondence is included in Appendix D.
Scheduling of interviews	As potential participants replied, the researcher continued to correspond with them to set up a date and time for the interview to occur. Interviews were held in the office of the faculty member being interviewed.
Follow-up invitations	A follow-up email was sent to faculty who did not reply to the initial email invitation from the researcher. This led to some additional interviews being scheduled.
The on-site visit	The researcher arrived on campus at the case study institution on a Sunday afternoon and was met by the Vice President for Student Affairs who checked him in to the guest housing that had been arranged.
Interview with administrators	The researcher began his time on campus with an interview with the Dean of the College and the Vice President for Student Affairs. This interview helped to clarify some basic contextual questions, to discuss logistical issues, and to gain the insights and perspectives of two key administrators prior to meeting with faculty members.
Interviews with faculty members	Interviews were held with faculty members, based on the appointments scheduled prior to the researcher's visit. The researcher used an interview form to guide the interviews, capture key words and phrases during the interviews, and to provide a mechanism for capturing the observations of the researcher during the interviews that was non-obtrusive. All interviews were audio recorded for later transcription and analysis. The interview form is included in Appendix C.
Additional interviews scheduled	After arriving on campus, the researcher received some suggestions from both the two administrators who were interviewed, as well as some faculty members, about others who might be good interview candidates. This led to additional contact being made and interviews being scheduled.
On-site observations	While on campus, the researcher spent time each day walking and observing the campus. This provided the researcher with some opportunity to note informal interactions between students, faculty, and staff. The researcher also was mindful about noting other artifacts such as flyers and advertisements posted in hallways and bulletin boards in academic buildings and social spaces. The researcher had opportunity to make use of the campus library as both a workspace and another place to observe interactions between members of the campus community. The researcher was purposeful about choosing to eat some meals in campus dining facilities to allow further observation. During the researcher's time on campus, an intercollegiate volleyball match was scheduled thus yielding yet another opportunity to observe part of the life of the campus.
Exit interview	At the conclusion of his time on campus, the researcher met again with the Dean of the College and the Vice President for Student Affairs. This meeting was at their request and was for the purpose of the researcher sharing some of his initial thoughts and observations with them. The researcher created a summary document that he provided to the administrators. A copy is included in Appendix E.

Table 1 continues

Step	Description
Interview Transcription	The researcher completed a word-for-word transcription of each interview using the audio recording of the interview.
Data coding	The researcher followed the coding process recommended by Creswell (2005, pgs. 238-239): each transcript was read and initial notes were made using the Weft QDA qualitative data analysis software; specific text segments were marked and a code, describing the meaning of that text segment, assigned; after coding the text, a list of all codes assigned was made with similar codes being grouped and redundant codes eliminated; this process was then repeated for each transcript. The result was a preliminary list of themes based on the interview data.
Theme identification	Using the list of preliminary themes as a foundation, the researcher continued to review and analyze institutional documents and observational notes. The use of multiple sources of data led to some modification of these as the overall phenomenon, as captured in the documents, researcher observations, and words of the interview participants became clear. Final themes were identified based on the codes from all of the analyzed data.
Theme presentation	Following the identification of themes, the researcher then began the process of writing the case study by setting the context of the case study site and then presenting the themes with supporting and amplifying quotations from the transcripts.
Conclusions and recommendations	The researcher concluded the case study by offering some synthesis, conclusions, and recommendations related to each of the identified themes.
External Audit	An audit, by an external, independent auditor, was conducted to determine the extent to which the results of the study are trustworthy. A copy of the attestation of the external auditor is included in Appendix F.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Presentation of Findings**

This chapter presents the data gathered from document analysis, semi-structured interviews with ten faculty members and two senior-level administrators, as well as researcher observations, at McFeely College (pseudonym), a small liberal arts institution located in the southeastern United States. Document analysis was done both prior to the on-site visit, during spring and summer 2010, as well as post-visit. Interviews were conducted during a one-week period during the fall of 2010 and were audio recorded. During this week, the researcher resided on-site at the case study institution, staying in college-owned guest housing, spending time observing the campus, and attending several campus events. During the spring and summer of 2011 the interviews were transcribed, with analysis and coding occurring from fall 2011 through spring 2013.

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the environmental context of McFeely College (pseudonym), including a profile of the institution and research participants, and to identify the themes that emerged during the interviews with the research participants, informed by document analysis and researcher observations. These themes are focused on the research participants' perception and understanding of the nature and role of the student affairs division at McFeely College and its relationship to both their and the institution's developmental goals for its students.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the scope and nature of the relationship between the academic affairs and student affairs units from the perspective of the faculty,

with a particular focus on issues and challenges to collaboration, and offer recommendations to address those issues and challenges. The central focus, or grand tour question, was “How do faculty members at McFeely College perceive student affairs personnel and how does that perception impact collaboration between faculty members and student affairs personnel at that institution?”

### **The Site**

**Site selection.** In selecting a site, the researcher sought to select a typical small college, defined using the classifications of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The site selected was an independent, private, co-educational, four-year college located in the southeastern United States. It is classified as *S4/HR*: *Small four-year, highly residential*, meaning “fall enrollment data show FTE enrollment of 1,000–2,999 degree-seeking students at these bachelor’s degree granting institutions. At least half of degree-seeking undergraduates live on campus and at least 80 percent attend full time” (Carnegie Foundation, n.d.). The selection of this site was due to its representativeness of the type of institution that the researcher wanted to study and because, based on publicly available information, specifically the college’s web site, it espoused a commitment to the ideas of collaborative learning. This institution is identified in this study by a pseudonym assigned by the researcher: McFeely College.

The researcher first initiated contact with McFeely College during summer, 2009. Initial contact was made with the President and with the Dean of the College. The researcher’s inquiry was routed to the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) at McFeely College for response and follow-up. The VPSA was the primary point of

contact and indicated his willingness, as well as that of the Dean of the College, for the researcher to conduct a case study at the institution.

**The campus.** McFeely College is an independent, private, co-educational, four-year college. With a student enrollment of approximately 2,000, the college offers 34 majors in arts, science, and business. There are approximately 120 full-time, tenure-track faculty members employed by the college. The cost of tuition is just over \$30,000. The college is accredited by a regional accrediting body, the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (McFeely College, n.d.c).

The college enjoys a downtown location that places it just a block off the main street of the town in which it is located yet, because of the physical geography and architecture of the campus, feels rural and secluded with minimal city streets actually running through the campus. It is much what one might typically picture as the quintessential liberal arts college: predominately two- or three-story brick buildings around a central green space or quad with tree-lined sidewalks. On any given day during the researcher's time in residence, students, staff, and faculty members could be found walking about the campus, sitting and reading or visiting on the lawn, or enjoying a pick-up game of Frisbee. It was the observation of the researcher that the college enjoyed good community support. When the researcher was on campus, it was the week preceding the annual family weekend celebration at the college and numerous downtown businesses displayed signs and banners in support of the college and welcoming parents/families. This was further confirmed in conversations on campus that indicate that students

frequent downtown merchants and are actively involved in the life of the broader community.

**The students.** During a time when college demographics are becoming more and more diverse, with more non-traditional students aged 25 and older seeking higher education (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013), the student body at McFeely College remains very traditional. As an institution, McFeely is committed to the traditional, four-year, residential college experience built on a foundation of the liberal arts. For example, Eugene Darko (pseudonym), a full professor in the public affairs department, when responding to an inquiry about developmental goals for his students, stated:

we are a liberal arts institution and we don't award professional degrees. Our objectives in terms of teaching outcomes have a lot more to do with making sure that we are producing students who become good citizens, that they are well trained in critical thinking, that they appreciate the liberal arts tradition and its philosophical underpinnings to life outside of the academy. In a variety of cases, we hope that we have students who are well prepared to go to graduate school, whether it's in the area of law or other post-graduate endeavors.

The student body consists almost exclusively of students aged 18-24; during Fall 2010, the time of the researcher's visit to the institution, total enrollment headcount was 2,103 and only 82, or 3.9%, were over the age of 25 (McFeely College, n.d.c). Of these, approximately 70% reside in college-owned housing. The male-to-female ratio is 1:1.3 or 44% men and 56% women. Students at McFeely College come from 40 states and 25 countries (McFeely College, n.d.c).

**The educational environment.** The academic profile of McFeely College is what one might typically expect of a small college, with a range of undergraduate majors



in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. The college does not offer graduate degrees. The largest majors are business administration, psychology, history, and English. McFeely has articulated a commitment to student learning, specifically integrated learning, and to faculty-staff collaboration. The mission and vision statements of the college, as publicly stated when this study began, indicated its commitment to “integrated learning.” The mission statement posted on the college web site was:

McFeely College's mission is to engage students in their development as whole persons through an integrative learning approach that stresses intellectual, ethical, spiritual and personal growth and prepares our graduates for responsible lives of learning, service, and leadership in a diverse and changing world. (McFeely College, n.d.d)

The vision statement of the College further amplified these ideas as well as giving some indication as to the institution’s developmental goals for its graduates:

McFeely College aspires to be a leading national liberal arts college, a model of integrative learning, and a community committed to open discourse and civil debate as ways of learning and as preparation for service in the world (McFeely College, n.d.d)

In addition, the Strategic Plan of the college identified, as its first two goals:

1. Be recognized for excellence in integrative learning.
2. Create a student-centered culture built upon openness and collaboration between faculty, staff, students and alumni. (McFeely College, n.d.a)

The researcher learned when he arrived on site that there were plans to change the language of the mission and vision to replace the term “integrative learning” with “experiential learning.” This change led to the addition of a previously unplanned question, asking each participant to talk about both the change in terminology and the change in meaning.

At the time of the researcher's visit, during the fall 2010 semester, McFeely College had a relatively new senior-level administration: the President was inaugurated in July 2007, and the Vice Presidents for both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs had both been hired since inauguration of the president.

In addition, during the time of the researcher's visit, the campus was gearing up for its decennial reaffirmation of accreditation by its regional accreditor, the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (COC-SACS). Part of the reaffirmation process with Commission on Colleges includes the development of a Quality Enhancement Plan. As described on the Commission on Colleges web site:

The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), submitted four to six weeks in advance of the on-site review by the Commission, is a document developed by the institution that (1) includes a process identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment, (2) focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution, (3) demonstrates institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP, (4) includes broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the QEP, and (5) identifies goals and a plan to assess their achievement. The QEP should be focused and succinct (no more than seventy-five pages of narrative text and no more than twenty-five pages of supporting documentation or charts, graphs, and tables). (SACS-COC, 2012, pp. 7-8)

The topic or theme for the Quality Enhancement Plan being developed by McFeely College was experiential learning as a component of the learning environment at the institution. As a part of this choice, the administration was working with the College's Board of Trustees to review and approve changes to the Mission and Vision of the institution in October 2010. This change was to include removal of the language "integrated learning" and replace it with "experiential learning." Several of the faculty members interviewed as a part of this study directly correlated the change in wording to

one necessitated by the requirement for the development of the Quality Enhancement Plan. Jane Fields (pseudonym), a professor of history, when asked about a faculty meeting in which the change was discussed, observed, “so this is what is and the way they present it is, gotta be done for SACS, gotta be done for the QEP.”

**The participants.** While on campus, the researcher interviewed two administrators: the dean of the college and the dean of students, as well as ten members of the faculty. The two administrators were interviewed together at the beginning of the researcher’s time on campus and this interview helped to clarify some basic contextual questions, to discuss logistical issues, and to gain the insights and perspectives of two key administrators prior to meeting with faculty members. Since the focus of this study was on faculty perceptions of student affairs personnel, rather than on how student affairs personnel felt they were perceived or perceived their own role, the dean of students was the only non-faculty member interviewed. Both of these administrators were relatively new to the institution.

**Charles Edmonds.** Charles Edmonds (pseudonym) serves as a vice president and dean of the college at McFeely. He was new to McFeely College at the time of the researcher’s visit, having been there only one year. He has been in the professoriate for 33 years. He was interviewed during a joint session with the dean of students. Dean Edmond’s general demeanor was polite, yet reserved. When he was mentioned by members of the faculty, most did not seem to know him well and appeared, in the opinion of the researcher, a bit hesitant about his leadership. This could be due to his recent appointment. He initially seemed a bit harried and busy, but as the conversation went on

it was obvious that he held some both strong and passionate views about the value of experiential learning and about the interplay between faculty and student affairs. In summarizing his job as dean of the college, Edmonds stated, “as Chief Academic Officer I’ve got responsibility for the entire academic program, uh, and that largely works out to be a lot of work with the faculty on various issues having to do with the development, implementation, assessment, of the program.”

**Mark Lambert.** Mark Lambert (pseudonym) serves as the dean of students at McFeely. Like his colleague, Charles Edmonds, Lambert was also somewhat new to the institution at the time of the researcher’s visit, having been there for two years. He has worked in college student affairs for over 25 years, most of those at large public institutions. He was interviewed in a joint session with the dean of the college. Lambert was very congenial and relaxed during the interview; he was also notably deferential to Dean Edmonds. During subsequent interviews with faculty members, most were able to identify Lambert, know his role on campus, and name him as the face or persona of student affairs at McFeely. When the researcher interacted with Lambert in his office or saw him on campus, he was often seen interacting casually and comfortably with students, faculty, and staff. In describing his job as dean of students, Lambert stated, “as Chief Student Affairs Officer, providing services and programs to support the educational mission as well as provide co-curricular learning for our students.”

**Faculty participants.** The faculty members who participated in this study were from a variety of disciplines and represented a variety of tenures at the institution. All faculty members interviewed had been in the professoriate for at least 6 years, with

5 having served for at least 20 years. The range of tenure at McFeely was from 1 to 23 years. Three had been at McFeely for 15 or more years, 5 had tenures from 5 to 14 years, and 2 had been at McFeely for less than 5 years. Table 2 summarizes the faculty participants in the study.

All of the interviews with faculty members occurred in their offices at a time mutually agreed upon by the researcher and the faculty member through email or phone communication. While the names of faculty members, along with their contact information, was provided by the dean of students, the invitation to participate came directly from the researcher and, to the researcher's knowledge, no faculty member was compelled to participate. In fact, of the overall list of potential faculty participants, several did decline for various reasons – mostly related to busy schedules. Most faculty members seemed relaxed and appeared to feel comfortable talking openly about their experience at McFeely related to their understanding of and involvement with student affairs, collaborative learning, and various aspects of the institution's culture. Interviews lasted, generally, between 45 minutes to one hour.

## **Findings**

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the academic affairs and student affairs units from the perspective of the faculty, with a particular focus on issues and challenges to collaboration, using a case study methodology. Following a review of key institutional documents, and orienting interview with two key administrators, and interviews with faculty members, several key themes emerged.

Table 2

*Faculty Participants in the Study*

FIRST NAME (Pseudonym)	LAST NAME (Pseudonym)	RANK	DISCIPLINE	GENDER	YEARS AT MCFEELY	YEARS IN THE PROFESSORiate
Eric	Booher	Assistant	English	Male	1	13
Todd	Collins	Assistant	Biology	Male	6	6
Eugene	Darko	Professor	Public Affairs	Male	20	20
Jane	Fields	Associate	History	Female	6	8
Jennifer	Johnson	Associate	History	Female	15	15
Albert	Keene	Assistant	Art History	Male	2	11
Daniel	Patton	Professor	Business Administration	Male	23	28
George	Snyder	Associate	History	Male	7	10
Samantha	Taylor	Assistant	Biology	Female	5	7
Roberta	Waxman	Associate	Spanish	Female	8	25

**Document review/analysis.** Prior to the on-site visit, documents were reviewed to establish an understanding of the institution and its context. These included three key documents related to the case study institution that were available publically: the Statement of Purpose (which includes the Mission, Vision, and Purpose statements); the Strategic Plan; and the Philosophy of Education, entitled *Liberation to Lead: A Liberal Arts Education at McFeely College [pseudonym]* as well as the college web site, academic catalogue as posted online, and institutional fact book as made available online. The analysis of these documents served to orient the researcher to the institution, provide some descriptive statistics about the institution, establish an understanding of how the institution choose to state and present its own conception and orientation toward student development, and to identify areas for further exploration during interviews.

Throughout these key institutional documents are references to *integrated* (later changed to *experiential*, as described above) learning, co-curricular programming, and the various ways these concepts are a part of the educational experience that the institution desires its students to have. This is significant in that these areas – the application of classroom learning in experience-based contexts and in programming purposefully designed to exist alongside and complement the academic experience – are often noted as key points of potential collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs (Baxter Magolda, 2003; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Kuh, 1996; Kuh & Hinkle, 2002; Schuh & Whitt, 1999).

A portion of the McFeely College Vision Statement directly names becoming a “model of experiential learning” (McFeely College, n.d.a) as one of the institutions’

commitments. Within the first theme of the Strategic Plan, the institution posits that “Every [McFeely] student will experience a broad, deep and experiential liberal arts education focused on developing his or her confident sense of freedom in the world and a sense of purpose in using that freedom” (McFeely College, n.d.a). The document then describes, as a means of accomplishing this goal, that the institution will “increase the number of students involved in research, artistic endeavors, independent study, study abroad, internships, service learning, and leadership experiences to the highest levels in McFeely's history” (McFeely College, n.d.a). The strategic plan goes on to even more directly address the relationship and interplay between academic affairs and student affairs in its second theme: “To link the academic, co-curricular and residential experience in ways that embody the "Liberation to Lead" vision” (McFeely College, n.d.a). It elaborates on the means of accomplishing this goal, stating:

The nature of [McFeely] College gives us an opportunity to draw on the residential aspects of students' lives to enhance their academic experience. We will weave together the residential and academic experiences to engage students in their development as whole persons, stressing their intellectual, ethical, spiritual and personal growth. We will link the academic, co-curricular and residential experience in as many ways as possible, including the following:

- Enhance the residential nature of the learning experience by maximizing the on-campus housing rate.
- Create an environment where intellect and character are developed with intentionality. Promote academic and personal integrity.
- Add co-curricular programs that make the overall [McFeely] educational experience competitive and distinctive regionally and nationally.
- Develop a Yale-style house system to integrate academic and co-curricular life.
- Provide opportunities for athletics to ensure regional and national competitiveness. (McFeely College, n.d.a)



This reflects an acknowledgement of the high percent of McFeely students who reside in college-owned housing. However, the document fails to define what specific co-curricular programming might be added or how the institution defines the co-curricular experience. This lack of definition is something that would later emerge during interviews with faculty members and their understanding of their responsibility with regard to the co-curriculum. The Philosophy of Education directly references *experiential learning* within the description of how students will develop into resourceful citizens by developing “the ability to work independently and collaboratively and to participate in experiential learning” (McFeely College, n.d.a) as a skill or habit of mind. While not directly addressing the idea of co-curricular programming, the Philosophy of Education does mirror language found in the Strategic Plan related to the education of the multiple dimensions of students, when it notes “a commitment to health in its largest sense: the physical and emotional well-being of self within a community that balances intellectual, ethical, spiritual, and personal growth” (McFeely College, n.d.a) as something to be cultivated in its efforts to produce responsible citizens. The researcher’s review of these documents seemed to suggest that there were differences, at least at the philosophical level, as to what the institution mean by integrative learning (or experiential learning) and the co-curriculum. Using some specific quotes from these documents, the researcher sought to tease out some of this nuance and to gain some sense of the faculty’s understanding of the terms and their meaning within these defining documents of the institution during on-site interviews.

**Administrator interviews.** Once on-site, the researcher began his time by interviewing two key administrators: the chief academic officer, Charles Edmonds, and the chief student affairs officer, Mark Lambert. During the course of this 30-minute interview that took place in a conference room in the same building that housed the administrative offices for academic affairs, the researcher sought to clarify some basic contextual questions, to discuss logistical issues, and to gain the insights and perspectives of two key administrators prior to meeting with faculty members. While the conversation was somewhat brief – both administrators indicating that their busy schedules would not allow for a more lengthy interview – a wide range of topics were discussed.

The researcher began by asking each administrator, from the area of the college that they represented, what their developmental goals for students were. Edmonds began and immediately referenced the educational philosophy statement, *Liberation to Lead*:

Well, I take a lot of my cues from the college's statement of purpose, which is entitled Liberation to Lead and that captures two broad sets of goals we have for our students. The freedom part has to do with the classic aims of a liberal education, which is to develop in students both the skills and knowledge to free them from ignorance but it includes teaching them things like critical thinking and effective writing and effective oral communication and so on. And much of that is the agenda for the formal curriculum, although some of that happens outside the formal curriculum, too. And the other piece is the purpose, and that has to do with, what do you use your knowledge and skills for? Here at [McFeely] we encourage students to think about more than just themselves and more than just their careers but to think about how they can help others and make a difference in the world. And that agenda is played out across the college. There is some in the academic program, particularly service-learning courses, but there's an awful lot that goes on in Student Affairs and in the chaplain's office.

Lambert concurred, also referring to the Mission Statement:

We try to look specifically at the idea of the intellectual, ethical, spiritual, and personal growth that is stated in the mission statement and try to be specific about targeting our programs in efforts to address those particular areas along with

them, obviously in the intellectual, supporting and enhancing the academic curriculum.

The researcher, noting the administrator's immediate reference to key institutional documents, followed-up with a question about a phrase from the vision statement:

*integrative learning*. It was at this point that Edmonds noted the terminology *integrative learning* was changing to *experiential learning*. He then offered an interpretation of what that term meant:

And there we mean a whole variety of experiences outside the formal curriculum, outside classroom that we believe will advance both the freedom and purpose objectives. So it includes internships, study abroad, service-learning, undergraduate research. Those are the four experiences that certainly are the focus within the academic program.

When asked about the change in terminology, Edmonds stated that the term *integrative learning* "was something that the former President apparently was a big advocate of" and then further noted, "when you go out and talk to faculty, they'll talk about experiential learning. You almost never hear the word integrative learning." He went on to explain that the term *experiential learning* is the term both used in the Strategic Plan and is the preferred term of the current President. He noted,

his [the current president] view, I think, is grounded in what the institution itself, how it thinks about, uh, well how it thinks about, how and what it calls that area of learning that is outside of the traditional classroom setting.

The researcher then asked Lambert about the role he saw student affairs playing in the experiential learning initiatives that had been the topic of the discussion. Lambert struggled to identify a significant role for student affairs, aside from leadership, which was actually not among the four experiences that Edmonds had specifically noted were part of the experiential learning initiative:

Researcher: Um, you guys named several things, internships, study abroad, research, service, leadership, um, which of those, all of those, some of those, none of those do you see student affairs having a large role in?

Lambert: Well certainly the leadership is one area that we do a lot with the students. When it comes to the internships and things, a lot of that is run through our career services office, and there are some internship that are offered in some various units to where students can get some experience but, again, I don't know that we're a driving force in that. The, let's see, again whether or not, you've got multicultural affairs, it's interesting because multicultural affairs is part of academic affairs previously and just last year moved to student affairs, and so trying address the diversity issues but I'm not sure in the end, uh, how much of that will come out in the experiential learning piece, but certainly it's an important emphasis for the college. Um, I think service is a piece that we work a lot in, the big question is, again, does it meet some of the criteria or expectations as it relates to true service-learning. That's a conversation and a discussion that we're still going through on that piece. Obviously study abroad is something that is primarily coordinated out of international programs but, uh, one of the things that we are doing with the fall break trips, some of our athletic teams that do take international trips, is trying to make sure that they meet some of the same standards that some of the other for-credit experiences would have. So we're trying to, again, bridge the gap between those two.

The researcher then shifted to the second theme of the strategic plan, which deals specifically with the co-curricular and the linking of the academic, co-curricular, and residential experiences. Lambert defined the co-curricular as,

something that supports, adds to, enhances what's going on in the classroom. And, the thing about it is it shouldn't be happenstance, it should be deliberate and intentional. Um, and there are different ways that you can do some of those things. Some of what we're trying to do within the residence halls is link the residential programming to academic coursework whereby a topic or issue that might be brought up in a classrooms is expanded on in a residence hall program that's offered to, not only the students who are in that class, but everyone.

He went on to describe several examples of recent or ongoing projects that illustrated the purposeful and intentional link between academic coursework and residential

programming. Edmonds then stated that he felt as though they were in the early stages of implementation,

I think we're right, at the moment, in terms of creating a truly, true sort of integration of residential and academic. We're in the early stages and we've got faculty and staff who are stepping forward who might be thought about as kind of early adopters . . . and partly what [Mark] and I are doing is trying to create some models of success so that other faculty and staff can see how this might actually work.

Edmonds then began to discuss some of his perceptions regarding faculty members and their ability and willingness to participate in co-curricular endeavors:

You know faculty on the whole, I think, uh, tend to see, tend to see the co-curricular and the residential as separate from the academic and they actually are. They love to think through how we're going to program students on the academic, in the formal academic curriculum and, you know, have no hesitation to want to put in place all kinds of requirements and things for students. But boy, when you take them over to the residential, co-curricular, you get a whole range of views of what is appropriate over there. And I think most faculty, probably, see it as something that (1) is not their responsibility and (2) is something that shouldn't be heavily structured and programmed and so that's partly, when I'm looking at it from a faculty side that's partly what you have to slowly change. And you won't change some faculty but you'll, you can change those that are in the middle who haven't really, sort of, thought about it a whole lot and are more open to seeing the virtues to a more integrative approach.

He went on to describe some of his own experiences from his time as a faculty member at another institution related to attempts at student affairs and academic affairs partnerships:

And one of the reasons these things fail, I'll say this, it was a frustration of mine all through when I was just a faculty member before I began to assume administrative roles, is that often times student affairs, this is my experience at [previous institution], would invite faculty to these things that they were having in the hopes that somehow there'd be some sort of connection between faculty and students and yet the role the faculty member was supposed to play, the expectations that student affairs had for what it was that was supposed to come out of all this was never stated and so it didn't work very well and faculty felt misused and they felt, you know, alienated by it, and so on. And I think that's partly a reflection that faculty were outside of their comfort zone and it wasn't clear what they were supposed to be doing with these students.

This led the researcher to probe about what steps, if any, were being taken to address those concerns in the present context:

Researcher: Now is that something that you guys are actively working to try to do differently here?

Lambert: Well we hadn't really talked about that piece. . . .

Edmonds: [simultaneously] We hadn't really talked about this

Lambert: . . . to be honest. I think one of the approaches that I've tried to take is to make sure that, at least with regards to the residence hall programming, the idea isn't for an RA [resident assistant] to go up to a faculty member and say 'Hey, come present this program in the residence hall.' I mean, what it's supposed to do is, if you've got a thought or idea you get resources, you get information, but you're still in charge of the program. The faculty member's invited to come and add to it, to participate at the level in which they're interested but, again, the idea is we're working with them to put this together, it's not 'oh, come to the hall and do this program' and poof, here I can check off the box that this is done.

It was the researcher's observation that both administrators now had a new awareness of this potential barrier to collaboration but that they had not previously discussed or considered it as a part of the current initiatives underway at McFeely College.

The conversation with Edmonds and Lambert then turned to the organizational culture and systems in place that might support or constrain collaborative efforts. The researcher began by asking about the applicability of such efforts on the part of faculty members to the annual performance review or tenure review process. Edmonds noted that such activity could be considered as part of those reviews, and then went on to discuss his views on offering monetary incentives for collaboration:

Well, in the promotion and tenure review standards, and really in the annual reviews, it would come in under college service. And faculty are free to describe

what they think are significant service contributions and this would certainly be one that could be described that way, depending on what they did. We don't offer, um, really much in the way of monetary incentives to get involved and, although I'm sure some faculty would say that's what we needed to do, uh, but partly what you're trying to do here is you're trying to, I mean to the extent that faculty are being motivated by stipends and incentives and so on, it's not going to result in a lasting change. You're trying to, uh, as I said, build a culture and part of building that culture is setting expectation about what it means to educate our students and what role faculty and staff need to play in that education. And so, ultimately, what you're trying to do is get this to be more intrinsic on the part of faculty and staff so that they want to step forward because they see this as a way of fulfilling their sense about educating our students. It takes a while to get there though.

The researcher then asked about other potential barriers to collaboration. Edmonds replied:

Well the biggest barrier from faculty side is time. Um, they've got pretty full plates, especially if they are active scholars and we want them to be active scholars. We, as a college, are increasingly embracing a teacher-scholar model where we want our faculty, first and foremost, to be superb teachers but we also want them to be active scholars and artists. And when you put those two things together there's not a whole lot of time left over. And so one of the, you know, one of the, part of the push back we'll get is 'well, this is very nice, but you want me to do all this other stuff and I don't have time.' My experience, though, is that if you hire the right kind of faculty, they can figure out how to do it all but again, that's kind of a generational thing as opposed to a, you know, you're best hope is with the younger faculty who are coming in and are still forming, in their own minds, what it means to be a good faculty member. It's much tougher to make changes with the faculty who've been here twenty or thirty years. Especially faculty who were hired thinking that the only thing they had to do well was teach.

Lambert then added some thoughts about barriers to collaboration, referencing the one time all-encompassing role of the faculty member, the rise of the student affairs profession, and current efforts to develop and integrated, collaborative educational experience. He also addressed some of the concerns raised by Edmonds regarding student affairs staff members not clearly identifying or articulating a role for faculty members when inviting them to participate in co-curricular programming:

You know, I think the biggest thing is trying to, people are used to things operating in the traditional sense of the classroom and, uh, the extra-curricular and the two being separated and, you know, obviously when you look at the history of higher education we all in one and then it separated and now we're trying to bring it back together, not to where it was before, but you know where it closer and it is getting people out of the old model of how they did it. And, um, you know, that seems to be, again, it's really kind of people starting to think outside of the box and be creative. And they have to not, some people get caught up in the 'this is mine, that is yours' or vice versa and it works both ways. And I think, you, you're talking about the insecurities, I think it still comes back to that from my staff's side of the coin is, you know, they want to feel valued in that they do contribute to the educational mission of the college and that it's not just planning parties and fun but there is learning, true learning, that goes on and that it does contribute to a student's overall education. And, uh, you know, in some cases bringing faculty into some of that can be threatening to them in what goes on. And so people letting go of some of those things and finding ways to really achieve that mission is the challenge.

The researcher then asked some clarifying questions to help understand the formal structural or systems relationship between academic affairs and student affairs, specifically as regards institutional governance. When asked whether student affairs staff members taught any classes, Lambert observed, "my understanding is over the course of time they have really moved away from that kind of model with regards to it . . . there's a couple of us that have doctorates and, uh, but at this time don't teach here at the college." The researcher then asked about participation in faculty meetings, often a primary communication and governance mechanism at small colleges. Edmonds described the involvement of student affairs in faculty governance, "[Mark], as the chief student affairs officer, has full of participation in faculty meetings but that's as far as it goes." Lambert noted that there did exist a student life committee, "there's a, the student life committee is run out of the dean's office, the associate dean, and there's two or three faculty members, yeah I think there are three faculty members and three students that serve on that."



Finally, the researcher asked Lambert and Edmonds about their perception of the informal interactions between student affairs staff members and members of the faculty:

Researcher: Um, and then just kind of informally your observation, I mean, do you feel like there is, or I guess a better question would be, what level of interaction do you perceive there being between your staff and the faculty? I mean, do they mix it up at the lunch table? Do they, do you see them sort of moving in overlapping circles or do they largely sort of operate in separate circles?

Lambert: I think it depends on your perspective. This is my first experience as smaller college, a liberal arts college. I see a lot more interaction than what I ever would see at a larger university. There are different tables or different areas in the cafeteria or commons and there is a table that frequently it will be a mixture of faculty and student affairs staff that are at that table. It's some of the same group on a regular basis, but again it depends on the circles in which people go. You know, folks over in [campus building] don't spend a whole lot of time in the commons because they're on that end of campus. And so they're eating lunch somewhere else. But, uh, I see a lot more of it both there and through other events than I did at other places I've been.

Edmonds: Yeah, I think that's a fair statement. It, there's a strong correlation between the length of the time that the student affairs person has been at the college and the extent to which they interact with faculty. It's, you know, the social networks and friendships develop over time, so.

The researcher noted Edmonds reference to tenure of student affairs staff members in relation to their level of interaction with faculty members and the inference that a potential additional barrier might be a high turnover rate among student affairs staff members.

The researcher's time with Edmonds and Lambert provided some useful contextual information and insights into their own expectations, understandings, and perceptions of how the faculty members at McFeely College perceived the student affairs staff and the possible impacts of that on collaborative initiatives.

**Faculty interviews.** All of the interviews with faculty members occurred in their offices at a time mutually agreed upon by the researcher and the faculty member through email or phone communication. Most faculty members seemed relaxed and appeared to feel comfortable talking openly about their experience at McFeely related to their understanding of and involvement with student affairs, collaborative learning, and various aspects of the institution's culture. Interviews lasted, generally, between 45 minutes to one hour. Over the course of these interviews, several key themes emerged.

*Theme 1: Faculty members could easily articulate their primary role on campus and have similar and consistent developmental goals for their students.* Each faculty member interview began, after basic introductory and demographic questions, with the researcher asking the faculty member being interviewed what he or she felt his or her primary role on campus was. For every faculty respondent the answer was essentially the same: teaching. Eric Booher summed it up succinctly, "certainly teacher first." Five other faculty members essentially answered with just a single word, either "teacher" or "professor." Eugene Darko, who had just assumed the role of department chair, still noted the primacy of his teaching responsibilities, "Teaching, really, I would say because I just assumed the chair position just this semester. But even with that I see myself more as a teacher than anything else."

Some faculty members did acknowledge multiple roles, including research and service to the college, while still noting the primacy of teaching. Samantha Taylor described her role as teaching through research, "My primary role is to be in the classroom as a teacher, and that's supplemented by my work in the lab. So, technically,

research but I look at it as research teaching.” Daniel Patton observed, “my primary role is teaching, um, even though we do all the other stuff as well. You know we basically have a three-pronged, you know, responsibility: teaching being primary I guess, and then we have sort of community service, and then, of course, research.” Only Albert Keene gave equal weight to each of three different roles, “it’s a combination of three things: 1/3 teaching; 1/3 administration, helping the college function; and 1/3 research.” Yet when asked if he felt he spent equal time in each his response was a resounding “no” punctuated with laughter.

Chief Academic Officer Charles Edmonds described McFeely College as “increasingly embracing a teacher-scholar model where we want our faculty, first and foremost, to be superb teachers but we also want them to be active scholars and artists.” This was clearly reflected during the researcher’s conversations with all faculty participants; the primacy of their teaching role and working directly with students was apparent. Even when discussing the time constraints they felt because of their other obligations, such as committee service, being department chair, and seeking to maintain a research agenda, priority was given to working with students.

Since the focus of the study was to look specifically at the impact of faculty perceptions on collaborative initiatives, the researcher probed with each faculty member interviewed what his or her developmental goals were for his or her students, as well as what he or she understood the institution’s developmental goals were for its students. When responding about their own developmental goals, it was notable that most faculty

members responded not from the framework of their own discipline, but in terms of broader educational goals.

The most frequently named individual developmental goal among faculty members was critical thinking. Eric Booher articulated one of his goals as helping students “develop that critical consciousness.” Likewise, Jane Fields said, “I want them to be critical thinkers.” George Snyder offered essentially the same language, “I want for them to be more skilled critical thinkers” as did Eugene Darko, “that they are well-trained in critical thinking.” Daniel Patton offered a similar idea when he said “we not only want to give them a certain amount of information, knowledge about a subject, but also one of the major goals is that we make them make them better learners.” Jennifer Johnson communicated a similar idea within the context of her discipline, history, when she stated that she wanted her students to “understand the way the historians think and how we think just the critical of paradigms of thought understand how those schools of thought are created and how they help us interpret history how interpretation of history itself changes over time.” Roberta Waxman spoke of her efforts “to approach students in a way that they realize that they that they are learning not just about the subjects but things that are going to help them later on in the so-called ‘real world.’”

Other oft-repeated developmental goals were assisting students in becoming responsible citizens, seeing students develop oral and written communication skills, and helping students hone their research skills and be prepared for graduate study. Todd Collins described his primary goal as, “number one would be informed citizen, responsible citizen as well.” Eugene Darko summed up his goals as developing “a well-

rounded student who is well-acquainted with the liberal arts and what they mean to citizenship and to uh public service.” These goals are all consistent with the articulated goals of the institution as found in the *Liberation to Lead* philosophy of education statement, as named in its first principle:

Traditionally, the liberal arts are the skills of freedom. A liberal arts education at [McFeely] College aims to produce resourceful citizens by developing these skills and habits of mind, including:

- the ability to read, listen, and observe carefully
- the ability to access information from disparate sources, to assess it appropriately, and to develop information into useful knowledge
- the ability to think critically, analytically, and creatively; to apply apt methods; to reason with rigor; and to use effective problem-solving skills
- the ability to use writing as a tool of thought and to communicate effectively in a variety of written and oral forms
- the ability to construct, understand, and evaluate arguments that use quantitative reasoning
- the ability to understand scientific discovery and to appraise it wisely; the ability to make judicious use of new technologies
- the ability to work independently and collaboratively and to participate in experiential learning. (McFeely College, n.d.b)

This demonstrates the pervasiveness of this document and the general alignment of faculty member’s goals with those articulated by the institution.

It was clear to the researcher after just a few interviews that a commitment to the liberal arts and to goals such as citizenship and critical thinking were held by most faculty members – perhaps this even being what drew them to teach at an institution like McFeely College. This was further confirmed when each faculty participant was asked about the institution’s developmental goals for its students. Again, there was great commonality in the responses. Eugene Darko followed up his response to the researcher’s question about his individual goals with this observation when asked about the institution’s goals:

Whether someone is teaching biology or political science or sociology or psychology, the philosophical underpinnings of this is to expose students to all these disciplines and have them have a well-rounded education. And by well-rounded we mean they have writing skills, they have they can articulate themselves orally, they can engage in critical thinking as applied to life outside of school. And that, frankly, that they could be employed in a variety of fields.

As notable as the unifying commonality found among the responses of the faculty members to questions related to their role on campus and to their and the institution's developmental goals for students, was the ease with which they answered the questions. It was the observation of the researcher that, aside from making sure they understood exactly what was being asked of them, there was little to no hesitation on the part of any faculty member in responding. It was clear they knew why they were at McFeely College and they had clear and easily articulated goals that they were pursuing with their students.

***Theme 2: Faculty members could not articulate a consistent definition of integrated or experiential learning or co-curricular programming and seemed unclear of the institution's expectations of them with regard to responsibility for these initiatives.*** The researcher also sought to understand faculty members' perception of how experiential learning and co-curricular activities were defined, what differentiated the two terms, and who, at the institution, bore responsibility for developing, implementing, and managing each of them. While faculty members were all easily able to speak about their primary role and developmental goals, this was not the case when responding to the researcher's inquiries about experiential learning and co-curricular programming.

When asked to define co-curricular, the researcher received a range of responses from faculty members:

- “When I think of co-curricular I think of multi-disciplinary.” (Eric Booher)
- “Co-curricular basically means an extension of curricular.” (Daniel Patton)
- “Anything that happens outside of the classroom where they can still get an education is the way I would define that.” (Samantha Taylor)
- “Well, running alongside the curriculum, um, efforts on the part of the college to provide experiences and structures for students that complement the academic curriculum.” (George Snyder)
- “You know we spend I think a lot of time trying to figure that out” (Jennifer Johnson)
- “I still don’t know. That was a buzzword from two years ago.” (Jane Fields)

Several faculty members did go on to further define or relate co-curricular to some event held or conducted outside of the regular meeting time of the course that was connected to or related to the course. For example, Jennifer Johnson offered:

Co-curricular should be something that is linking the activity outside the classroom with something inside the classroom but I envision it as having a core academic component. So if I invite a speaker to come to McFeely College, use archaeologists, my students go, we take him or her out to lunch, those are co-curricular activities.

George Snyder concurred, “well, running alongside the curriculum, um, efforts on the part of the college to provide experiences and structures for students that complement the academic curriculum” while Todd Collins spoke about the co-curricular and the transcendence of learning in the collegiate setting:

To me co-curricular is part of that engaged learning, it’s that learning outside the classroom, whether it’s through service learning, or seminars on campus, or the other events that students are experiencing. Because I, while it’s not formal a lot of times, I do believe a lot of the learning at college takes place well outside the classroom. You know it’s in the dorms, the conversations with friends and RAs

and staff and faculty outside the classroom, where it's not a formal class but there's still a lot of learning going on.

Albert Keene offered a similar analysis with some thoughts on how it might, or might not, be accomplished:

That's a good question [laughter]. It's so broad it could be any number of things. Um, in terms of the proposals the college is putting forward I think it is trying to bridge the gap that sometimes exists between what goes on in the classroom and what goes on in student life in the dorms. So that students feel that all parts of their life while on campus seem integrated. There you go. So I think that's the general ideal. It's a difficult thing to put into practice because it requires that you have adults, basically, [laughter] who are going to devote time to doing it. So you have to either hire a whole bunch of people who work in this kind of in-between world. Or you could try and get faculty to do it, but faculty at small colleges, or even medium sized liberal arts college, and we teach 3 and 3, that's a heavy load, there's just not time.

There was some variance in faculty members' response to the researcher's inquiries about responsibility for co-curricular programming. Most did connect co-curricular programming with student affairs, or some unit within student affairs.

However, as illustrated by Samantha Taylor's observation, there is some confusion as to what is and is not part of student affairs: "all the clubs and organizations go through [staff member], who I don't think is part of Student Affairs, per se, maybe he is, I don't know, um and that might be telling right there [laughter]." The staff member that she referenced was, in fact, a member of the student affairs staff, serving as director of the student center.

Faculty members also struggled somewhat to define the terms integrated learning and experiential learning. For example, Jennifer Johnson, when asked about the concepts, replied that the terminology used "could be experiential, could be first-hand, we just keep



inventing different buzz-words.” Jane Fields, who also referred to the concepts as “buzzwords” noted,

I can tell you that the goals that, the faculty’s goals now – it just changed yesterday – the mission of the college just changed yesterday, this why we’re a little cynical about it. It was integrative learning. It is now experiential learning and it is also, depending on what day you ask, about educating the whole person or it’s about freedom with purpose.

Her comments seem to imply that, regardless of the terminology, there is an underlying developmental goal. Todd Collins in discussing the change from integrated to experiential, observed,

I think we had a lot of different perceptions on what integrative learning meant. There was no very good definition. And, as that was phased out and we’ve now decided to focus on experiential learning, that type of learning is an engaged learning, active learning experience combined with reflection, in my mind.

George Snyder was a bit more direct and blunt in his assessment of the change in terminology:

Yeah and this is just, you know, this is just not us at our best, and I think you could see it at any college. The notion of integrative learning was done at the insistence of our previous president; the faculty and administration now are more devoted to experiential learning, internships, travel, these sorts of things. And you know I think we’re essentially going to swap out those words in the vision and that’s not that great or thoughtful.

Perhaps because of the emphasis in the reaffirmation process on experiential learning – that being the topic of McFeely’s Quality Enhancement Plan – and the recent changes to the terminology in the mission and vision, many faculty members implied in their comments that they felt that experiential learning in particular, co-curricular to a lesser degree, needed to be something new, rather than something that already existed.

Jane Fields related frustration with regard to how experiential is being defined as a part of the Quality Enhancement Plan and her feeling that things that seem to be obviously experiential are being judged to not meet the working definition:

Yeah, but the frustrating part is that the QEP committee – so there’s a QEP committee – and the QEP committee had these forms, by department, at the very beginning of the year, like before the year started. They met with each department and said we want to know what you’re doing for experiential learning so we have some sense of it. But they defined experiential learning in such a way that most of the things that we do that are experiential learning don’t count. So, in their definition of experiential learning it’s about independent student projects. So, it’s independent things. Now, I don’t know if they’re sticking with that after all the feedback they got from faculty, but what they were saying was this is like independent studies or internships or independent research or whatever. So we sat in that room, the whole history department sat in that room, and we generated this list of all the experiential things that we do with our classrooms, with students individually or not, and it was basically, well, I’m not sure if that really fits the definition. [laughter]

Daniel Patton also commented on the connection between experiential learning and the Quality Enhancement Plan and noted similar elements to the definition of experiential learning as related to that plan:

Right I mean that our new, sort of a, quality enhancement program, you’re going to hear that, you know, QEP, a lot because that’s part of our goal for SACS, for our accreditation body, to have one specific area where we concentrate on or we can, sort of, focus on and that is experiential learning. And that can take any kind sort of a mutation from speakers in the classroom, students doing service learning, to actually internships and, you know, independent studies, things like that that [where] we put students in situations where they have to make decisions and we hope that they learn from it.

In talking about the concepts of co-curricular programming and integrated or experiential learning with faculty members all faculty respondents seemed to understand those concepts as relating to something beyond or outside of the classroom context.

McFeely College’s strategic plan specifically states that a goal is to “create a student-

centered culture built upon openness and collaboration between faculty, staff, students and alumni” (McFeely College, n.d.a). However, only a few faculty members made mention of any campus-based programming other than programming that emanated from the academic departments when discussing co-curricular programming and experiential learning and few had been involved in any collaborative programming with the student affairs division. Further, there was not a common or consistent definition of what those terms meant, how—or if—they were related, and what the institution’s objectives or expectations of faculty were as regards implementation of that component of the college experience.

***Theme 3: Faculty members do not understand the role of Student Affairs and are often unaware of student affairs’ activities, programs, and initiatives.*** After asking each faculty member interviewed to describe his or her own role, the researcher asked each faculty member to describe the student affairs unit and what he or she felt the role of student affairs was on campus. Responses varied somewhat among faculty participants; most had a general sense that student affairs was in charge of the experience of students outside the classroom but also confessed some ignorance as to what, specifically, that operational unit did. The most commonly named roles of the student affairs division were:

- Residence Life
- People in charge of retention (student engagement, comfort, academic success)
- The people who plan events and run the student center

Roberta Waxman confessed, almost apologetically, “I have to be honest with you I am not really familiar with everything that they do.” Biology professor Samantha Taylor noted, “I think even at a small school that office isn’t as understood or known maybe to the faculty members as it could be or should be.” She went on to observe, “what I would hope student affairs is doing is helping students fit in to McFeely College curricularly [sic] as well as all that non-curricular, out-of-classroom stuff and making sure that they’re growing up in ways that they’re supposed to.” Similarly, Todd Collins stated, “So, I see the role of student affairs as providing a college-engaged environment essentially when students aren’t in the formal classroom. They’re at least tasked with that and that’s difficult.” Albert Keene suggested, “some of it has to do with basic logistical things like student housing, uh, student activities on campus, other aspects involve student activities off campus, uh extra-curricular learning experiences, uh, I guess student affairs oversees student government and student organizations.” When asked about the role of student affairs Jane Fields questioned the researcher back: “I assume they handle, um, res life, student life, you know, CAB, the [student] Center, food services, health services. Am I on the right target? Orientation?”

One faculty member, Jennifer Johnson, had just met with Mark Lambert, the dean of students, in her role as department chair the day before being interviewed for this case study and offered this observation:

You know if you'd asked me this yesterday or if you'd asked me this on Saturday I would've had a different answer. But, I sat down with Dean Lambert yesterday as chair to chat about a couple of things. I never knew student affairs was quite so big. For me, when you say student affairs, before I met with Dean Lambert, I would have just, in other words, been thinking about organizations and where people report to. Like I just assume that's primarily residence life. So if you'd

asked me ‘who is student affairs?’ what I think of are Dean Lambert, Michelle [pseudonym], Rick [pseudonym], the AC coordinators, Lisa [pseudonym] over in his office, people like that. That’s who I think about. I didn’t realize that it also included campus safety or health services or psychological counseling. I didn’t realize the umbrella was that wide.

Another faculty member, George Snyder, noted the wide range of roles he felt student affairs was expected to fulfill:

I don’t know. I – that’s a good question – I don’t know that that’s [the role of student affairs] ever been laid out explicitly. I think it’s just a given that you have a student affairs division. I mean, if I think about it I’m sure I can come up with some answers. It really does go several directions at once. I guess you could pile it all under this notion of developing the whole person. But you know an office that oversees housing and discipline and recreation and student retention, I mean that’s an office that’s going in a lot of different directions at once.

Most faculty members interviewed felt there was little to no interaction between themselves and the student affairs staff except on a “when needed” basis. There was a general sense that student affairs staff were:

- Available
- Inviting
- Caring/Concerned about students

Those who seemed to know the most about the work of student affairs were those who had, through whatever means or context, the opportunity to become personally connected with a member or members of the student affairs staff. Almost all of the faculty members interviewed indicated to the researcher that they were interested in knowing more about the work of student affairs. Some even probed the investigator seeking additional information on the work and role of student affairs.

When asked about how they were made aware of the work and activities of the student affairs division, faculty members frequently mentioned hearing from the dean of students occasionally during faculty meetings, but expressed an interest in hearing and knowing more. Daniel Patton noted, “Uh, it doesn’t hurt for staff, student affairs staff, to go around and have presentations in faculty meetings and stuff, you know. “ Some expressed concern about not knowing about changes or initiatives that, at least indirectly, they felt affected them.

Todd Collins, an assistant professor of biology, shared about the implementation of a science floor in a campus residence hall:

Researcher: Mmm hmm. Um, do you feel like that, um, that the student affairs staff have a role to play in accomplishing the developmental goals that you have for your students?

Interviewee: I don’t know if they have a mandated role but I would like to see more collaboration. Um, for example, I think there is a science floor in one of the dorms this year, it’s a new thing. And, the biology and chemistry majors that are living on that floor really like it. They are able to study together, it helps their classes as well as their socializing and dorm life. Um, this idea of a themed dorm, which the graduate school I was at had – I wasn’t living in them but, the experience that worked in my laboratory while I was in grad school they liked those themed dorms that I think we’re perhaps starting to try.

Researcher: Um, now the establishment of, like a science floor in the residence hall, is that something that you were aware of in the planning stages or...

Interviewee: No. I really heard about it this year from the students.

Researcher: From the students?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Daniel Patton observed, “In general, I think there are some faculty members that don’t even know who our VP for Student Affairs is or what goes on in [the Student Center] or other places.”

Despite not being able to define or describe the role of student affairs with much degree of specificity, several faculty members indicated a general sense of satisfaction with the work of the student affairs unit, based largely on their own limited interactions with that division or based on what they observed and saw from students. Eric Booher offered,

what I can say, at least from my estimation, is that they are very involved and I don't mean that in a bad way; I don't mean that they're controlling or anything like that. There seems to be a level of involvement with the students that I am not used to seeing. I've been to three state schools where, you know, students come and go and you don't even notice. They're puffs of smoke, you know. Here it's not that way.

Likewise, Roberta Waxman commented, "Well, they are working fine because, like I said, you know students get all kinds of benefits from all the offices, you know, that we have here."

***Theme 4: Faculty members do not naturally think of student affairs staff as potential collaborators in achieving student-learning outcomes.*** Prior to his on campus visit, the researcher had analyzed institutional documents, including McFeely College's Strategic Plan. This plan includes, as its first two goals, that McFeely seeks to:

1. Be recognized for excellence in integrative learning.
2. Create a student-centered culture built upon openness and collaboration between faculty, staff, students and alumni. (McFeely College, n.d.a)

Seeking to assess faculty understanding of these goals and the degree to which such collaboration was occurring, the researcher asked each faculty member about the role of student affairs in accomplishing both their individual student learning outcomes as well as those of the institution. Generally, faculty members tended to immediately think of faculty colleagues (either within their own department or in other departments) as those

with whom they would partner in accomplishing their student learning outcomes or in developing experiential learning initiatives, and even co-curricular experiences, for their students. In discussing responsibility for the co-curriculum, Jennifer Johnson was clear:

Researcher: OK. Those are good definitions. Um, so who who is responsible for the co-curricular aspect of college life?

Interviewee: The professors. That's who's been responsible for it.

Researcher: OK. Um and um

Interviewee: And I don't see much initiated by, now I do I get the sense that that's changing. But I don't think they really know how to do it... yet.

George Snyder in talking about the possible connection between co-curricular programming and experiential learning noted, "at this point experiential learning is largely the purview of the academic affairs division."

Most faculty members interviewed reported that they had not engaged in dialog with student affairs staff about their student learning outcomes, either in general or in planning specific events, programs, or activities. Most were open to such discussions but were unsure as to how this might happen.

In discussing the possible role of Student Affairs in accomplishing student learning outcomes, Eric Booher noted, "I think to a point, I guess to a point I guess they do just by the method of the course itself. If, to claim that my classes help to have a teachable person and their intent is to retain the whole person, to help that, then, yes, they do have a role in it. I'm not sure how, to me it's indirect involvement with that and so thus maybe their ability to retain and help and, you know, make students comfortable at the college itself, I think is very valuable to me in my class, a successful class, and to make their experience in class a success. So yeah, I guess they do." George Snyder saw



the role of student affairs primarily to be in accomplish goals beyond the academic, “Yes, yes. Outside of the strictly intellectual and academic ones to the extent that we, you know, do care about the development of the whole person yeah, for sure, student affairs has a role to play.” Todd Collins stated, “I don’t know if they have a mandated role but I would like to see more collaboration.” He further elaborated, “I see both student affairs and academic affairs as being co-equal in how the students are learning. I mean, it’s true they are supposed to have academics as their focus but a majority of their time is not in the classroom.” Jennifer Johnson felt like student affairs wanted to be connected to the curriculum with their program but observed, “I have no idea how they do it. I don’t know what their specific goals are.” Samantha Taylor saw the responsibility for developmental goals as a team effort: “I think it should always be a team process, especially at a small, liberal arts school.”

When asked about partnerships with student affairs, most spoke of student affairs as being the source of financial resources and logistical assistance. In talking about his work as an advisor to student organizations, Eugene Darko indicated their relationship with student affairs was largely fiduciary, “student affairs will appropriate the monies depending on the priorities they have and how many groups they have.” Jennifer Johnson noted that when planning events they could obtain support from the director of student activities, “we call him the Dean of Fun, but he he’s always good about compensating some costs, paying for t-shirts, things like that.”

The researcher followed-up by asking faculty members if they had engaged in any significant dialog with members of the student affairs staff about their student learning

outcomes. Most indicated that they had not. Eugene Darko observed, “No, not in a deliberate way . . . we haven’t been as deliberate and intentional about this as we should.”

Jane Fields could not recall any sort of opportunity for that sort of conversation:

No, and maybe there have been opportunities for this that I haven’t, like maybe there was a forum or something that I couldn’t go to, I don’t know. But, um, I’m just covering my bases here, I have never attended something like that. I’m not going to claim I’ve never been invited to do something like that because my memory is not that great but in the six years I’ve never participated in something like that.

When questioned about the possibility of partnering with a staff member from student affairs, one faculty member expressed concern that the involvement of student affairs might lead to a model of making everything fun and a lessening of rigor. Albert Keene noted, in speaking about collaborating with student affairs:

Interviewee: . . .sometimes they can be helpful but sometimes not. They have a job to do and they’re interested in doing well at their job which often comes in conflict with the job I need to do.

Researcher: Um, can you talk about that just a little bit, uh like uh, where the two might collide?

Interviewee: Uh, the two can collide in terms of what the different camps want for the students or expect of the students. Student affairs is uh ultimately, it’s a branch of entertainment. It’s in charge of looking after the students and their well-being physical and mental, psychological uh and getting them involved in extra –curricular activities, which is great um but that’s not the same thing as what I do in the classroom and I don’t want the student to get confused, to think that I’m a branch of student affairs, for example. Uh, the students have some difficulty separating the two figuring out why isn’t class more fun, like, you know, what happens with student affairs projects, um, and so I think faculty have to maintain a certain line because here, particularly on a small campus, we’re very, very friendly with the students.

This appears to be an outlying observation as no other faculty members articulated these specific concerns during interviews.

Faculty members were somewhat divided in terms of their interest in being a part of students' lives beyond the classroom (or classroom-related activities). Some felt student affairs had information that could help them be better teachers, such as Samantha Taylor:

I personally would like them to let the faculty know when students are having issues. Um, I know there's probably a confidentiality issue there but you know I have a lot of confidentiality issues with my students. Anyway, it'd be nice to know when my students are struggling in a way that might be affecting them in my classroom. You know they be getting a C in my class but they may be actually very capable of getting an A but there's something socially going on that I'm not aware of so for me to be a better teacher and to maybe reach that students I would like some of that information if possible to help me maybe reach out to them differently. You know if there's a student who's having issues with social awkwardness or drinking uh when we sit and talk it could be using certain examples that make more sense for them or um allow me to connect to that student better in the classroom so that maybe he wouldn't transfer as much.

Others spoke of concerns related to authority and boundaries – and questioned how interested students would be in having faculty members engage them in other aspects of their lives (e.g., in the residence halls). Albert Keene notes that different faculty members have different levels of interest and comfort in engaging students outside the classroom and faculty office context, “Um there are some faculty who are really interested and their whole reason for being a college professor is to move into the dorms with the students and do that kind of thing. Not everybody can do that.”

It seemed that, although faculty members recognized a role for student affairs at the institution, they did not naturally think of them as partners in the accomplishment of their individual student learning outcomes but more a resource for logistical and financial support. Moreover, the willingness of faculty members to be a part of student affairs-initiated programs was modest, at best.

***Theme 5: Significant real and perceived barriers to collaboration exist.*** The researcher sought to gain understanding from faculty members what they felt were the most significant barriers to collaboration.

*Barrier to collaboration: Time.* The overwhelming first response to this question during interviews was the constraints of time. Eric Booher assessed the situation, “I wonder if it is as simple as we teach too damn much, you know, and I just [inaudible] time to walk next door to figure out that. Might be as simple as that.” Similar observations came from Todd Collins,

I'd say the biggest barrier is also our advantage and that's that we're small. Because we're a small college we all wear a lot of hats, we all have a lot of responsibilities, and finding the time to carve out an intentional collaboration – I mean it can be done but you've got a lot of other time commitments pulling on you.

Albert Keene, in noting the pressure to make tenure, spoke about the importance of guarding one's time and focusing on those things of personal and institutional priority:

Time! Time, if you want to put it that way, time is the biggest barriers. You can, I know that nobody says, will ever discourage faculty from helping or participating in any number of activities. You really have to watch out for your time. Um and you just have to guard your time. Be responsible for yourself.

*Barrier to collaboration: Institutional culture and lack of relationship with student affairs staff.* Faculty members believe they lack time to develop relationships with Student Affairs staff – and these relationships need to be built in order for opportunities for collaboration to emerge. In anecdotal cases where faculty members had become acquainted with members of the student affairs staff, most found the partnership to be rewarding and provided an opportunity for the faculty member to learn about the role and work of student affairs in a positive way.

The researcher observed, while on site and moving about the campus to conduct interviews, that the location of faculty offices, which were generally within classroom buildings, and the offices of the student affairs personnel, which were located in a building connected to a gymnasium, offered little opportunity for faculty members and student affairs personnel to encounter one another unless they were purposefully seeking to do so. Further, while dining in the campus dining hall, it was the researcher's observation, limited by the fact that he was not, obviously, able recognize every person and categorize them as a faculty member or staff member, that the faculty members he did recognize appeared to be sitting and interacting with other members of the faculty while staff, including the student affairs staff recognized by the researcher, either stayed within their own groups or took their lunch to go.

The researcher asked several questions in each interview that attempted to help him understand the institution's culture, especially as it related to the interaction of faculty members and members of the student affairs staff. The researcher found that, generally, there were very few structured or formal mechanisms in place for the faculty to meet, get to know, or interact with student affairs staff members. Todd Collins, when asked about the opportunity for conversation between faculty members and student affairs staff, noted,

I would say a little. On a day-to-day basis if I were not going over there and seeing them at lunch time about the only time I'd be interacting with them is when I was calling them for something that I needed or vice versa if they were calling me for something. Which doesn't happen that often.

Eugene Darko concurred, "Mmmm, really they are very few formal, uh, avenues or even venues for such interaction."

There did not seem to be a lack of interest or willingness, beyond the constraints of time, to such interaction. Eric Booher observed,

I think at the interpersonal level it doesn't seem like very much, but I do think at the same time at a professional level, in my experience so far, there is a lot of integration. I mean I can't list a bunch of the types of things that show me that but essentially they do seem available to me all the time.

A few of the faculty members interviewed did articulate that, because of various institutional activities and initiatives, they had gotten to know members of the student affairs staff. When this was the case, all noted that they found the collegial relationship to be rewarding professionally and informative in that they developed a greater understanding of the role of the student affairs unit. Daniel Patton felt he was unique in his connection with student affairs. His response is interesting, in that he comments on his perception of his colleagues on the faculty:

Unfortunately, you're asking the wrong person because I mean you're asking a person that's very skewed in their thinking. I'm an outgoing person so I know everybody in student affairs, everybody by first name, good friends, we all, you know, we sit down and have lunch often together at the common. So from my point of view we have we are intermingle all the time, a lot. Both in at school and after hours, you know, we are friends we get invited to each other's homes and things like that. In general I think and there are some faculty members that don't even know whose our VP for Student Affairs is or what goes on in [the student center] or other place.

Many of those same faculty members also indicated that, through their relationships with the student affairs staff, they had also gained valuable insights into the lives of the students of the institution, such as George Snyder:

It's more likely to happen if someone tries to make it happen. Um so for instance, I mean, I know Vicky Loeb (pseudonym) pretty well. I know Vicky Loeb pretty well because uh I started putting on some, I started bringing in some outside speakers and needed some help with that and that's her field of expertise. We started talking and realized we had a lot of [inaudible]. We'd gone to the same

school, she's active in the local Jewish community, I'm a Jewish historian. You know we have these areas of commonality.

*Barrier to collaboration: Lack of incentives/reward/recognition.* There were a variety of expressions of concern about the need for incentives (either monetary or related to tenure) for faculty members so that they could invest in collaborative ventures. In discussing increased collaboration being a goal of the administration, Eugene Darko observed:

It is always the incentives. So, what is there to incentivize in moving this direction? Is it very important for promotion? Is it very important for tenure? Is there a stipend that is linked to it? What are the consequences if I don't go along? Especially at an institution such as a college, the repercussions are rather limited given the structure of a typical college faculty.

Charles Edmonds, the chief academic officer, confirmed that there were little financial incentives to collaboration,

we don't offer really much in the way of monetary incentives to get involved and, although I'm sure some faculty would say that's what we needed to, but partly what you're trying to do here, I mean to the extent that faculty are being motivated by stipends and incentives and so on, it's not going to result in a lasting change.

In assessing the impact of working on a collaborative initiative on tenure, Todd Collins stated, "yeah it looks great on my tenure packet but that's not what they're looking for for the tenure packet. So that, while it might be a little gold star on the tenure packet it's not something they're really going to look at." Jennifer Johnson commented that she would like to see such efforts more valued but was candid in saying, "I don't see much on that front. I don't even know how you'd do it." George Snyder did note,

You know service is a really huge part of how we're assessed here and working in faculty-staff learning community is definitely a line on the vita; it's not as good a line on the vita as an article. And maybe it shouldn't be. Or how good a teacher you are. But, yeah, there is some incentive in place for that.

*Barriers to collaboration: Other.* Two faculty members did speak about student motivation and enthusiasm, rather than time, as being the biggest barrier to successful collaboration. Daniel Patton shared, "Well, the main barrier, if I were to think about something, uh, would be, uh, I don't think our students are that enthusiastic about this process, this stuff, you know. I think the main barrier is motivation." This was a conclusion shared by Jennifer Johnson, who observed,

I think the students. You know, how do you get them to figure it out. I think the one, for worse, I think, actually, sort of we have a culture of um, lackadaisical work here and I think it is slowly changing, I hope it's changing but you know we're shocked at how little they work, how little they read, how much effort they really put in.



## Chapter 5

### Recommendations, Implications, and Conclusions

#### Recommendations

This chapter offers recommendations based upon the themes that emerged from a single site case study exploring faculty perceptions of the role and function of student affairs personnel at a small college. The primary aim of the study was to examine how faculty members at the case study institution perceive the student affairs personnel and how that perception impacts collaboration between faculty members and student affairs personnel at that institution. As Creswell notes, “in qualitative inquiry, the intent is not to generalize to a population, but to develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon” (2005, p. 203).

The conceptual framework for this study was derived from the work of Sandeen (1991) and, Winston et al. (2001). Central to this framework is that the primary role of student affairs personnel is that of educator. Winston et al., building on the work of Sandeen, state, “the student affairs division must become an integral part of college students’ quest to integrate, make meaning of, and apply classroom learning; to remediate academic deficits and acquire new skills; and to address personal and social development issues” (p. x). They further identify collaboration between student affairs and the faculty to be a key way in which this educational role is to be accomplished, stating “the fundamental domain of student affairs administration as it enters the twenty-first century is education, carried out in an integrated and collaborative manner with faculty and staff members from other major institutional organizational units” (Creamer et al., 2001, p. 8).

This study explored the environment of a small college and then used that environmental information as a context to depict, qualitatively, the day-to-day experiences and perceptions of faculty with regard to the role and functions of the student affairs personnel. Using that qualitative depiction, this study then examined the scope and nature of the relationship between the academic affairs and student affairs units, with a particular focus on issues and challenges to collaboration.

Themes were developed from document analysis, semi-structured interviews with ten faculty members and two senior-level administrators, and researcher observations, at McFeely College (pseudonym), a small liberal arts institution located in the southeastern United States. These themes are focused on the research participants' perception and understanding of the nature and role of the student affairs division at McFeely College and its relationship to both their and the institution's developmental goals for its students.

**Recommendation 1: Faculty members need to understand the role of the student affairs division.** A critical first step for McFeely College, as well as other institutions seeking to foster or build collaboration between faculty members and student affairs personnel, is for there to be a good working knowledge of the role of the student affairs division by the members of the faculty. Magolda (2005) notes that,

a prerequisite for effective collaboration between faculty members and student affairs professionals is the need for individuals in both groups to become aware of the cultural boundaries they create and to understand that who they are as individuals and as a subculture influences their actions and interpretations. (p. 20)

The mission and vision statements of McFeely College clearly indicate its commitment to "integrated learning." The mission statement, as posted on the college web site and reviewed by the researcher prior to his on campus visit was:

McFeely College's mission is to engage students in their development as whole persons through an integrative learning approach that stresses intellectual, ethical, spiritual and personal growth and prepares our graduates for responsible lives of learning, service, and leadership in a diverse and changing world. (McFeely College, n.d.d)

The vision statement of the College further amplified these ideas as well as provided some indication as to the institution's developmental goals for its graduates:

McFeely College aspires to be a leading national liberal arts college, a model of integrative learning, and a community committed to open discourse and civil debate as ways of learning and as preparation for service in the world. (McFeely College, n.d.d)

In addition, the Strategic Plan of the college identified, as its first two goals:

1. Be recognized for excellence in integrative learning.
2. Create a student-centered culture built upon openness and collaboration between faculty, staff, students and alumni. (McFeely College, n.d.a)

If the institution is to be successful in establishing and implementing collaborative and integrative experiences it is important that faculty members be acquainted with the role and work of the student affairs division.

Without exception, every faculty member interviewed described his or her primary role on campus as teaching. The faculty members interviewed as a part of this study know why they are at McFeely College. However, it was clear from interviews conducted by the researcher that most faculty members do not know, or were not able to succinctly articulate, the role of the student affairs division. Faculty members are also, generally, unaware of student affairs' activities, programs, and initiatives; they do not know who they are, what they do, or what resources and services they could potentially bring to the collaboration table.

According to Sandeen (2004), the success of collaborative efforts between academic affairs and student affairs divisions, “may depend on how faculty and academic leaders perceive the abilities of their particular student affairs staff” (p. 31). It was the researcher’s opinion, based on interviews and observations on campus, that faculty members operated with the general assumption that the student affairs staff had a purpose, worked hard, and had good intentions and motivations; yet they were unable to describe those things with any specificity. The faculty did not perceive the student affairs personnel negatively; there existed a general ignorance as to the role of the student affairs division and thus no real conception of how student affairs could contribute to the accomplishment of the developmental outcomes the faculty have for their students.

Assisting faculty members in better understanding the role and purpose of the student affairs division can be accomplished through both formal and informal means. Based on the researcher’s interviews and observations, the faculty members who knew the most about the student affairs division at McFeely College were those who had become acquainted with the division, and this acquaintanceship most often came about because of a professional, collegial relationship with one or more members of the student affairs staff. These relationships, when formed, provided a conduit through which understanding of roles and responsibilities could be shared. For example, Todd Collins shared that

[A student affairs staff member] became my program assistant for this trip because we ran into each other at lunch time and I mentioned it and it went from there. So it wasn’t a directed – oh let’s do this collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs.

Pace et al. (2006), in their research, found that faculty and staff participants in a collaborative initiative built upon the intergroup dialog model, experienced similar outcomes, with participants indicating, “that they learned about faculty and staff responsibilities and found this quite helpful in advancing their understanding of how the university functions. Participants reported on the pleasure of getting to know others in the university community and forming new relationships they plan to continue” (p. 311).

During interviews, several faculty members shared ideas for how they might become better informed about the role and activities of the student affairs division. Samantha Taylor suggested, “pop into a faculty meeting every once in a while and letting us know what’s going on recently” as one mechanism for improving intra-divisional communication. Daniel Patton offered a similar suggestion, “it doesn’t hurt for staff, student affairs staff, to go around and have presentations in faculty meetings and stuff, you know.” Another frequent suggestion was to have more opportunities for informal interactions that could lead to discovering common interests or overlapping and/or complementary initiatives.

Another strategy for increasing awareness may involve organizational realignment, such as has been done at some institutions where the student affairs division reports to the provost, or increasing the participation and involvement of student affairs personnel in institutional governance through committee service. Arminio et al. (2009) observe, “campuses where academic and student affairs personnel work together most effectively have broad representation on campuswide committees and other decision-making bodies, ensure participation of faculty and student affairs educators in a variety of

course-based and cocurricular activities, sponsor joint research and scholarly endeavors, and create opportunities for collaborative oversight and decision making on use of institutional resources such as buildings and endowments” (pp. 16-17). The benefit of such strategies lies in providing a mechanism for faculty members and student affairs personnel to get to know one another. While some campuses may find this an appropriate strategy to eliminate some barriers to collaboration, Sandeen (2004) notes,

new reporting arrangements or organizational structures may be useful, but the knowledge and skills of student affairs staff and the willingness of academic affairs staff to view undergraduate education as the total life experience of students during their college years are far more important to improving student learning. (p. 33)

In summary, the faculty at McFeely College did not perceive the role of the student affairs personnel as educators, as described by Sandeen (1991) and Winston et al. (2001). This was due to a lack of an overall awareness and understanding of the student affairs division, something that can be addressed both formally and informally. However, while becoming acquainted is a first step toward gaining role awareness and appreciation it is just the beginning of collaboration.

**Recommendation 2: Academic affairs and student affairs administrators need to provide leadership in developing a common understanding of institutional goals and in providing structures to support collaboration.** While it is critical for faculty members to gain an understanding of the role and purpose of the student affairs division, this alone is not enough. Magolda (2005) suggests, “educators interested in partnerships between student affairs professionals and faculty members must not only encourage border crossings but provide the border crossers with the technical, political,

and cultural framework to support their efforts” (p. 21). It is important for the administrative leadership of the institution to acknowledge the value of collaboration and to help build a bridge between the academic affairs and student affairs divisions.

A key piece of bridging academic affairs and student affairs is developing a common understanding and vocabulary related to the goals and objectives of the institution. According to Shushok et al. (2009), “when faculty and student affairs educators are brought to the same table, there is a difference in language and perspective” (p. 14). And, as Kuh, Siegel, and Thomas (2001) note, “faculty members, academic administrators, and student affairs practitioners all make valuable contributions to the educational process, yet their core values and priorities sometimes put them at odds with one another” (p. 48). Prior to arriving on campus, the researcher, through document analysis, was familiar with several key ideas and phrases that McFeely College used to describe the educational experience it seeks to provide to its students. During an initial interview with the chief academic officer and chief student affairs officer, the researcher took note that, when asked to describe their role on campus, as well as the role of their division, the chief academic officer made reference to and used language from the educational philosophy statement while the chief student affairs officer referenced and used language from the mission statement and strategic plan. This difference, albeit perhaps subtle, represents a difference in philosophical understanding and orientation. The two documents are not in conflict with one another, but each uses a distinct vocabulary. For collaborations to be successful, each group involved must understand the

goals – both the broad institutional goals and the specific individual goals – that the collaboration is attempting to address.

Most faculty interviewed indicated that they had not had a conversation with anyone in student affairs about either their or the institution's developmental goals for students. Creamer et al. (2001) observe that "effective institutions have long viewed student affairs professionals as partners in the total educational enterprise" (p. 4). At McFeely College, the faculty needs to have a venue to share ideas, initiatives, and student learning and developmental goals with the student affairs staff and to make them partners in the enterprise. Further, there need to be a meaningful dialog about how these goals can be met through both collaborative and supportive programming in the areas of co-curricular and experiential learning. This requires open dialog and time for the development of mutual understanding that will lead to a culture of trust and respect within the collaborative venture.

Developing a framework and organizational structure for collaboration is also important if institutional goals are to be accomplished. As Sandeen (1991) notes, "the campus functions best as a community, not as a group of separate, non-communicating administrative fiefdoms" (p. 64). However, faculty members and student affairs personnel often have different work-life experiences such as different schedules, different performance expectations, and different priorities. Magolda (2005) reminds, "faculty and student affairs subcultures subscribe to qualitatively different ideologies, complicating initiatives for collaboration" (p. 19). During faculty interviews, no faculty member voiced opposition to being involved in collaborative initiatives, and some even expressed



interest. Sandeen (1991) suggests that “faculty members will respond positively to student affairs leaders who work hard to improve learning opportunities for students and who show genuine and professional concern for them” (p. 59). Yet it was also clear to the researcher that collaborations were unlikely to occur serendipitously or spontaneously as the degree of interaction and interface between faculty members and student affairs personnel was varied, inconsistent, and not systemic. The faculty members who were most aware of the role and purpose of the student affairs division, as well as those who had engaged in some form of collaboration with student affairs, generally pointed to having the opportunity to meet and become acquainted with someone in student affairs as a point origin for the collaboration. Administrators must be willing to make provision for both this initial acquaintanceship and the planning and execution of the collaborative venture by offering support through things such as schedule flexibility, release time, and financial support for collaborative ventures.

Having clear expectations for faculty members when designing or proposing collaborative initiatives is essential. During the researcher’s interview with the dean of the college, Charles Edmonds, and the dean of students, Mark Lambert, the discussion turned to the linking of academic, co-curricular, and residential experiences to create integrated or experiential learning opportunities for students. While these two administrators articulated this as a collaborative effort between academic and student affairs, both acknowledged the challenge of the faculty in engaging this idea.

A key concern, as described by Edmonds and later articulated by some of the faculty members interviewed, is making sure that everyone understands their role and

responsibilities in the initiative. In describing the future of academic and student affairs partnerships, Colwell (2006) suggests,

the academic and student affairs partnership will be nourished by the collegial and personal ethos of the small college; the institution places significant value on meaningful individual interactions, between faculty and students both in and out of the classroom, between staff and students, and between academic and student affairs staff. (p. 65)

This is consistent with what the researcher found at McFeely College. There is a high degree of personal regard among members of the faculty toward both their colleagues and the student affairs staff. However, often faculty members, who are very comfortable in the context of the classroom, are less comfortable in other, less structured contexts such as the residence hall or on experiential learning trips. They may also have less expertise or experience in managing the logistics of cocurricular or experiential events. Making sure faculty members understand their role and what is expected of them can help them be successful in the execution of an event or activity and, hopefully, more willing to reprise that role in the future. Similarly, faculty members need to help student affairs personnel understand their role. This requires purposeful dialog and planning in an environment characterized by mutual respect and trust.

By developing a common understanding of institutional goals and providing structures to support collaboration, administrators can help foster and nurture collaborative ventures, leading to the enhancement of student learning and the accomplishment of student learning outcomes. As Shushok and Sriram (2010) noted in summarizing their research of an academic affairs and student affairs partnership in the development of a residential living-learning community, “when this gap [between

academic affairs and student affairs] is bridged and the two areas work collaboratively, the satisfaction, persistence, learning, and personal development of students increase” (p. 76).

**Recommendation 3: The institution needs to articulate what it means by terms like “experiential learning” and “co-curricular programming” as well as its expectation of its faculty in these initiatives.** While speaking with faculty members, the researcher was struck by the number of references that were made to *Liberation to Lead*, the institution’s educational philosophy document, and with the way that the language of that document was the same language used by them to name both their individual goals and their understanding of the institution’s developmental goals for students. There was an obvious high level of enculturation of the themes and vocabulary of this document among the faculty. In contrast, what the researcher did not find was a common definition or understanding of other key terms from documents, like the strategic plan, such as integrative learning, experiential learning, and co-curricular programming. At McFeely, there was much confusion about these different terms, or buzzwords as some faculty members deemed them, and the expectation or expectations that accompanied them. It was the observation of the researcher that faculty members were fervently attempting to meet unclear and undefined expectations, driven by the threat of the regional accreditation process. In this context, a survival mentality had emerged and this is not conducive to seeking to accomplish goals collaboratively.

Of particular note, many faculty members associated the change in terms from *integrative learning* to *experiential learning* with the change in administrative leadership

and with the institution's need to satisfy the expectations of its regional accreditor. The researcher sensed some degree of cynicism among the faculty members interviewed about the institution's true, long-term commitment to these goals. Again, this stands in contrast to the faculty's ability to articulate the college's educational philosophy, *Liberation to Lead*, and the degree to which the document seemed to have resonance with the faculty.

While the administrators to whom the researcher spoke seemed to have some shared understanding of what was meant by experiential learning and how the two divisions – academic affairs and student affairs – could work together to accomplish this goal, that same understanding had not been successfully shared with the faculty. Faculty members, rather, felt that the call to develop experiential learning was a directive to create something new and no faculty member interviewed by the researcher had pursued or considered a partnership with student affairs in pursuit of this directive. This is disappointing because, as Baxter Magolda (2001) states,

as members of the campus academic community, student affairs professionals can help faculty enhance learning in the curriculum by sharing their expertise in holistic student development with faculty who must understand how learners construct knowledge to implement learning-centered forms of pedagogy. (p. 289)

Further complicating matters was a developing definition of *experiential learning* that left some faculty members feeling that some of their current or ongoing initiatives that they felt were experiential did not meet the definition that was being communicated.

As Colwell (2006) notes,

the extent to which students see academic and student life staff working together shapes how they view faculty and student life staff and their learning: extensive collaboration suggests to students that both faculty and student life staff are

educators and that their learning in and out of class is all part of a single, whole, educational experience. (p. 62)

McFeely College is philosophically committed to the ideas of integrated or experiential learning and to the education of the whole person. However, at the time this case study was developed, a lack of common understanding of these terms, coupled with the pressure of the reaffirmation of accreditation and the use of experiential learning as a key component of satisfying the accreditation process, has led to an inhibitor to collaboration. Student affairs personnel potentially bring much to the table in the area of experiential learning and co-curricular programming. As Creamer et al. (2001) observe, student affairs personnel “promote student learning and personal development through the execution of multiple educational activities that are fundamental to the basic purposes of higher education and they execute them using principles of collaborative and active learning” (p. 5). However, until faculty are assisted in developing and cultivating a common institutional understanding of the underlying goals and until the expectations of faculty members with regard to the accomplishment of those goals collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs is unlikely to occur.

**Recommendation 4: There must be alignment between institutional expectations and the faculty promotion, tenure, and review systems.** Among the constraints to collaboration, as articulated by faculty, were time and concerns about the potential negative impact of time spent on collaborative initiatives, as compared with research and scholarship, on their path toward tenure. As Sandeen (2004) notes,

some faculty may hesitate to participate in joint efforts with student affairs—for example, in developing residential learning communities—if they see no professional rewards for themselves. This is especially the case if promotion and

tenure policies continue to give little recognition to collaborative service activities or to 'non-traditional' scholarship. (p. 31)

Many faculty members interviewed by the researcher felt pressured because they had too many and competing demands on their time, including teaching, committee work and other service to the college (serving as department chair, advising, etc.), and research. Faculty members also discussed expectations related to tenure and expressed that they did not feel that those expectations aligned with other expectations, such as pursuing experiential learning or collaboration across disciplines or departments. The rewards system at McFeely College does not seem to align with expectations.

When asked about the connection between the faculty assessment processes and collaborative initiatives the Dean of the College, Charles Edmonds, did not characterize pursuit of collaborative initiatives as an extension of the teaching expectations. Rather, he stated,

in the promotion and tenure review standards, and really in the annual reviews, it would come in under college service. And faculty are free to describe what they think are significant service contributions and this would certainly be one that could be described that way, depending on what they did.

Some faculty members interviewed by the researcher did acknowledge that collaborative initiatives could be considered service but most were quick to point out that both teaching excellence and research leading to scholarly publication were valued more highly than service contributions. Shushok et al. (2009), concur that "to be involved much in the cocurriculum early in an academic career is often difficult, if not imprudent for faculty members" (p. 10).

Edmonds suggested that he hoped that the primary motivator for faculty involvement in collaborative initiatives would be intrinsic, partly because this type of motivation would lead to more long-term and lasting change. Colwell (2006) suggests that one such intrinsic motivator for faculty members might be the possibility of helping them best accomplish what, at McFeely College, faculty members universally see as their primary role: teaching. He notes, “at small colleges, faculty are particularly interested in interactions with students outside the classroom, as they realize a fuller understanding of their students’ lives can inform their classroom teaching” (p. 62). Further supporting this idea is the research of Haynes and Janosik (2012) on the benefit of faculty and staff involvement in living-learning programs. They found that “receiving intrinsic benefits was reported more frequently than receiving extrinsic benefits” (p. 36). What appears to be missing, then, is some assurance for faculty members that time spent on collaborative initiatives will not negatively affect the path toward tenure.

More clearly articulated and expressed expectations, perhaps rewarded in the tenure process or, perhaps, just not disincentivized by that process, have the power to create the context for McFeely College to accomplish its goals with regard to integrated or experiential learning in a collaborative fashion.

### **Implications**

There has been little research done that explores faculty perceptions of student affairs personnel, particularly in the setting of a small college. The research that has been conducted has been quantitative in methodology (e.g., Hardwick, 2001). Thus, this study presented an opportunity for a qualitative exploration of how faculty members perceived

student affairs personnel and how that perception impacted collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs within the context of a single institution.

This study used a single site case study methodology. It is hoped that the results of this single site case study can be transferred to other similar sites/situations. As Merriam (2009) notes, “every study, every case, every situation is theoretically an example of something else. The general lies in the particular; that is, what we learn in a particular situation we can transfer or generalize to similar situations subsequently encountered” (p. 225). However, there are also many unique, contextual variables and circumstances that might make some of the findings of this case study specific only to McFeely College or only to small colleges with a profile similar to that of McFeely College.

It should be noted that exploration of faculty member perceptions of student affairs personnel does present some challenges. The variety of organizational and reporting systems, political structures, and staffing models deployed on different college and university campuses makes comparison and generalization difficult. In addition, each individual brings his or her own experiences and biases to any relationship, including the relationship between a qualitative researcher and interviewees. In this case, the redundancy and commonality expressed by the research participants – that ultimately led to saturation – makes a case that the experiences observed and recorded by the researcher are not outliers but represent the faculty experience at McFeely College.

The findings of this study were not exactly what the researcher anticipated before the study began. Working within the conceptual framework of the primary role of student



affairs personnel being educators, it was anticipated that faculty would hold much stronger opinions about the student affairs personnel and their role, and that those opinions would be the key to understanding the scope and nature of the collaborative environment on campus. What the researcher found, instead, was that the faculty were, generally, unaware and uninformed as to the role of the student affairs division. The key to understanding the scope and nature of the collaborative environment proved to be the lack of a common understanding of administrative expectations, coupled with a lack of understanding of the role of the student affairs division, and the presence of real constraints such as time and lack of incentive. It is possible, perhaps even likely, that this is the case not just at McFeely College but at many other small colleges as well.

Future research, both in the form of large-scale quantitative studies as well as more single site case studies, offers higher education leaders and administrators the opportunity to continue to learn about the culture and nature of the academic and student affairs divisions on college and university campuses and, with that knowledge, be able to understand how to best foster, support, and nurture collaborative initiatives. To do so is significant if improvements to student learning outcomes are to be realized. As summarized in the introduction to *Powerful Partnerships: A Shared Responsibility for Learning* (American Association for Higher Education, et al., 1998, pp. 1-2):

most colleges and universities do not use our collective wisdom as well as they should. To do so requires a commitment to and support for action that goes beyond the individual faculty or staff member. Distracted by other responsibilities and isolated from others from whom they could learn about learning and who would support them, most people on campus contribute less effectively to the development of students' understanding than they might. It is only by acting cooperatively in the context of common goals, as the most innovative institutions have done, that our accumulated understanding about learning is put to best use.

Additional understanding of the faculty perspective and perceptions is critical to the effective use of collaboration to accomplish student learning outcomes.

### **Conclusion**

Over the past 15 years, the researcher has had the privilege to work in a variety of roles in higher education including instructional technology, library services, academic affairs administration, and student affairs administration. The researcher's general experience, and one that the literature confirms (e.g., Baxter Magolda, 2003; Blimling, 1993; Colwell, 2006; DiGregorio et al., 1996; Magolda, 2005; Schuh & Whitt, 1999), is that various operational units on most college campuses tend to operate in silos. This is true at McFeely College. The reasons for this bifurcation were not, however, what the researcher expected to discover. Instead of finding that faculty members held strong opinions about the student affairs personnel, particularly in regard to their role as educator, the researcher found that faculty were, generally, unaware and uninformed as to the role of the student affairs division and this ignorance, rather than negative perceptions, was a leading factor impacting collaborative initiatives. The researcher is, however, encouraged by the findings of this case study and about the potential that this and future research holds for continuing to improve the educational environment on college campuses and the accomplishment of student learning outcomes through collaboration.

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**Appendix A**

**University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
Institutional Review Board Approval**

Gmail - NUgrant Message - Official Approval Letter for IRB project #10474 <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ui=2&ik=007c3a17a0&view=pt&q=n...>



Matt Peltier <mpeltier@gmail.com>

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## NUgrant Message - Official Approval Letter for IRB project #10474

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nugrant-irb@unl.edu <nugrant-irb@unl.edu>  
To: johanlon1@unl.edu, mpeltier@gmail.com

Tue, Jun 29, 2010 at 5:58 PM



June 29, 2010

Matthew Peltier  
Department of Educational Administration  
29 Brandon Ln Bristol, VA 24201

James O'Hanlon  
Department of Educational Administration  
123 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20100610474 EX  
Project ID: 10474  
Project Title: The Impact of Faculty Perception of Student Affairs Personnel on Collaborative Initiatives: A Case Study

Dear Matthew:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as Exempt Category 2.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 06/29/2010. This approval is Valid Until: 12/31/2010.

1. The approved informed consent form has been uploaded to NUgrant (file with -Approved.pdf in the file name). Please use this form to distribute to participants. If you need to make changes to the informed consent form, please submit the revised form to the IRB for review and approval prior to using it.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- \* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- \* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- \* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- \* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- \* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

Gmail - NUgrant Message - Official Approval Letter for IRB project #10474 <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ui=2&ik=007c3a17a0&view=pt&q=n...>

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman, CIP  
for the IRB



**Appendix B**

**Informed Consent Form**



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
Department of Educational Administration

***Introduction:***

We invite you to take part in a research study being conducted as a dissertation project at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. It is important that you read and understand several general principles that apply to all who take part in this research study: (1) taking part in this study is entirely voluntary; (b) you may not benefit directly as a result of taking part in this study, but knowledge may be gained that might benefit others; (c) you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without affecting your relationship with the investigators, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln or Roanoke College; (d) leaving the study will not cause a penalty or loss of any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Before you volunteer to take part in this research, the study must be explained to you and you must be given a chance to ask questions. You should discuss anything that you do not understand with the person who is explaining it to you before you agree to volunteer. Once all of your questions have been answered, you must sign this consent form, which gives us permission for you to participate. The nature of the study, the risks, inconveniences, discomforts and other important information about the study are discussed below.

***Identification of Project:***

The Impact of Faculty Perception of Student Affairs Personnel on Collaborative Initiatives: A Case Study

***Person in Charge of Study:***

Matt Peltier  
Ph.D. Candidate, College of Education and Human Sciences, University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
Contact: [mpeltier@gmail.com](mailto:mpeltier@gmail.com) or 423-383-0673

***Faculty Advisor:***

Dr. James O'Hanlon  
Professor, College of Education and Human Sciences, University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
Contact: [johanlon1@unl.edu](mailto:johanlon1@unl.edu) or 402-472-5310

***Purpose of the Research:***

The purpose of this single site case study is to explore, using a single-site case study methodology, faculty perceptions of the role and function of student affairs personnel at a small college. You were invited to participate in this study because you are a faculty member at the case study site.



**Procedures:**

Participation in this study will require approximately 60 minutes of your time and will consist of a one-on-one interview with the investigator that will be recorded with a digital audio recording device. The interview will take place in a mutually agreed upon, private location.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Initial here to indicate your agreement to be audio recorded during the interview.**

This study will make use of respondent validation. You may be contacted at a future date to review the investigator's preliminary analysis to ensure that the investigator's interpretation of your experiences is accurate. If you are willing to be contacted for the purpose of respondent validation, please provide an email address that the investigator can use to send information to you below:

**Participant's Email Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Risks and/or Discomforts:**

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.

**Benefits:**

There is no guarantee that you will receive any benefit from taking part in this study. The results of this study may help administrators to better understand the relationship between the academic affairs and student affairs units on their own campus, take steps to correct incorrect or inaccurate perceptions, and to address issues and challenges related to collaboration between the two units. This study may also help faculty and students affairs personnel to gain better self-understanding.

**Confidentiality:**

Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be stored on the password-protected laptop computer of the investigator or in a locked cabinet in the investigator's office and will only be seen by the investigator. Audio files will be stored on the investigator's password-protected computer and will be heard only by the investigator, who will personally complete the transcriptions. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private. The audio files will be deleted after the study.

**Compensation:**

There will be no compensation for participating in this research.



*Opportunity to Ask Questions:*

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. You may contact the investigators listed above at any time. If you have questions concerning your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at 402-472-6965.

*Freedom to Withdraw:*

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or Roanoke College or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

*Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:*

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

**██████████ College Institutional Review Board**

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of ██████████ College as Study #10SA001. If you feel you have not been treated according to the description in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact the chair of the Institutional Review Board, ██████████ College, ██████████ ██████████ or by e-mail at ██████████

*Signatures:*

-----  
Name of Research Participant (please print)

-----  
Signature of Research Participant

-----  
Date

-----  
Signature of Investigator

-----  
Date

**Appendix C**

**Interview Protocol**

<b>Interviewee:</b>	
<b>Interview Data:</b>	
<b>Interview Time:</b>	
<b>Location:</b>	
<b><i>Introduction</i></b>	<p><i>Introduce the purpose of the study.</i></p> <p><i>Discuss use of the data.</i></p> <p><i>Discuss confidentiality.</i></p> <p><i>Inform the participant of intent to record interview.</i></p> <p><i>Advise participant of the following:</i></p> <p><i>(a) taking part in this study is entirely voluntary;</i></p> <p><i>(b) the participant may not benefit directly as a result of taking part in this study, but knowledge may be gained that might benefit others;</i></p> <p><i>(c) the participant is free to withdraw from the study at any time without affecting his or her relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln;</i></p> <p><i>(d) leaving the study will not cause a penalty or loss of any benefits to which the participant is otherwise entitled.</i></p>
<b><i>Informed Consent</i></b>	<i>Have participant review and sign informed consent form</i>
<b><i>Audio Recording</i></b>	<i>Turn on and test audio recorder</i>
<b>Academic rank:</b>	
<b>Academic discipline:</b>	
<b>Gender:</b>	
<b>Type of undergraduate institution attended:</b>	
<b>Years at case study institution:</b>	

<b>Years in the professoriate:</b>	
<b>Please describe your primary job or role on campus:</b>	
<b>Do you have other roles?</b>	
<b>What are your developmental goals for your students?</b>	
<b>What are the institution's goals for its students?</b>	
<b>Please describe the student affairs department at this institution.</b>	
<b>What is the primary job or role of the student affairs staff at this institution?</b>	
<b>Do they have other roles?</b>	
<b>What is the role or purpose of co-curricular or extra-curricular activities?</b>	

<p><b>What are some of the co-curricular or extra-curricular activities at this institution?</b></p>	
<p><b>Have you ever participated in co-curricular or extra-curricular activities with students? If so, why?</b></p>	
<p><b>Do the student affairs staff have a role to play in accomplishing your developmental goals for your students?</b></p>	
<p><b>In accomplishing the institution's developmental goals for its students?</b></p>	
<p><b>Do you have a role to play in accomplish the developmental goals of the student affairs staff for students?</b></p>	
<p><b>Have you ever partnered with a member of the student affairs staff in the accomplishment of a student learning outcome?</b></p>	
<p><b><i>If yes, please explain what this relationship was. Please elaborate on your perception of the value of that partnership.</i></b></p>	

<b><i>If no, would you be willing to do so? Who should initiate this partnership?</i></b>	
<b>Do you feel collaboration between faculty and student affairs staff is encouraged by your institution?</b>	
<b><i>If yes, in what ways and by whom?</i></b>	
<b><i>If no, why not?</i></b>	
<b>What do you feel are some of the barriers, if any, to collaboration between faculty and student affairs staff?</b>	
<b>Any other comments of observations?</b>	
<b><i>Closing</i></b>	<i>Thank the individual. Assure of confidentiality and discuss respondent validation.</i>

**Appendix D**

**Participant Recruitment Email**



Dear Faculty Member:

Greetings! My name is Matt Peltier and I am a Ph.D. candidate in Educational Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I am writing to invite you to take part in a research study that will focus on faculty perceptions of the role and function of student affairs personnel at a small college. This research project has been supported by Dean Edmonds (pseudonym) & Dean Lambert (pseudonym) and has been approved by the IRB of both the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and McFeely College (pseudonym).

Participation in this study will require approximately 60 minutes of your time and will consist of a one-on-one interview with the investigator that will be recorded with a digital audio recording device. Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential.

It is important that you understand several general principles that apply to all who take part in this research study: (1) taking part in this study is entirely voluntary; (b) you may not benefit directly as a result of taking part in this study, but knowledge may be gained that might benefit others; (c) you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without affecting your relationship with the investigator, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or McFeely College; (d) leaving the study will not cause a penalty or loss of any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

I will be on your campus September 27-30, 2010. If you are willing to participate in this study, please reply to this email with several dates/times that you would be available to meet with me. I am happy to come to your office for the interview. If you would prefer to meet in a conference room or other space, please let me know and I will make arrangements for an alternative location.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,  
Matt Peltier  
Ph.D. Candidate  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
mpeltier@gmail.com

**Appendix E**

**Summary Prepared for Exit Interview at Case Study Site**

**Site Visit to McFeely College (pseudonym)**

September 26-30, 2010

Matt Peltier, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

**Preliminary Thoughts/Observations...**

McFeely is an independent, private, co-educational, four-year college with a student enrollment of approximately 2,000 students. There are approximately 125 full-time, tenure-track faculty. The cost of tuition is just over \$30,000. The college is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Some unique contextual facts:

- Relatively new senior-level administration. President was inaugurated in July 2007; Vice President for Academic Affairs and Vice President for Student Affairs both hired since inauguration of the president.
- Campus is preparing for reaffirmation of accreditation, including development of SACS-required Quality Enhancement Plan.
- College Board is set to review/approve changes to the Mission and Vision of the institution in October, 2010. This change will include removal of the language “integrated learning” and replace it with “experiential learning.”

The idea of collaboration or collaborative initiatives is expressed in the

- Vision statement: “aspires to be a model of... integrative learning” (soon to be “experiential learning”)
- Mission statement: “development as whole persons through an integrative learning approach that stresses intellectual, ethical, spiritual, and personal growth” (soon to eliminate the phrase “as whole persons” and instead “promoting their intellectual, ethical, spiritual and personal growth”).
- Strategic Plan: Theme 1 related to Experiential Education Programs and Theme 2 that discusses linking the academic, co-curricular, and residential experience.
- The Pillars orientation theme: Personal Distinction, Campus Involvement, Motivation to Serve, and Academic Excellence
- The identification of “experiential learning” as the theme for the SACS-required Quality Enhancement Plan

The purpose of this study was to examine the scope and nature of the relationship between the academic affairs and student affairs units, with a particular focus on issues

and challenges to collaboration. Below is a summary of some key findings, based on conversations with faculty members. **It should be noted that this is a VERY preliminary analysis of the findings based largely on the recollections of the investigator, not based a complete qualitative data analysis process.**

### **Perception of Student Affairs**

Most faculty members interviewed were unable to articulate who worked in student affairs or what role the Office of Student Affairs played on campus. The most commonly articulated roles were:

- Residence Life
- People in charge of retention (student engagement, comfort, academic success)
- The people who plan events and run the student center

When asked about partnerships with student affairs, most spoke of student affairs as being the source of financial resources and logistical assistance.

### **Awareness of Student Affairs**

Most all articulated an interest in knowing more about the work of student affairs. Some probed the investigator seeking additional information on the work and role of student affairs.

Faculty did frequently mention hearing from “Dean Mark (pseudonym)” occasionally during faculty meetings, but expressed an interest in hearing and knowing more. Some expressed concern about not knowing about changes or initiatives that, at least indirectly, they felt impacted them.

Faculty were somewhat divided in terms of their interest in being a part of students lives beyond the classroom (or classroom-related activities). Some felt student affairs had information that could help them be better teachers. Others spoke of concerns related to authority and boundaries – and questioned how interested students would be in having faculty engage them in other aspects of their lives (e.g., in the residence halls).

### **Collegiality/Connection with Student Affairs**

Most faculty felt there was little to no interaction between themselves and the student affairs staff except on a “when needed” basis. There was a general sense that student affairs staff were:

- Available
- Inviting

- Caring/Concerned about students

Those who seemed to know the most about the work of student affairs were those who had, through whatever means, gotten personally connected with a member or members of the student affairs staff.

### **Openness to Partnerships/Collaboration**

Most faculty members tended to immediately think of faculty colleagues (either within their own department or in other departments) as those with whom they would partner.

Some expressed concern that the involvement of student affairs might lead to a model of “making everything fun” and a lessening of rigor.

Many wanted logistical support from “administration” but also implied a sense of wanting freedom or autonomy in planning and implementing programs, trips, etc.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

Most faculty reported that they had not engaged in dialog with student affairs staff about their student learning outcomes, either in general or in planning specific events/programs/etc.

Most were open to such discussions but were unsure as to how this might happen.

### **Experiential Learning / Co-Curricular Experiences**

The most diversity in responses came when faculty were asked to define “experiential learning” and “co-curricular.” Only a few immediately made connections with campus-based programming other than programming that emanated from the academic departments. Many struggled to define the terms and were unclear if the terms represented overlapping or distinct concepts.

Most faculty feel that it is the responsibility of the faculty to develop and implement experiential and co-curricular experiences for their students.

Perhaps because of the emphasis in the reaffirmation process on experiential learning and the recent changes to the terminology in the mission and vision, many faculty implied in their comments that they felt that “experiential learning” in particular, “co-curricular” to a lesser degree, needed to be something new, rather than something that already existed.

### **Barriers to Collaboration**

The most commonly articulated barrier was TIME.

There were a variety of expressions of this from concern about the need for incentives (either monetary or related to tenure) to a desire for there to be fewer expectations on time in other areas so that they could invest in collaborative ventures.

Others expressed simultaneous concern about lack of student engagement or student apathy and encouragement that either experiential learning or collaboration in co-curricular ventures could help mitigate this with students.

**Other**

A few faculty members mentioned other campus culture issues (student alcohol use was cited more than once as an example) that they felt were impacting students both in and out of the classroom and saw increased collaboration as important in addressing those issues.

**Appendix F**

**External Audit Report**

## EXTERNAL AUDIT ATTESTATION

Matthew S. Peltier (researcher) requested that Erika Bradley (auditor) complete a methodological audit of his qualitative case study dissertation entitled "THE IMPACT OF FACULTY PERCEPTION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS PERSONNEL ON COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES: A CASE STUDY." The audit was conducted in March, 2014.

The purpose of the audit was to determine the extent to which the results of the study are trustworthy. The audit was based materials provided for review by the researcher. These materials provided the evidence for the research process and were the basis for determining the extent to which the findings were supported by the data.

### Audit Materials

The following materials were provided:

- IRB-related documents from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and McFeely College
  - IRB Application and Approvals
  - Blank and Completed Informed Consent Forms
  - CITI Certification for Matthew S. Peltier
- Audio files of all interviews
- Transcripts of all interviews
- List of codes/themes
- Draft of the complete dissertation

### Audit Procedure

The audit consisted of the following steps:

1. Email and/or phone conversation to discuss audit and audit role
2. Receipt of requested files
3. Review of IRB-related documents
4. Review of random sample of transcripts (sample determined by auditor)
5. Review random sample of audio files to ascertain accuracy of transcripts (sample determined by auditor)
6. Review draft of dissertation to assess consistency in purpose, methodology, and analysis as well as compliance with IRB-related documents.
7. Complete and submit a signed attestation to the researcher.

### Audit Results

#### *Review of IRB-Related Documents*

The IRB-related documents were reviewed to learn more about the approach and methodology utilized in the study prior to reviewing the interview transcripts and listening to the audio files. It is the determination of the auditor that the research was conducted in an ethical manner as described in the IRB submission.

#### *Research Data*

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Transcripts: The auditor reviewed a sample of the transcripts of the interviews conducted by the researcher. The auditor selected four of the interview transcripts and compared them with the audio files. It is the determination of the auditor that the audio files were accurately transcribed.

*Review of Draft of Dissertation*

The purpose of the study was clearly noted in the final draft of the dissertation and the methodology and data reporting was consistent with the IRB protocol and the raw data provided.

**Conclusion**

After reviewing the materials provided by the researcher for this audit, I am submitting the following conclusions about the research process:

- The auditor believes the process of the study was consistent with the approved research protocols approved. The data obtained remained true to the focus of the study.
- The auditor believes the materials provided for review establish the trustworthiness of the study and the conclusions drawn as a result of the research.

Attested to by Erika Bradley this 8<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2014.

Erika Bradley, Ed.D.  
Research Assistant/East Tennessee State University