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## The Liberal Arts and Career Pathways: Creating Resources for Faculty and Students

By Robbin D. Crabtree, PhD,  
and James Simon, PhD

Many faculty and academic leaders feel under siege today, as the media and other public discourse recurrently question the value of a college education in general and the wisdom of majoring in the liberal arts in particular. The seemingly relentless attack arises from a context of rising costs and increasing levels of student debt, decreases in family discretionary income and related declines in access to home equity loans, and general anxiety about the economic context and near-term prospects for new graduates.

Not surprisingly then, there are noticeable shifts among first-time and transfer students toward enrolling in professional schools such as business, engineering, and health care at comprehensive universities (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Articles such as “Liberal Arts Majors Are Screwed” encourage students in the humanities and other areas to “switch to a major with more job prospects” (Schawbel, 2014). Given that up to 50 percent of college students enter as undecided, and as many as 50 to 70 percent of students change majors (and career goals) at least once while in college (Gordon and Steel, 2003), the challenges to liberal arts faculty, department chairs, and deans are significant. We ignore them at our peril.

For many years, initiatives such as

AAC&U’s LEAP (Liberal Education and America’s Promise) have sought to identify and articulate the practical, transferable, and marketable skills that are cultivated by the liberal arts. More recently, the AAC&U has been on the front lines of responding to public and political pressure by sponsoring studies and reports such as “How Liberal Arts and Science Majors Fare in Employment” (Humphreys and Kelly, 2014) and “It Takes More Than a Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success” (Hart Research Associates, 2013).

These studies provide compelling data about the value of a college education to first-time employment; document the initial, peak, and long-term earnings of college graduates across disciplines; and monitor advanced degree attainment for liberal arts graduates. Importantly, these reports highlight that the learning outcomes associated with the liberal arts consistently map to individual career success and other substantial social and economic contributions.

In the current context, especially for those of us in liberal arts colleges, it is our duty to steadfastly promote and defend the *inherent* and *enduring* value of the liberal arts. However, we are increasingly cognizant of the need to articulate and reinforce the *practical* value of a liberal arts education, and we must prepare faculty and students as partners.

Despite the staff and ample services

that support career planning at our institutions, few students take advantage of these resources until late in their college years (Novakovic, Kantamneni, Guillen, Fouad, Terry, Harris-Hodge, & Henry, 2006). Liberal arts students consistently (though naively) complain that those services do not support their majors. This situation at our university inspired us to integrate professional discernment activities into the academic programs and to support career-related teaching and advising—without becoming narrowly careerist or vocational.

The Classroom to Career (C2C) initiative at Fairfield University illustrates one strategy for creating resources and structuring routine academic encounters that foreground career discernment and preparation for mapping liberal arts

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### Promoting Work-Life Satisfaction

By Rob Kelly

Whether it's caring for a child or an ailing parent, participating in community activities, or pursuing a hobby, faculty members have and deserve lives beyond work. Formal policies, which vary across disciplines, are important, and academic leaders should actively promote such policies and programs because they can significantly affect faculty morale and retention. In addition, academic leaders at all levels can implement measures at the local level to promote work-life satisfaction and effectiveness.

In an interview with *Academic*

and professor of work and organizational psychology at the University of Baltimore, sees her role as advocating for institutional policies and programs that support work-life satisfaction as well as doing what she can to support individuals within her college.

As a first step, Wilson recommends becoming familiar with the policies and programs that the institution has in place to support work-life satisfaction. "Be informed so you know whom to ask about those options. There's so much available, but there is a lot of misinformation flying around, and oftentimes faculty don't know about it. I think being able to point them in the right direction or get them connected

"Ultimately, it's about recruiting and retaining the best faculty and staff. If you really care about individuals succeeding, then you have to recognize that there is life outside work. What can we do as an institution and leaders to help them succeed?"

*Leader*, Laura Koppes Bryan and Cheryl A. Wilson, authors of *Shaping Work-Life Culture in Higher Education: A Guide for Academic Leaders* (Routledge, 2014), offered recommendations on how to promote work-life satisfaction for everyone's benefit.

The work-life movement began as women entered the faculty ranks and had child care responsibilities. The definition of "life" has expanded over time, and Bryan and Wilson advocate a broad interpretation to include things such as elder care, professional development, career assistance for a spouse or partner, self-care, retirement planning, religious and social activities, and hobbies.

Bryan, who is dean of the Yale Gordon College of Arts and Science

with people in human resources or academic affairs is really important at the local level," says Wilson, associate professor and chair of the Klein Family School of Communications Design at the University of Baltimore.

Bryan and Wilson offer the following ways to support work-life balance:

- **Compile a list of resources.** To help connect faculty to resources on campus, Bryan recommends compiling a document that provides information on work-life resources and sending it to faculty members. In addition to alerting faculty to what's available, it sends the message that it's OK for faculty to make use of these policies

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and programs. This endorsement can help faculty who may otherwise be reluctant to seek help for fear of being stigmatized for doing so.

- **Choose your words carefully.** The way you communicate is essential for putting the faculty at ease. Your choice of language can make a difference in the way faculty feel about your stance on work-life issues, Bryan says. For example, faculty may interpret the word “accommodate” more negatively than the word “support” when you refer to these issues.
- **Create spaces to talk about work-life issues.** Wilson also recommends having family-friendly events to acknowledge that faculty have lives outside the office. And simply asking “What did you do this weekend?” reminds individuals that you know that they don’t just “disappear” at the end of the work day. I think everybody engages in that kind of conversation differently, but it starts to create a space in the workplace where you can have a little bit more blending of life and work,” she says.

Bryan regularly uses the first five or 10 minutes of meetings to “check in with everybody around the table by asking ‘What’s going on in your life right now? What do you want to share with the rest of us?’ That shows I’m interested in knowing about them as people. They also learn about each other,” Bryan says, noting that not everybody is comfortable sharing this type of information, so it’s important to make this optional.

In addition, when leaders talk about their own work-life situation, “We saw as a common theme how important it was for the leader to be transparent

about their own work-life responsibilities. When leaders who shared that they had child care or eldercare responsibilities, they were viewed as more work-life friendly,” Bryan says.

- **Include work-life information on your unit’s Web page.** Bryan did this shortly after becoming dean, and “I’ve actually had several faculty and staff candidates say that when they saw that, it encouraged them to apply to the university.”

Another way to demonstrate your commitment to work-life issues is to form a work-life committee. This also can help you understand the faculty’s work-life needs to enable you to develop policies and programs to address them, Bryan says.

- **Be flexible and creative in looking for solutions.** There is a wide range of options that leaders have at their disposal to address work-life issues. “They don’t all have to be grand policy gestures. Some [measures] can be very small things that make a huge difference to the faculty or staff member,” Wilson says.

For example, one way to support faculty members who need to drop off and/or pick up their children at day

care or school is to avoid scheduling meetings in the early morning or late afternoon.

When faculty members have life-changing events, Bryan strives to create some flexibility in their schedules. “We’ll actually modify their duties. They’re still on contract and working full time, but we will modify what they do as a way to have more flexibility in how they spend their time at the university,” Bryan says.

For Bryan, the main motivation for implementing policies and programs to support work-life satisfaction is to help faculty and staff succeed. But there are other benefits as well.

“Ultimately, it’s about recruiting and retaining the best faculty and staff. If you really care about individuals succeeding, then you have to recognize that there is life outside work. What can we do as an institution and leaders to help them succeed?” Bryan says.

In addition to being good for the individual faculty members, being supportive of faculty with work-life issues can save money and minimize legal risk. An American Council on Education study ([www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Making-the-Business-Case-for-Workplace-Flexibility.aspx](http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Making-the-Business-Case-for-Workplace-Flexibility.aspx)) demonstrated that it’s less expensive to offer some work-life policies than it is to replace a faculty member. ▼

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If you have questions, contact the editor Rob Kelly at [robkelly@magnapubs.com](mailto:robkelly@magnapubs.com).

# The Importance of Cocurricular Verification on the College Campus

By Julian Thomas Costa, MEd

With the growing emphasis on service-learning and the heightened necessity for experience on a resume, the ability to validate a student's participation in cocurricular experiences has become absolutely necessary. Over the past 40 years, colleges and universities across the country have begun to recognize this necessity as it became increasingly clear that extracurricular activities do provide experiential learning opportunities not found in the classroom.

## Background information

During the mid-1970s, academic institutions all over the country were beginning to realize that the traditional academic transcript was limited in terms of the data it was able to report. In a 1977 study, educational psychologists Robert Brown and Richard Citrin explored the changes on the horizon for the academic transcript. They emphasized that student development must be assessable and that the contemporary methods of instruction were not being communicated properly within the existing transcript formats (Brown and Citrin, 1977). Student affairs administrator Thomas Cosgrove concurred that no validation or official record keeping of extracurricular experiences was maintained (Cosgrove, 1986).

These issues continue today, as administrators continue to challenge the comprehensiveness of the academic transcript. For example, service-learning is catalogued as a cocurricular experience, even when the experiences are directly tied to academic coursework.

It was quite evident early on that having a student development transcript would be valuable to institutions. In a 1978 survey of 320 campus officers across the country, a majority

were supportive of the concept, the more vocal audience being the student affairs divisions (Brown and Citrin, 1978). Cosgrove pointed out that the process of recording students' participation must begin early on in order for students to be conscious of their activity selection and participation; as a result, students would be mindful of their own development as they pursue their degrees (1986). Optimistically, a more strategic selection of activities could lead to stronger group cohesion within student organizations in addition to more participation within the student body.

## Methods of documentation

When we think about a cocurricular verification system, perhaps the most pressing issue at hand is the diversity of experiences and information. Unlike the academic transcript, which is meant to report quantitative data relating to a student's academic achievements, the cocurricular transcript is responsible for reporting experiences, level of involvement, tangible artifacts created in conjunction with a program, and even service hours at a volunteer venue. As a result of this diversity, the organization and administration of a cocurricular verification process must be flexible, contain a classification hierarchy for its records, and support authentication.

Related literature on this topic describes various common structures for cocurricular verification systems, two of which I will present here. The first is the portfolio method, which, as Brown and Citrin (1977) mention, closely resembles the promotion and tenure dossiers that college faculty are often required to assemble. In this instance, students are required to gather artifacts from the various experiences that they would like to include on their cocur-

ricular transcript, such as a program or name tag from an event or a thank-you letter for a completed service project.

A second method, which aligns closely with an accreditor's recent emphasis on experiential learning, involves the grouping of experiences, memberships, and projects into various outcomes that would be defined by the institution (Brown et al., 1979). An example would be professional development, such as a student's participation in the activities of a chapter of a professional society or attendance at the society's annual conference.

Whatever the method of execution may be, certain administrative guidelines are important for a successful verification procedure. As mentioned, flexibility is vital to providing students with a beneficial service. Students might want to document even the most trivial of their out-of-class activities, and this should be encouraged. Further, they may provide unorthodox means for authenticating the experience. As the administrator or person in charge of approving these experiences for posting on the cocurricular transcript, you must be willing to review these submissions with an open mind and be ready to ask questions.

In order to maintain the integrity of the transcript as well as the credibility of your department (and ultimately your institution), you must ensure that the information being posted to students' transcripts is truthful as presented by the student. Approaching a cocurricular transcript with an established structure will make the process much smoother and invariably will answer many student questions.

I recommend establishing a coding system for each type of experience—for example, working in a local soup

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kitchen would be logged as community service, serving as president of the campus radio station would be logged as club membership, and having an article published would be logged as scholarship. Each institution will craft different codes based on the opportunities readily available to its students. If you are unsure about this, review the annual reports of various academic departments, the student affairs division, or even your campus newspaper. A simple skim through these documents can give you ample insight into what your students are doing.

### Technological resources

Since we live in the information age, consider digital means for recording and maintaining students' cocurricular experiences. While paper record keeping still has value, such an approach for this venture would be exhausting to the staff members involved in verifying experiences and retrieving records as well as to the student who wishes to post an experience to his or her transcript.

In many cases, your campus' database system may come with a student involvement component. For example, the Jenzabar system (2001) allows records to be kept on student involvement in campus organizations. From this information, reports can be generated for various institutional purposes such as alumni outreach or inclusion in campus publications. Depending on the capabilities of your campus' database, it might be possible to generate reports that can list individual students' cocurricular experiences.

Perhaps these records can be made accessible to a student intranet for online reference in a password-protected space. This has been a trend for academic transcript access for more than 10 years, and having cocurricular data accessible through these same means would be highly beneficial to students and faculty

members for the purposes of academic advising, career preparation, and perhaps most simply, record keeping.

If your system does not have these abilities, look into third-party computer systems that can be used exclusively for cocurricular verification and record keeping. Depending on the campus' governing policies for technology, such a system could significantly reduce the workload of support staff members, because students would be able to input their own experiences for posting on the transcript. An example is CollegiateLink, which was developed by Campus Labs in 2009. This system provides an intranet for students to document their experiences, browse the activities of other campus organizations, market their organization's events and happenings, and provide a centralized database for the organization's members and pertinent documents. Students can download and print their cocurricular transcripts for distribution in any fashion that they wish. The role of the administrator, in this case, would be to provide verification for the posts that students submit for inclusion on their transcript.

### Concluding thoughts

Documenting cocurricular and experiential learning is a valuable service to offer on your campus. For first-semester freshmen and graduate students nearing their thesis defense as well as all students in between, a transcript that documents their activities in college has proven to be an invaluable companion to the resume and the academic transcript. In fact, depending on the situation, the cocurricular transcript may be deemed *more* important than the academic transcript. In today's job market, experience is the key to employment. This is where the traditional academic transcript as we have known it for decades is almost useless.

A lot can be learned from the transcript development process itself. As students go through the process of sub-

mitting their experiences for inclusion, they are learning the importance of keeping accurate records, gathering verification of their experiences, and gaining practice in preparing written correspondence with the administration. These skills will prove to be beneficial once the students are employed and wish to apply for promotions, financial support for travel, or grants; the process also imparts everyday communication skills for the workplace. Supporting our students is of paramount importance to educators. In addition to providing high-quality learning experiences, we must now offer our students ways to demonstrate these experiences as they prepare to enter the chaotic world beyond campus.

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majors. The goal is to guide students throughout their four years in considering how their disciplinary learning and their general learning, in and out of the classroom, prepare them for a variety of career paths.

In operationalizing the Classroom to Career program, we first wanted to map what we were already doing. In summer 2012, we asked each department to prepare a one-page document that listed the activities sponsored annually by the department to help students think about life after graduation. These included alumni panels, career nights, grad school information sessions, internship courses, capstone courses, and

ing students' career planning while also guiding them toward greater intentionality and cross-divisional collaboration.

The department lists were then elaborated upon and individualized, adapted for the Web, and featured on each department's home page. Under the guidance of department chairs, departments added hyperlinks to discipline-specific tips and resources (e.g., cultivating faculty mentors, lining up professors as references, wise use of the required capstone experience); professional organizations related to the discipline; and university-level activities that cut across departments (e.g., job fairs, resume workshops, leadership development opportunities, alumni job shadowing). Departments added references to academic experiences and activities such as

them to complete it before meeting with their advisor in order to get students to do some homework ahead of time—not only about the courses they still needed to progress toward graduation, but also to reflect upon their career aspirations and to guide them to link their choice of electives (and potential minors, study abroad sites, research projects, cocurricular activities, etc.) to their career preparation. All faculty advisors were given the same checklist, along with their department's C2C materials, inviting them to facilitate more substantive conversations with students beyond merely providing a signature and PIN for registration.

We used a variety of measures to evaluate the impact of these efforts. The first time around, nearly 1,500 hits on the C2C website were logged during the advising and registration period. Our Google analytics showed that students spent up to two minutes on some pages, well above the average time spent on a Web page (less than one minute).

In order to maintain momentum beyond the initial advising period, we implemented a Facebook ad campaign during the following two semesters. Close to 500 students clicked on those ads. Students surveyed reported that the advising checklist helped them develop more personal relationships with their advisors. Faculty reported more in-depth conversations with their advisees, and that they appreciated having resources to support their own effectiveness as an advisor.

Current students have not been the only audience. Admissions staff members are hungry for ways to promote the liberal arts with prospective students. The admissions counselors bring postcards about C2C on high school visits. The C2C initiative is promoted during annual meetings with high school guidance counselors visiting campus. In the current economic context, high school

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mentored research. The “one sheets” were then peppered with a range of activities sponsored annually by the Career Planning Center (individual assessment, career fairs, and resume-and cover-letter-writing workshops), Alumni Relations (job shadowing and networking events), and student clubs (community service, leadership, and peer mentor programs).

We organized this information by year, with early years featuring exploratory activities and later years focusing on in-depth and experiential activities such as internships and resume development. Given that faculty often see career planning as “not my job,” developing these one sheets helped them see the degree to which they were already actively and routinely involved in assist-

ing students' career planning while also guiding them toward greater intentionality and cross-divisional collaboration. The department lists were then elaborated upon and individualized, adapted for the Web, and featured on each department's home page. Under the guidance of department chairs, departments added hyperlinks to discipline-specific tips and resources (e.g., cultivating faculty mentors, lining up professors as references, wise use of the required capstone experience); professional organizations related to the discipline; and university-level activities that cut across departments (e.g., job fairs, resume workshops, leadership development opportunities, alumni job shadowing). Departments added references to academic experiences and activities such as

study abroad and how to leverage these activities to develop marketable skills; a link to a video introduction by the dean that provides general advice for first-years, sophomores, juniors, and seniors; videos in each of the four years of college featuring peer advice from students at each stage; and testimonials from graduates in each major that affirm the longer-range value of the liberal arts and illustrate the application of the majors to myriad jobs and career paths. We set up table tents in the dining halls and hung posters around campus to promote these home pages. We also asked departments to incorporate the system into the two academic advising periods each year. We sent out an advising checklist to all 1,800 students in the College of Arts and Sciences and asked

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students and, even more so, their parents, seek confidence that college choice will map to career readiness. Alumni too are pleased to see the university respond to the economic context and challenges for college students that they read about every day in the Wall Street Journal and New York Times.

While the Classroom to Career initiative was conceptualized in the arts and sciences dean's office, it was developed in collaboration with colleagues in career planning, student affairs, student government, seniors and recent graduates, and the faculty chairs in each of the arts and sciences disciplines. Student leaders were helpful during the planning process, giving feedback on the idea and providing quotations to integrate into the C2C Web pages. Student leaders and staff mentors in the First Year Experience program promoted C2C to their students. The college advisory board members, mostly alumni, provided feedback as the initiative was being developed, and many offered their own stories to illustrate the value of their liberal arts education to their successful career journeys. Thus, the process lowered some of the silos that often undermine or complicate collegial work between offices and across constituencies.

Classroom to Career at Fairfield University ([www.fairfield.edu/c2c](http://www.fairfield.edu/c2c)) has been largely successful, but it has not been without challenges. Over 70,000 words of copy were generated for the Web pages, along with graphic branding elements, videos, and a variety of promotional print materials. The time and costs associated with these efforts were substantial. A year later, a comprehensive Web rebranding at the university disrupted the look of and some of the links in C2C, requiring further time and effort to adapt it to the new Web templates. Keeping the Web pages fresh and current will be an ongoing chal-

lenge, as will driving each new class of students to use the resource. Nevertheless, after more than two years, C2C has emerged as a comprehensive and well-liked approach to connect liberal arts majors and professional preparation and as one way to integrate career conversations into routine academic advising—with a higher degree of faculty enthusiasm too. Building greater collaboration across campus, particularly across academic and student affairs, has been another positive by-product of this initiative.

Greater attention to the practical value of the liberal arts and the development of programs such as Classroom to Career will go a long way toward increasing student readiness, and perhaps even parental comfort with a student's choice of a humanities major. But we must not abate our defense of the inherent and enduring value of a liberal arts education for individuals and for society.

Each successive news story about the rising costs of higher education, mounting student debt, or the questionable employment prospects of new college graduates chips away at public confidence, not to mention our own political capital as educators. Yet the received narrative rarely delves into the decades-long deterioration of public funding for education, the disproportional concentration of student debt in the for-profit sector, the escalating demands for comprehensive services and high-end facilities, and the costs associated with increased accountability, all of which contribute to the rising costs of a college education. These are also the parts of the story we must continue to tell as we tenaciously defend and promote the liberal arts.

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## Recommendations for Partnering with Student Affairs

By Rob Kelly

Although student affairs and academic affairs share the same goal of educating students and preparing them for success after college, the two divisions don't always collaborate as effectively or as frequently as they might. With changing expectations from students, parents, and society in general, perhaps it's time to be more deliberate in forming partnerships across these divisions.

"I think more and more what we're seeing is that an effective and successful college experience—a holistic college experience—is what society is asking of higher education today. It's what our students want, and it's what parents and business people want from higher education today," says Eva Frey Johnson, dean for student development and director of student involvement and leadership at Pacific Lutheran University. "No longer can a student just come to a college campus and say, 'I'm just going to get a degree. I'm just going to pick an academic major, take the classes I have to take, and be done.' I think more and more the cost of higher education requires our students to ask, 'What can I get both in and outside the classroom that makes this the most effective for me today as well as for my future?'"

One of the goals of partnering across divisions is to remove the barrier between the two complementary aspects of the learning experience, because much of what students learn occurs outside class, and students don't compartmentalize their learning experiences. However, the traditional divide between academic affairs and student affairs perpetuates a sense of compartmentalization.

A recognized need for collaboration isn't always enough to make it happen. Differences in workplace cultures, organizational structures, and work styles can be obstacles to collaboration. However, these differences can be complementary.

By recognizing what each partner can bring to the learning experience, sharing capital, and understanding the partner's perspective, one can create experiences that are beneficial to the student and the partners.

There are many areas in which student affairs and academic affairs intersect, such as academic integrity, first-year experience, common readings, student mental health, and supporting specific student populations such as veterans and international and minority students.

Building a relationship with another professional, particularly with someone who operates in a different organizational culture, takes time. Partnerships often begin when people are asked to work on an institutional priority together. Partnerships can also be initiated by individuals—usually student affairs staff members because they tend to have more flexibility than faculty, Johnson says.

For faculty, particularly those who have not yet earned tenure, working with student affairs can be difficult to fit into an already busy schedule with other priorities. Any partnership has to benefit them professionally.

Johnson has found that younger faculty tend to have a greater affinity for student affairs because they attended school in an era in which student affairs played a more direct role in educating students. However, as dean, she wouldn't seek to partner with a new faculty member, preferring instead to work with an academic affairs colleague at a similar level in the university's hierarchy.

Johnson found a partner in Wendy Shore, a psychology professor at the university who has served as chair and vice president of the faculty. The two have collaborated for about 10 years on research (both applied and scholarly) on student development and the role of persistence and resiliency in students' ability to earn their degrees.

Based on this experience, Johnson offers the following advice:

- **Be patient.** "[Partnerships across divisions] take patience because we're trained differently. It's a lot like learning a new language. You've got two different types of cultures that are coming together, and you have to give each other a lot of grace because there are words, phrases, and concepts in academic affairs that mean absolutely nothing in student affairs," Johnson says.
- **Understand each other's rhythms and priorities.** "We share the goal of student success, but the manner in which we come to support students isn't always the same. One is not better than the other, but together they're incredibly powerful. When student affairs and academic affairs people come together, they need to suspend judgment. Always seek opportunities for clarification, because what I think I understand and what a faculty member may understand can be two very different things," Johnson says.
- **Develop a personal relationship.** "You have to like each other. ... It's really one of the core values. If you don't like the people you're working with and you're already doing work that is outside the mainstream, it's very hard to sustain it," Johnson says.
- **Be willing to share your capital.** Each partner has abilities and knowledge that can benefit the partnership. For example, Johnson has more experience with the granting agencies that provide funding on student affairs research than her partner, and her partner brings an analytical lens from her cognitive psychology background.

These partnerships across divisions are "incredibly worthwhile," Johnson says. "If you work in partnership authentically, it's always a win-win. It will make both the faculty member and the student affairs professional stronger in who they are and what they do on the college campus and how they serve the students." ▼