



Learning Collaborative for Higher Education
Student Affairs Program
Collaborative Research Proposal

Achieving Strategic Alignment
Revised Proposal – July 12, 2007

Background and Objectives

As student affairs divisions take on an increasing number of activities and functions central to the university mission, demands for organizational alignment, performance, and accountability have increased. The proposed study will examine the strategies student affairs leaders use to create strategic alignment.

The *Achieving Strategic Alignment* project will involve a survey of the program membership's chief student affairs officers to benchmark current approaches and will draw on specific member cases to highlight effective practices. The study will benchmark current levels of alignment; key participants in the strategic planning process; key sources of information used to make adjustments to programming and services; tenure, experience and education of unit heads; and professional development offerings. The study will highlight best practices for aligning unit- and division-level goals, communicating the activities and successes of student affairs to key constituents, and strategies for professional development that help prepare student affairs leaders with the necessary skills for student affairs' emerging strategic role.

Key Points of Inquiry

1. What are the best practices and challenges associated with achieving strategic alignment in student affairs?
2. What processes are used for aligning division goals to institution goals, and for aligning unit goals with division goals?
3. What monitoring systems are in place and what are the procedures for making adjustments?
4. How are the skills of unit-level leaders being developed?
5. What methods are used to communicate the activities and successes of student affairs divisions to key constituents?

Study Design

There will be two stages of data collection for this project: a member survey and member case studies.

Member survey: This phase of the project involves a telephone survey of chief student affairs officers. The survey will include questions about the approaches used to achieve strategic alignment, monitor progress, and make adjustments to programming and services. The survey also will include questions about the professional development of unit heads and methods used to communicate with key constituents. The telephone interview will take approximately 60 minutes and will be scheduled at a time that is most convenient for the student affairs officer. The draft survey has been revised to reflect member feedback. Attached you will find the revised survey instrument.

Member case studies: This phase of the study will build on the first phase by drawing on specific member cases to highlight best practices for aligning unit- and division-level goals, communicating the activities and successes of student affairs to key constituents, and strategies for professional development. More detailed data surrounding the areas investigated in the first phase of the project will be collected via follow-up telephone interviews with a select number of participants from the first phase, as well as a review of relevant documents (such as strategic plans, assessment plans, staff development materials, etc.).

Data Analysis and Reporting

Member Survey

The Student Affairs Learning Collaborative (SA-LC) staff will analyze the data collected from all member institutions in aggregate. From this analysis, SA-LC staff will prepare a summary report that includes descriptive statistics on the approaches members use to align goals, monitor progress, make adjustments to programming and services, develop staff, and communicate with key constituents. The report will describe common challenges faced by members in each area and touch on some of the most effective practices used across the membership.

Member Case Studies

The case study report will complement the survey report by providing a greater level of detail on best practices in each of the key areas. More specifically, the case study report will highlight effective professional development and communication practices. It also will highlight effective methods for achieving strategic alignment and developing divisionwide monitoring systems. Descriptions of the processes used by selected member institutions will provide insight into best practices.

Participants

Boise State University
Clemson University
Colorado State University
Florida State University
Georgia Institute of Technology
Miami University
Mississippi State University
Northwestern University
Oregon State University Foundation
Texas Christian University
Texas Tech University
University of California, Berkeley

University of California, Irvine
University of California, Los Angeles
University of California, Riverside
University of Kentucky
University of Maryland, College Park
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
University of Tennessee
University of Texas at Dallas
University of Texas at El Paso
University of West Florida
University of West Georgia
Vanderbilt University

Next Steps

The table below summarizes the timetable for moving forward with this Collaborative Research project.

Action Item	Responsible	Timeframe
Provide Eduventures with feedback on proposal and survey instrument	Liaisons	No later than July 3
Revised proposal and survey instrument to members	Eduventures	July 13
Begin scheduling Phase I telephone interviews with chief student affairs officers	Eduventures & Liaisons	Mid July
Phase I interviews	Eduventures	Late July – Early August
Begin scheduling Phase II telephone interviews with chief student affairs officers	Eduventures & Liaisons	Early August
Phase II interviews	Eduventures	Mid to late August
Collaborative Research Report distributed to Learning Collaborative members	Eduventures	Early October

We look forward to working with you on this project. We encourage members of the Student Affairs Learning Collaborative to participate in all stages of the research. You may contact me to discuss the project at any time. I can be reached via e-mail (lfamularo@eduventures.com) or phone (857.221.9794).