

THE WORK EXPERIENCES OF STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS:
WHAT VALUES GUIDE PRACTICE?

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	6
CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION.....	7
CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW.....	19
CHAPTER THREE – METHODS.....	44
CHAPTER FOUR – BEHAVIOR PATTERNS ACROSS DEPARTMENTS.....	59
CHAPTER FIVE – BEHAVIOR PATTERNS WITHIN DEPARTMENTS.....	152
CHAPTER SIX – DISCUSSION.....	201
APPENDIX A – INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	238
REFERENCES.....	240

ABSTRACT

One segment of the academic community that is overlooked in most research is the large cadre of professionals who deliver a multitude of services to students outside of the classroom. From the perspective of students, the student affairs professionals they encounter in the residence halls, advising offices, and within other aspects of the campus life fabric, are the face of the university. This case study of student affairs professionals within four departments at one large, public, Research-I University seeks to define the core values of the work, understand perspectives on the individuals they work with, how practice unfolds within the organization context of the campus, and what values guide practice. The literatures drawn upon include; student affairs ideology, service delivery patterns and techniques, institutional theory, professional specialization, and trends in higher education. The findings from this study illustrate that the work experiences of student affairs professionals are dominated by brief encounters with students that occur within a work environment that is frequently overwhelming. High volumes of students seeking service and limited opportunities to develop ongoing relationships create challenging work expectations for student affairs professionals. The core values of the profession are in transition as institutional priorities that focus on efficiency and competitive advantage become further established within academe. Policy recommendations for the student affairs profession and institutional decision makers are made in the final chapter.

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

A veteran student affairs professional within an advising office talks about his efforts to maintain effective practice within high numbers of student contacts.

MB: So I am finding that there are things that I can do physically as well as mentally for myself, when I have those fleeting moments, so I can maintain that momentum. And I think that's been a big challenge because they keep throwing more and more numbers at us. I don't want to be robotic in my approach and I know it's so easy, my god it's so easy. That's unfortunately kind of what we do here as an advisor, on this campus we have a tendency to be very, very, very prescriptive. You've got general information sessions, now everybody goes to a general session. You get the same information. Those information sessions aren't so much about information, it's about how to dissuade students from declaring those majors or to make the process as troublesome as possible so the student just sits down and says maybe I don't want to pursue this. In light of that trend, trying to maintain, trying not to gets stale on a day-to-day basis that is what's important.

Another professional working within residential services speaks about balancing his desire to spend time with students and the numerous administrative tasks in his role.

LO: I feel like it's something that is necessary, the administrative work, especially when there are so many students here. People always said when I moved over here, well it must really different. It's not really that different. I'm dealing with the same issues that I did before the difference is I just have more of them (laughing). More paperwork, more calls, I think that's part of the job. I wish at

times, there are situations where administrative work takes over. It's frustrating because I want to have interactions with the students. I wouldn't be in this job if I didn't want that so it's disappointing because I would like to be able to spend more time with students but I can't because I have to do XYZ paperwork for a meeting or for the central office. I think that's just the nature of this job that I'm in.

PROBLEM

The organizational setting of contemporary higher education institutions can be described as a complex and dynamic community of professionals with a range of competing priorities. Faculty has the charge to pursue scholarly research and cultivate interest in their field through teaching. Administrators are focused on acquiring resources, maintaining quality and prestige, and allocating resources strategically so the institution can be responsive to external constituents. Students are seeking relevant educational and social experiences that will produce marketable skills for the professional world while also enjoying their overall college experience. Professional staff and appointed personnel provide a multitude of services and functions that are critical to the institution in terms of instructional, student, and administrative support. This begs the question about how do these diverse priorities, constituents, and perspectives unfold during the delivery of higher education opportunities at a large public university?

This exploratory case study seeks to describe and understand the core values and actual work practices of student affairs professionals as one of the largest growing segments of university personnel. Student affairs professionals deliver a range services to undergraduate students within an organizational context that is experiencing declining

resources and increasing expectations of accountability. The core values of student affairs professionals, how they feel about their work, the tendencies of their students and campus, and how those tendencies affect their practice are the research questions that guide this study. Understanding how student affairs professionals experience and make meaning from their work, clients, and institutional context may offer insights into developing best practices for this group of professionals. The ability to navigate what appear to be contradictory values within higher education organizations can enable students, faculty, and staff to reach mutual goals in terms of student success.

CONTEXT

Traditionally higher education organizations had two primary institutional actors, campus administrators and professors. Most of the research conducted in higher education has for a long time focused on these two groups of professionals and the students themselves. This simple characterization is no longer applicable because the number of functional roles on many campuses has grown to accommodate increased organizational complexity and a diversity of purposes now being pursued by higher education organizations.

The financial expenditures to administrative support areas, most notably in student affairs, have surpassed the expenditures to instruction in recent years as more academic managers are hired on campuses (Leslie and Rhoades, 1995; Rhoades, 1995a; Rhoades, 1998). The conventional view of academics as the only true “professionals” on campus has been challenged by tremendous growth and reliance upon the managerial professionals who work in student affairs. This segment of the academic labor market is

clearly critical to the institution they work within but we do not know much about them in terms of their work experiences, the values that guide practice and the outcomes they seek. In order to understand more about these factors and because student affairs professionals have come to occupy a great number of positions, they are the unit of analysis for this study.

Student personnel services and students affairs as a functional category of professionals appeared on college campuses over seventy years ago to deliver and support a comprehensive range of learning opportunities outside the classroom (Komives & Woodard, 1996). Previous to this specialization of services all these outside of the classroom duties were the responsibility of one student personnel administrator with the common title of Dean of Men. As American universities moved to the German model which emphasized scholarly inquiry, the development of cognitive intellectual ability became the sole purview of the faculty whereas the moral, social, and emotional development became the bread and butter of the student affairs profession.

However today, some seventy years after the Student Personnel Point of View (SPPOV), a seminal position paper that outlined the ideology and goals of the profession, practitioners in student affairs struggle to maintain their often tenuous grip on keeping the student at the center of their work process. Increasingly doing what is best for individual students' development is becoming a complex challenge of competing values, priorities, and pressures within an organization that operates from a managerial culture.

Institutions of higher education are complex and changing organizations and the profession of student affairs has over the years tried to meet the needs of diverse people.

As a result the profession has become more diverse and complex and specialized in order to make responsibilities within the organization more manageable. The specialization is referred to as the “silo structure” of higher education and results in professionals perceiving situations from the point of view of their own specialization. The complex dynamic of specialization within universities and student affairs in particular has not gone unnoticed. An updated iteration of the Student Personnel Point of View calls on the profession to establish itself through specialization while not losing sight of a more holistic approach to their work with students (Love & Estanek, 2004)

The literature within the field of student affairs is filled with thousands of articles which identify critical factors leading to the development, retention, and success of students in higher education settings. Astin (1993) described one of the primary themes of the student affairs profession when he noted that having an impact on student development meant having an awareness and involvement in the total environment of the student. Evans and Reason (2001) summarized thirteen philosophical statements that have consistently served as a guide for student affairs practice over the last sixty years. The recurring themes and values espoused in the field are based upon the pragmatic philosophy of John Dewey. The worth of the individual, a holistic approach, the importance of experience, and the attention to the environment are all common threads that have guided the student affairs profession from its beginnings and are the same tenets that are emphasized and taught to new professionals today. Another major tenet of the field is fostering the growth of the “whole” student and not only their intellectual potential (Evans & Reason, 2001). Placing individual students at the center of the

educational process and considering them as a whole rather than their intellect alone is also what student affairs has been about since its inception.

While theoretically much of the student development literature builds a strong case for the important value of practice revolving around student needs and the critical interaction between student and institutional environment, the reality of contemporary institutions suggests it can be extremely challenging to accomplish. Rising numbers of students, economic and political influences, rising tuition costs, and declining state appropriations and financial aid have combined with an insatiable demand for higher education to create an unstable and dynamic environment in postsecondary education. Woodard, Love, and Komives (2000) have identified these factors and the push for engaged institutions, a focus on student learning, and an emphasis on accountability as change drivers influencing higher education. Institutions have come under fire for overspending and administrative bloat, failing to produce graduates with expected skills, and focusing less on the undergraduate experience while making research the primary priority. As a result of the mounting calls for greater accountability and the need to acquire critical resources, colleges and universities have pursued various cycles of improvements which include focusing on customer service, reorganizing administrative structures and functions, and aggressive marketing strategies (Love & Estanek, 2004).

Many scholars have suggested the current climate for the funding of higher education mimics a private sector philosophy. The notion of competition and spending money strategically in order to capture a potential market is now becoming more routine practice while the investment in human capital and the traditional public good mentality

of higher education appears to be on the ropes. More public institutions see themselves as “state-assisted” rather than state-supported, and have pursued increasingly competitive and market-like behaviors to acquire the best students, brightest faculty, innovative facilities, and the most lucrative grants, contracts, and donations (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). This pattern of institutional behaviors and choices has been described as *academic capitalism* by Slaughter and Leslie (1997) and this study will utilize this concept as a background for understanding organizational behavior and how its impacts the core values and work of student affairs professionals.

One of the most frequent strategies for improving student learning and the undergraduate experience is through the implementation of innovative student programs and services such as service learning opportunities, learning communities in the residence halls, and a myriad of campus activities through which students can gain leadership and other experiences. While most student affairs professionals eagerly invest their expertise in these efforts they often do so while managing the multiple other roles within their existing position. Working on these tasks directed at student learning aligns directly with the core principles of the profession but the difficulty arises from the organizational context that places more value on managerial efficiency than human development. Institutions have the tendency to undergo a vast array of improvement techniques and initiatives in order to appear responsive to the claims of their constituents but unfortunately the resources to sustain these student affairs programs are scarce. The consequence of limited, at best, institutional support for these endeavors places direct

pressure on existing student affairs employees as they attempt to navigate a holistic approach to students from within their functional silos.

One element of this press on student affairs practitioners coming from the institutional level is the fact that organizations of higher education operate out of a traditional structure that is dominated by hierarchy, specialization, and bottom line thinking. The effect this context has on the work experiences of the professionals delivering the service to students is dramatic since this group of professionals' value developmental work with individual students. Additionally, student affairs professionals are being called upon to fulfill many additional responsibilities outside of direct support and contact with students by designing and delivering credit bearing courses, sitting on committees developing policies and processes, program development, and general administrative work related to student records maintenance. While most professionals working in higher education will tell you they don't mind those other activities as a way to increase skills, breadth of influence, and even control over their work; the consequence is less time and availability to develop relationships with students and therefore their extensive range of needs are not being addressed.

In addition to institutional factors, the students coming into the higher education community are creating a press on delivering service in alignment with the professional ideology and the practice of student affairs. High volumes of students are arriving on campus less prepared academically and personally for the experience of college. Additionally, students on today's campuses appear more interested in establishing their

independence and identity than engaging student affairs professionals offering of support so they can “develop” as a whole individual.

At the same time this generation of students’ reliance on parental support and guidance from home has reached an all time high with more students being unequipped to solve their problems and conflicts at college. Consumer oriented children of baby boomer parents, labeled the millennial generation by Strauss and Howe (1991), view education as a service they are purchasing and as such expect it to be delivered to them on their terms and conditions. The academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime supports this perception within undergraduate and graduate students as they understand that organizations need them and students are willing to leverage that power. As customers within academia, undergraduates see education as something to be consumed rather than valuing the discovery of their own truth and the process of becoming a college educated citizen. Today’s students often appear as entitled and demanding to many working in higher education. These characteristics of millennial college students and the organizational structure are coupled with the fact that student affairs professionals have limited opportunities for extended contact with students. The ability to place individual students at the center of their everyday work routine is something that very few experience with any regularity. As such the core values of the student affairs profession are in a transition on college campuses.

From an institutional perspective, enrollment and admission decisions are made in order to balance the bottom line and remain competitive among their peer institutions in terms of recruiting students and faculty. Administrators in enrollment management often

target incoming class sizes based on how much tuition revenue is necessary to balance the budget rather than making decisions based on what is best for the students being admitted in terms of their overall experience. It appears that administrators have taken a free market or “survival of the fittest” approach since they are aware that the students being admitted will need a significant amount of support in order to graduate. The support available to students is promoted by informing prospective students about the many innovative program improvement initiatives occurring on campus but they do not tell them they are being delivered by already stretched student affairs professionals.

The segment of the academic labor market occupied by student affairs professionals is finding its practice and ability to impact students in preferred ways to be constrained and impeded. Their professional efforts and products are espoused by the institution in order to promote an image to the external constituency and in return these same efforts are under resourced and expected to occur within existing positions through role accretion. This paradox is not surprising knowing the numerous roles that higher education organizations are attempting to fulfill in order to be all things to all people. What is surprising is that a profession with core values directed at helping students develop as whole individuals finds that striving for a mere connection with students during brief encounters is the best it can hope for in the current context of higher education.

Campus administrators as well as student affairs professionals can find useful information in the outcomes of this study to provide a roadmap for navigating the tremendous change occurring in higher education organizations. As more institutions

competitively pursue new markets for acquiring critical resources it will be important to support campus professionals by analyzing and adapting the expectations and outcomes of their functional roles. Campus administrators would be well intended to consider how initiatives originating out of the organizational field or a business orientated reference point affect the campus community, especially those professionals charged with developing individual talent and skills. Departmental leaders need to assess and understand the behaviors of their employees and how they are responding to the pressures of their organizational environment. Student affairs professionals may understand the behaviors of their colleagues and supervisors with more clarity and determine new ways to think about their work as a result of this study.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The work of Michael Lipsky (1980), Barbara Gutek (1995), Sheila Slaughter & Gary Rhoades (2004), and Dan Lortie (1975) provide the primary theoretical framework for this study. The core theoretical concepts involve employee lack of control over time and work, changes in service delivery, institutional level actions that are market-like and premised on competition, and how employees in human services make meaning from their work. This exploratory study applies these principles in the context of higher education support services for students; more specifically in the contexts of increasing responsibilities, declining resources, and high demands for service. As it is appropriate to the understanding of context, this study will also draw on the literature describing institutional behaviors and the student development principles which form the foundation for student affairs.

The basic research questions examined in this study are:

- What are the core values of student affairs professionals?
- What are the work experiences of student affairs professionals?
- How do student affairs professionals feel about the tendencies of their students, department, and institution?
- How do student affairs professionals see these tendencies affecting practice?

The research questions are addressed in a case study of four departments at one large public research university. Departments were selected based upon the frequency and intensity of their interactions with students and a mission predicated on providing specific services to students within a particular functional area. Qualitative techniques including semi-structured interviews and document analyses were used in this study.

The next chapter of this manuscript provides an overview of the literature that informs this study. Chapter Three describes the specific methods and rationale used to investigate the research questions. Chapter Four and Five details the findings of the study with Chapter Four looking at aggregate employee behavior, emotions, and sense making patterns across departments and Chapter Five looking at distinctions on within department individually. Chapter Six summarizes key findings within the framework of the research questions, provides a conclusion for each office, and makes a series of policy recommendations that result from the interpretation of findings within the context of higher education, addresses the limitations of the study, identifies considerations for future research, and concludes with personal reflections relevant to the study findings.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

The work of Michael Lipsky (1980), Barbara Gutek (1995), Sheila Slaughter & Gary Rhoades (2004), and Dan Lortie (1975) provide the primary theoretical frameworks for this study. The core theoretical concepts from each of the authors are presented first in bulleted form and then explained in further detail. All of these authors help us to better understand the specific perspectives that student affairs professionals may hold about their work, their students and colleagues, and the institution they work within and most importantly how all these various elements impact their practice. This study uses the theoretical concepts from the above authors and overlays them upon the higher education environment. All but Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) and Lortie (1975), actually derived their theories for application in industries other than education. In order to further provide scaffolds for understanding the core values and work experiences of student affairs professionals, literature on institutional behaviors, student development theory, and trends in higher education will also be utilized. All of these literatures provides context for illustrating and understanding the challenges faced by student affairs professionals as they attempt to pursue a holistic approach with students. Lastly, research questions and the working assumptions which flow from the literature are presented.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

There are four key concepts that significantly frame this study, each plays a part in helping to understand student affairs professionals' perspectives on their work, how their practice is impacted by their institutional context, and how they make meaning from their work experiences. Lipsky (1980), Gutek (1995), Lortie (1975), and Slaughter &

Rhoades (2004) are the scholars contributing to the core concepts of this study. The core concepts from Lipsky's work are:

- Resources and requirements – Resources are always an issue and are either declining or needing to be repeatedly justified. As a labor intensive enterprise, student affairs staff is often asked to do more as budgets and people decline. Additional duties are required by administrators in an effort by institutions to improve quality of services or improve the bottom line. Added duties or role accretion with the same or even fewer resources increase the stress felt by employees and results in services being limited or of lower quality.
- Rationing services – Departments need to limit individual services to clients because of the unlimited demand for services coupled with limited time and resources. Rationing services allows departments and employees to manage workloads and strain on the individual or department.
- Preferred customers – Because of the unlimited demands for services, limited time and resources, employees develop preferred customers who they tend to seek out and serve over other customers. These are the clients that are most likely to follow established procedures and come prepared to do what is expected. They become preferred clients because they take up the least amount of employee time which is a limited and precious commodity for the employee.

Gutek's core concepts as related to this study are:

- Changes in service delivery – From a societal level, the nature of service delivery has shifted from ongoing relationships between service providers and clients to

more encounter based interactions. Almost all service provider/customer exchanges have migrated to become “fast food” interactions characterized by anonymity rather than regular interactions with the same providers continue over time. The trend toward encounter based service delivery works well in many industries but can greatly affect both employee and client outcomes in settings premised on collaborative and developmental relationships.

Lortie’s core concepts as related to this study are:

- Primacy of psychic rewards – As with many professions in the helping/human service industry, subjective and often intrinsic rewards are of primary importance to the employee. Satisfaction is derived from achieving desirable results with clients or students and in knowing that they have ‘reached’ the individual. Salary, prestige, and other structural conditions of employment tend not to be of importance to these groups of professionals.
- Craft pride as realized purpose – Understanding what makes employees bask in the glow of achievement provides insight into how they make meaning from their work and find purpose in what they do. Teachers and other professionals in similarly structured settings often find their purpose is most reinforced when quality relationships with students are achieved.
- Spectacular case versus aggregate outcomes – Employees in labor intensive professions that work toward more ambiguous outcomes such as learning, development, or wellness are likely to find reward in the success of isolated individuals versus the success of the entire class or cohort. Universalistic

standards of achievement might be espoused to peers or supervisors but in reality there is widespread uncertainty among these professionals that they can impact all of their students or clients. As such, their practice while intended for a group, is most fulfilling when they explicitly know that an individual has benefited from their efforts.

Slaughter and Rhoades' core concepts as related to this study are:

- Students as commodities – As higher education institutions pursue resources more aggressively from multiple sources; students have become an indispensable commodity. In addition to attracting them to campus with state of the art facilities to acquire their tuition revenues, they are also the targets of marketing for luxury town homes, trendy eateries, and hi-tech products and services. Alternatively, students perceive higher education as a product or service that is consumed for a particular cost and as a result students see themselves as consumers.
- Changing orientation of colleges and universities – As institutions of higher education market themselves to attract students, faculty, and relationships that can provide diversified revenues and a competitive edge among their peers they must also be aware how these actions can have unintended consequences for the work force in academia. Most relevant to this study is that as institutions pursue external partnerships we may find that employees and department's become stratified based on their ability to compete and their core values of practice begin to change.

With the above core concepts outlined briefly, further description will expand on the nuances, intricacies, and interrelationships of these principles with the work experiences of student affairs professionals. This outcome is achieved through the illustration of two broad constructs that are directly relevant to this study. The first is conceptualizations of service provider patterns. The second is the psychology of managerial professionals whose work on campuses involves developing human capital.

CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF SERVICE PROVIDER PATTERNS

Conceptualizations of service provision patterns that inform this study are framed by Michael Lipsky (1980) and Barbara Gutek (1995). The work of Lipsky (1980) provides a valuable conceptualization for professionals working in student affairs since it describes front-line public employees who are faced with unlimited demands for service, ambiguous outcomes, and inadequate resources. Lipsky's research was based upon employees he defined as street-level bureaucrats who work within large social service organizations. The similarities to student affairs professionals in the higher education sector are notable. Much like Lipsky's street-level bureaucrats, student affairs professionals often work with wide autonomy and discretion to complete work tasks, face unclear goals that are difficult to measure, and tend not to control the outcomes or pace of their work.

The street level bureaucrat paradox pits the contradictory characteristics of an out of control work routine predicated on direct service to people with uncertain outcomes, limited input, and a rapid work pace. The result is an employee who has little perceived control over their work environment while being simultaneously constrained in their

professional autonomy by organizational structures and regulations. Student affairs professionals, much like street level bureaucrats are not told exactly how to serve their clients but use their judgment to stay within the confines of institutional and departmental policies.

Lipsky argued that street-level bureaucrats are further challenged in that the helping/educational orientation of their work is incompatible with the need to implement vague policies and process high volumes of clients. Bureaucracy within large organizations is prevalent because the environment is characterized by infinite demands for service and cost control measures; as such hierarchy and efficiency are logical from an organizational perspective. These descriptions of street level bureaucrats do well to illuminate the work environments of the student affairs professionals in this study.

To understand the behavior of street level bureaucrats, Lipsky described how service delivery is impacted by the conditions of the work environment. These include rationing services, structuring availability around preferred clients, and other types of employee coping strategies. For the purpose of this study, rationing services most often takes the form of either withholding information from unengaged students or limiting the amount of time spent directly with students. Examples of this behavior among student affairs professionals could be seen in their reluctance to ask probing questions that get to the root of a student's problem because they do not have the time or are unwilling to stray from their functional silo.

Street level bureaucrats also structure their time at work to spend more time with preferred clients and avoid contact with certain clients. Preferred clients are those

individuals who follow the organization's procedures and come prepared with the designated information, skills, or motivations. These individuals become preferred clients because they take up less time for street level bureaucrats and are thus more likely to respond favorably to the information or treatment being provided. In the example for student affairs professionals, we find students who come prepared to meetings, arrive on time, and follow through on suggestions are preferred and actually have greater access to these employees.

Barbara Gutek (1995) illustrates the broad changes in the way that services are delivered to individuals as a result of changing societal patterns. Gutek describes a service trend that suggests encounter based transactions have become the norm. High volumes of clients and organizations operating from a managerial paradigm based on hierarchy impede ongoing relationships between providers and clients. Transitory encounters between anonymous individuals on both sides of the service equation are more the norm rather than the exception. An example of relationship based service delivery can be illustrated with a waiter or proprietor of a local diner. Customers from the surrounding area expect the establishment to fulfill a need while also anticipating frequent and ongoing interactions over the course their relationship.

According to Gutek (1995), these changes in service delivery patterns are being fostered by high client volumes seen throughout urban societies including large university environments. The most transparent example of encounter based service delivery is seen in the fast food industry where transactions are isolated exchanges between clients and providers and neither one knows much about the other. Similarly, in

student affairs, advisors and counselors working with students often have large numbers of appointments in a given week and rarely get to see the same student repeatedly over the course of the semester. In reality these professionals enter these encounters with the understanding that this may be the only time they even see the student and as such will restrict the amount of information delivered so that it directly applies to the presenting student need.

These concepts on service provision patterns are relevant to the study of large bureaucratic organizations since interactions tend to be encounter based due to an efficiency value that is embedded within organizations. The service provision patterns are especially relevant to the work environment of student affairs professionals. The concepts of Lipsky (1980) and Gutek (1995) frame a significant portion of this study. Specifically, each scholar addresses possible employee behaviors and perceptions in a service delivery context that is described by large workloads, high stress, ambiguous goals and outcomes, and limited resources.

PSYCHOLOGY/GROWTH OF MANAGERIAL PROFESSIONALS

In addition to the work behaviors anticipated by Lipsky's (1980) research on street level bureaucrats another interpretation that adds to our understanding of the work experiences of student affairs professionals is Rhoades' (1998) concept of managed professionals. The concept was originally coined to describe the dynamic faced by faculty as their scholarly work became more scrutinized and 'managed' by department heads and administrators. Essentially, the concept decries how the entire academic profession has been restructured to place more value on commercially relevant research

lines and funding opportunities. Faculty views these changes to their work as devaluing basic curiosity driven science, autonomy, and academic freedom. More about this topic regarding commercially driven activities will be addressed in the next section however this idea of being managed is relevant to understanding more about student affairs professionals.

A new categorization of a segment of the academic labor market arose from Rhoades' concept of managed professionals. Managerial professionals are defined as the rising number and functional specializations of non-faculty professionals employed in higher education, such as those within the expanding field of student affairs. This group of academic professionals has been labeled as *managerial professionals* (Rhoades & Sporn, 2002). Managerial professionals in academia engage in a wide array of activities that enable institutions to produce and support postsecondary education. Non-faculty professionals administer a comprehensive range of programs and services that generate entrepreneurial revenues, provide accountability information for constituents, and provide a critical depth and breadth of out of the classroom services to students.

National data on categories of employees shows a dramatic increase in the number of managerial (support) professionals on campuses, up from 20% of the academic labor force in 1976 to 29% in 1995 (Rhoades & Sporn, 2002). The majority of research on managerial professionals in higher education has spoken to their increasing numbers compared with other professional employment categories in the postsecondary sector. Administrative support employees include those in student affairs and account for

most of the growth in higher education expenditures with faculty numbers declining or remaining constant over the same period (Rhoades, 1998; Rhoades, 1995a).

The other area of research based upon managerial professionals is focused on the increasing expenditures that institutions pay for what were once considered services ancillary to the academic mission. Rhoades (1998) suggests the amount of institutional expenditures on these categories of employees call for a careful consideration of the products and roles of this group of professionals as such we find one of the rationales for this study. The emergence of managerial professionals over the past thirty years can be associated with governmental quality assurance initiatives, entrepreneurialism, and the massive growth and reach of higher education in terms of both public good for society and private good for individuals. Regardless of the reasons, more non-faculty professionals are serving a wide range of student needs, administering federal or state regulations, and have direct responsibility for generating revenues (Rhoades & Sporn, 2002).

This segment of the academic work force operates within a very unique context in terms its work environment and as such their feelings about their work and how they make meaning from it is relevant to this study. Managerial professionals operate as neither faculty nor administrators but belong to professional associations, attend conferences, publish in journals, and draw upon a set of “best practices” that informs their work in higher education (Rhoades 1996). As one of the fastest growing segments of the academic labor market, managerial professionals are critical to institutions of higher education and are responsible for producing quality education, generating

revenues, governing research, and most relevant to this discourse, supporting students' growth and development. As a category of personnel they typically work a twelve-month contract and are hired, fired, and evaluated by managers much like them. Managerial professionals were at one time considered another part of administrative support costs and more a peripheral part of the institution. However, in the context of the competitive industry of higher education as described Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) and Slaughter and Leslie (1997), managerial professionals have become increasingly utilized and influential (Rhoades & Sporn, 2002).

While the work of the above authors conceptually frame the study, two additional bodies of literature are drawn upon to lend further foundation to understanding the core values and work experiences of student affairs professionals in the context of postsecondary institutions. These are trends in higher education and the principles of student development.

TRENDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

This study is connected to a post-industrial theoretical framework that informs our understanding of the changes facing higher education. By looking at the impact of significant societal trends we can monitor how institutions of higher education respond and adapt. Several researchers have studied the dramatic changes occurring in public higher education with both the institution and its workforce serving as the unit of analysis. Breneman (1993b) used financial data to argue that state and federal funds for higher education are decreasing and will continue to be a smaller part of the resource recipe in higher education. Colleges and universities have responded to the change in

financial support from government sources by developing partnerships with both business and industry (Fairweather, 1988). Gumport and Pusser (1995) explored the increasing power of state administrative offices to dictate educational programs, curricula, and faculty workloads. Massy and Zemsky (1990) found evidence that the changing patterns of academic work encouraged faculty to develop research agendas with an applied focus.

The notion of a post-industrial society has been illustrative when applied to social phenomena of both the current and previous century and has sometimes been referred to as the Information Age. The emphasis is on new networks of knowledge managed by multiple actors that value innovation, new commodities, and the competitive acquisition of resources. In higher education, the influence of internal and external networks on the production and pursuit of commercially driven enterprises has been labeled as “academic capitalism” by Slaughter and Leslie (1997).

Academic Capitalism

The theoretical construct of academic capitalism describes the common occurrence of state sponsored entrepreneurial behaviors on the part of institutions, faculty, administrators, and many other academic professionals who work in higher education. Academic capitalist tendencies have become embedded within institutions and become a point of reorganization. As a result these competitive activities have become a powerful mechanism which alter values of practice and serve to further to stratify organizations and professionals along competitive lines. Academic disciplines closer to a perceived market have access to opportunities to acquire diversified resources and the associated prestige. Conversely, faculty in education and humanities experience

declining opportunities, resources, and status as stratification in a new form becomes more entrenched and perpetuated within the academy.

Academic capitalism is a relevant frame for this study to discover to what extent work products, professionals, and values in student affairs are becoming more aligned a business model premised on efficiency and cost control versus human development. Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) suggest that institutions are actively developing their capacity to market products related to faculty research, instruction, and even student services by hiring new types of professionals and creating new administrative structures. By using both conventional and evolving academic structures and units, professionals in student affairs are more routinely given managerial directives to develop and market numerous commodities to students and other markets.

Although these types of work activities may sound at odds with the traditional scope of student affairs, it has become a more common endeavor and for some may be viewed with as potential to provide better services to students and development opportunities for professionals. For example, managerial professionals assuming more competitive and strategic behaviors can increase balances in their department's budget and possibly reduce strain on existing personnel. Many institutions now offer students designer services such as luxury rooms, priority parking, and enhanced learning support services to students who are willing to pay an additional fee (Slaughter, 1998). So although some practicing academic capitalists in student affairs may be reluctant participants guided by managerial dictates some could see positive outcomes in the

opportunities offered to them as professionals as they design opportunities for students that have market potential in the private sector.

Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) also suggest that institutions increasingly view students as both raw material and a commodity to be mined for the organization. Many managerial professionals function to extract resources from students as their time on campus is viewed as a significant source of revenue beyond their tuition payments. The research to advance the theory of academic capitalism describes how managerial professionals working in admissions, financial aid, and residence life units are assuming a market-orientation in their work by practicing “yield management” similar to what is seen with airline seats and hotel rooms. A rising administrative specialty area called enrollment management has become institutionalized on campuses as the strategic recruiting and marketing of the institution to targeted students has become necessary.

Another outcome of this shift toward more competitive, market-like behaviors is the once distinguishable boundary between the state and the market, and public and private sectors/goods has become increasingly permeable and subject to interpretation by both institutional and external actors. As a result of more aggressive approaches to secure external resources, there has been a significant change in how institutions of higher education make decisions and manage their enterprise. Academic capitalism helps to explain these changes in institutional behaviors and decisions, their impact on higher education as a sector, its academic labor market, and the opportunities for students enrolled in colleges and universities.

Institutional Theory

Institutional behaviors associated with academic capitalism can be further explained by considering the influence of an interconnected network of peer organizations on how that can dictate decisions and choices made by administrators. Several scholars can add context to the current trends experienced in higher education and how that context can impact student affairs practice.

Resource dependency theory suggests that the external entities providing larger shares of resources to higher education institutions exercise a good deal of control over the internal behaviors of organizational members (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). For example, because postsecondary institutions need student tuition to exist, students and their families could be considered as one important external resource driving institutional decisions to build the “biggest and best” student union in the country. The relative magnitude and criticality of the external resources be it tuition, research grants, or donors is a strong indicator for how much control is potentially wielded over an institution. If student enrollment is the single biggest share of resources provided to an organization and it ceases to function in the absence of students then resource dependence can help explain the arms race to create the most innovative and state of the art facilities for students (Tolbert, 1985).

Institutional theory also is helpful in understanding how and why some decisions or policies are enacted within postsecondary education organizations. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) described three influential factors that cause higher education institutions to operate, behave and make similar decisions. Coercive, normative, and mimetic

isomorphism each play off different forces within an institution's organizational field to explain striking similarity across very diverse organizations. Politically motivated governmental regulations, professional codes of ethics, and the desire to attract faculty/students each play a part in institutional isomorphism. Institutional theory proposes that external legitimacy to constituents and networks is more important than the internal coordination of behaviors (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Institutional theory helps to explain how elements of the academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime have spread into thousands of unique institutions across the Carnegie classification.

One of the last trends in higher education that is relevant to providing context for this study is the widespread and dynamic change that is occurring on college campuses across the country. The challenges facing higher education are numerous including the high numbers of diverse students arriving on campus, increased calls for staff and faculty accountability, decreased state support, disputes over employee work loads and benefits, and the pressure to enhance the curriculum and overall learning environment (Komives & Woodard, 1996). A directly related mandate that springs from this pressure to improve the learning environment is the focus on improving retention rates and identifying specific learning outcomes.

PRINCIPLES/IDEOLOGY OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

Student affairs have a long standing practical and theoretical tradition within higher education and its core values and principles form the last contribution to framing this study. Many theories and concepts have been advanced to illustrate the values and professional ideology within the field of student affairs and this work will influence the

present study. Because we can assume that many professionals working in student affairs value the growth and achievement of individual students this study intends to determine if these values actually influence and appear in everyday practice.

Most of what is known about student development is based on the work of Erik Erikson (1968); he proposed that individual development occurs through a series of age-linked, sequential stages that arise during a person's lifetime. The work of Chickering and Reisser (1993) elaborated on Erikson's notion to propose that establishing one's identity is the central developmental issue during the college years. Chickering and Reisser's model identifies seven unique vectors of development that are overlapping competencies in the path toward the establishment of an individual's identity. The vectors include competence in intellectual, emotional and social realms and result in students becoming more autonomous, purposeful, and empathetic.

The basic premise of Chickering and Reisser's (1993) research is that educational environments have a powerful influence upon how successfully students' navigate the seven vectors of development. Through the interaction between the individual student and their campus environment, these and a host of other authors would suggest that students can develop positive attributes as a result of the intentional efforts of student affairs professionals. Additional research done by Astin (1993) identified academic and social integration in college as greatly impacting student retention. Tinto (1975) found student departure behavior from college was closely related to person-institution fit. Stoecker, Pascarella and Wolfe (1988) in results from a nine-year longitudinal study demonstrated that academic and social integration were the most important determinants

of college persistence. Chickering and Reisser (1993) found evidence that colleges providing numerous and diverse opportunities for integrating and engaging in academic and social communities positively influenced retention and success through identity development in students.

The foundation of student affairs work is grounded in the belief that education of the whole student and the intentional prompting of both cognitive and affective development should guide practitioners as they design learning opportunities within the campus environment (Evans & Reason, 2001). Scholars from a cognitive approach to development such as Perry (1970); Kohlberg (1969) and more recently King and Kitchner (1994) suggest that individuals progress through a series of qualitatively different and increasingly complex assumptions about how the world functions. Basic assumptions are replaced with more complex ones as people test and evaluate, and seek new meanings about events and experiences in their lives. The implications of the cognitive structural approach for student affairs professionals suggests that educators should provide less advanced students with learning tasks that emphasize diverse and conflicting viewpoints within a structured format. The level of interaction required for this type of learning opportunity is something that is missing from the encounter based transactions that occur in higher education institutions

Based upon the pragmatic philosophy of John Dewey, student affairs work has always stressed the importance of placing the development of each unique student at the center of education process, the importance of experience, and the critical nature of the interaction between the person and the environment (Lloyd-Jones & Smith, 1954). Much

of the research on student departure from college identifies the person and institutional interaction as critical to retention. For example, the work of Kuh, Whitt and Shedd, (1987) suggested that student departure behavior from college was related to both individual and organizational attributes but the amount of congruence between these elements was critical. Tinto's (1975) model of student departure argues that colleges are much like other human communities and that persistence results from establishing community membership. Sanford (1966) concluded that change and development happens in students when an appropriate balance between challenge and support exist within their college environment.

The above theoretical principles from the student affairs literature illustrate that the common core values have historically included focusing on the development of the whole student and the critical nature of the interaction between student and campus environment. The relevance of these principles can not be understated in terms of this study. Based upon the espoused values of the student affairs profession and its theoretical underpinnings, this study will examine how these ideas are implemented in the functions and roles of routine work experiences and if new values are guiding professionals.

The nature of student affairs work environment in terms of student volume and the organizational pressures suggested by Slaughter & Rhoades' (2004) concept of academic capitalism likely impact what values guide practice and affect the ability of professionals to impact the whole student. Additionally, the core values of the profession could be in transition within the context of the dramatic change occurring within both

institutions and the students coming to campus. It will be interesting to note whether student affairs professionals are being guided by a business model which values efficiency, new revenue streams, partnerships and fee-for-service orientations as suggested by Keeling & Heitzman (2003). The frameworks on service provision patterns, managerial professionals, and the research on the changing context of higher education are the foundation for understanding the work experiences of student affairs professionals. This study will illustrate what core values guide student affairs practice and the extent to which traditional student affairs values based on the development of the whole student become implemented with undergraduate students.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Four research questions are focused on understanding the core values and work experiences of student affairs professionals, how they feel about, and make meaning from their work. The research questions are:

- What are the core values of student affairs professionals?
- What are the routine work practices of student affairs professionals?
- How do student affairs professionals feel about the tendencies of their students, department, and institution?
- How do student affairs professionals see these tendencies affecting practice?

Due to the exploratory and descriptive nature of this study, the research questions intend to gain insight into how one group of professionals working in student affairs at one institution perceive their routine work experiences. The study is designed to give

student affairs professionals and senior administrators a deeper knowledge of employee behaviors, perceptions, and emotions.

ASSUMPTIONS

While this study is an investigation into the work experiences of student affairs professionals, the core values driving their practice, and how their practice delivering service to students is perceived, there is no intent to determine cause and effect patterns by either confirming or disconfirming hypothesis. This study does not intend to generalize the findings to other institutions or organizational settings. There are however some working hypotheses about the work experiences, behaviors, and practice that are likely to be observed and these are described below.

Looking through the lens of individual experiences I might expect that managerial professionals in student affairs would feel overwhelmed by limited time to complete the various roles expected in their job. Considering the high student demand for services coupled with other responsibilities for program development, committee work, and record keeping, it would not be surprising to hear student affairs professionals are pressed for time in a forty hour work week.

The personal consequence for lacking time to complete work assignments is psychological and physical stress. I expect that student affairs professionals would report that their positions are stressful as a result of high demands for service and a “do more with less” philosophy within their department. The expectation for developing and delivering quality student programs and services within a tight fiscal climate can present complex challenges for student affairs professionals on a regular basis.

It is my expectation that these realities of the work environment will lead to individual rationing behaviors that reduce stress and also changing and impacting the core values of student affairs practice. As suggested by Perlow (1999) and Lipsky (1980) as employees become overwhelmed by the demands of their work they develop strategies to help them cope more effectively. Managerial professionals in student affairs may attempt to gain control of their work environment by seeking work that takes them away from student contact, developing preferred customers, and only working with students within their functional specialty.

From the departmental level, it is my expectation that student affairs professionals have very different perspectives about their work that is contingent upon the particular purpose of their unit. Specifically, I would suggest that departmental and organizational structures premised on efficiency and controlling costs will lead to frustration for student affairs employees and the alteration of the core values that guide their work. The explanation for rigid departmental processes and limited opportunities for input by the professionals charged with delivering services to students are likely a result of institutional priorities consistent with the academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime. Therefore, student affairs practice is governed more by the values of efficient customer service than by more developmental relationships between providers of the service and the clients themselves.

I expect that student affairs professionals will express concern and frustration about the institutional level priorities being pursued on the campus. The initiatives that originate from central administration will be perceived as illogical, short sighted and

more about economics than about what is best practice for undergraduate students. The myriad of improvement plans coming from the institutional level aimed at retention, recruitment, or other similar priorities will likely be viewed by student affairs professionals as ineffective for students and challenging for them as employees.

Student affairs professionals are already pressed to serve the high volume of students coming into their department in a given week. Any campus level initiative that comes from the top down, without previous communication or discussion with those working directly with students are likely to be viewed skeptically. I expect that employees will identify unanswered questions, inconsistencies, and procedural log jams in most campus initiatives involving students. Despite these obstacles, student affairs professionals will do their best to align their practice with the notion of educating the whole student, putting the student at the center of the educational process, and prompting positive interactions between the person and the campus environment. However, the ability to practice according to these traditional values of the student affairs profession on any regular basis are likely to be impeded by institutional priorities that emphasize new external markets, the lack of interest from the students they work with, and their own personal coping strategies to manage competing values.

Finally, I expect that student affairs professionals will express concern over where their profession is heading and whether their professional practice is based on what is best for students. I would expect job restructuring and role accretion to continue within student affairs as new competencies in assessing outcomes, managing personnel, fund raising and revenue generation become a larger part of the job responsibilities. As the

professional labor market within higher education is reorganized and aligned to meet the new expectations of the academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime, these employees will feel pressure and dissonance. I expect that professionals in student affairs will be expected to acquire new competencies and areas of specialization that most likely will be discrepant with their professional training, education, and the traditional values of student affairs work.

Additionally, student affairs professionals will express uncertainty about the rise in development activities that impact their practice through corporate partnerships, collaborations, and donor relationships. The implications of these activities on professionals are likely to be varied as individuals find elements of their position are less about students and more about market orientated behaviors. A group of professionals that historically has been for and about 'students' is likely to find themselves in a unfamiliar space where student needs have been supplanted by the search for new markets and revenues. The center of the educational process is shifting and being redefined as units are being forced to be efficient, entrepreneurial, and focused on external resources. As a result it is likely that new core values are evolving within the profession of student affairs and professionals are doing their best to navigate these competing priorities within their institutional context.

In summary, after considering employee time rationing techniques in response to high student volume, the institutional and departmental pressures to improve service to students in alignment with stated priorities, and the expectation to secure resources in a competitive environment it is expected that student affairs professionals will feel tension

in the workplace. I expect student affairs professionals to rationalize their work efforts by focusing on impacting isolated students by connecting with them in any means possible.

CHAPTER THREE METHODS

This chapter highlights methods used to investigate the following research questions.

- What are the core values of student affairs professionals?
- What are the routine work practices of student affairs professionals?
- How do student affairs professionals feel about the tendencies of their students, department, and institution?
- How do student affairs professionals see these tendencies affecting practice?

This inquiry is an exploratory case study of four student affairs departments at one large, public, land grant, Research I institution. The university serves 28,442 undergraduate and 8,363 graduate students and awarded almost 8,000 degrees in the 04/05 academic year. The institution admits approximately 6,000 new freshmen every year and maintains student programs and support services that offer academic advising, leadership opportunities, career counseling, recreation, and a wide range of out of classroom activities. The university employs approximately 2,500 faculty, 5,900 staff, 2,500 appointed professionals, and over 3,000 graduate assistants. The university campus is geographically located in the southwest and covers over 370 acres with 179 buildings. In response to heightened calls for accountability, this university has recently engaged in a concerted effort to increase retention and graduation rates.

In many respects this particular institution is not unlike many of its peer public institutions which actively pursue a multitude of disparate activities while engaging in

research, service, and teaching. Fiscal constraints that result from inconsistent and variable state support and increased costs of doing business combine to make managing these complex organizations like this one a challenge for administrators. Additionally, these institutions are all extremely cognizant of their status within the college rankings and as such, are forced to pursue the prestige and status associated with acquiring and maintaining the best faculty, students, facilities, and campus life.

One factor that makes the particular institutional setting for this research project unique is that this campus operates within one of the lowest performing states in terms of K-12 education, has over a 25% enrollment of minority students, and is within close proximity to the Mexican border. This particular land grant institution faces challenges in terms of admitting and graduating students from within the state at rates comparable to those students coming in from outside the state.

As an exploratory case study, this research addressed the lack of in-depth inquiry on the complex behaviors and perspectives held by managerial professionals working in student affairs. In order to gain a detailed and rich understanding of the work products, actions, and constructed meanings the data gathered employed qualitative techniques (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). These methods enabled the researcher to hear the stories told about student affairs work and paint a picture of meanings through interviews and document analysis. By listening to how understandings are constructed through the ideas of the participants and analyzing departmental documents this research provided a rich description of work experiences (Creswell, 2003). The investigator was interested in describing the lived experiences of student

affairs professionals and encouraged each participant to “tell their story”. In depth interviews using a combined open-ended and semi-structured format offered an opportunity to gain thick descriptions of experiences and sense making techniques (Seidman, 1998). Since a detailed exploration of the work practices, value driving practice, and meanings created by student affairs professionals does not exist, comparative case-study methods offered the opportunity to develop this area of inquiry.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with twenty-one student affairs professionals employed within four departments. (see Appendix A for interview questions.) The interview questions were built upon the foundation of the ideas described above, and were often conversational in nature and utilized probing techniques to further elaborate on issues coming out of the interview process (Snow *et al*, 1982). Probes such as “What was that experience like for you” were used to encourage participants to continue speaking about interesting topics that were relevant to the research questions. Each study participant was interviewed once, usually in their own campus office. Interviews lasted from forty-five minutes to ninety minutes.

Documents were also solicited from each employee interviewed or accessed through the department’s website when available. The documents collected included mission statements, job descriptions, and employee calendars. Only a small number of participants provided these additional documents and the investigator was reluctant to continue asking for the materials. A number of reminders were delivered through email but many participants failed to respond. I think this was mostly due to the fact that these professionals like all university employees, were extremely busy and once the interview

was completed they went on with their work and believed they had provided as much information as was reasonable. I also felt that the participants were a bit guarded about sharing their day to day work calendar with the investigator because of how it might be perceived in terms of their organizational abilities, efficiency, and productivity.

Unobtrusive observations were conducted in each department during the interview process with particular attention paid to easily visible text information posted within the office. Prior to each interview with the participants, the investigator made explicit efforts to arrive early and survey the materials displayed within the residence hall, department office, or building space being occupied by the participant. Because each office and participant displayed different amounts and types of materials the data collected through observation was inconsistent but added some valuable context to the interview data.

DEPARTMENT SELECTION

The departments were selected because they met one or more of the following criteria: 1) the department regularly and frequently interacted with students; 2) the departments function was to provide or offer a service, program or learning opportunity to students; and 3) the departments were likely to be affected in some form by the institutional priority to increase student retention and graduation rates. In order to protect the anonymity of the participants the investigator has provided the following pseudonyms to identify the departments involved in the project; the Campus Life Office (CLO), the Academic Services Office (ASO), the Workforce Training Office (WTO), and the Housing and Residential Services Office (HRSO).

Utilizing Seidman's (1998) principle of maximum variation, the sample of participants included professionals from a range of personal backgrounds, professional expertise, and years of service. The interview protocol asked participants to describe and think about the routine work experiences. They were asked to comment on the personal and professional values that guided their practice, the characteristics of students, and how institutional or departmental priorities intertwined within the unique context of their work experiences.

In each of the four departments studied approximately five interviews were conducted. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed along with field notes taken during the interviews. Participants were recruited for participation in the study through an email which was sent to their departmental supervisor asking for volunteers. Potential participants were also identified through word of mouth. Participants already interviewed spoke to their colleagues about the experience and recommended their colleagues contact me or some participants suggested other colleagues that I should contact. Of the twenty-one participants interviewed, twelve were female, four were African-American, three were Hispanic, one was Asian-American, and the remainder was Anglo. **(confirm above numbers!!!!)**

The focus of this study was on the routine work experiences of student affairs professionals including what values guided their practice, their perceptions regarding their work with undergraduate students, colleagues, and within the institution. Lipsky's (1980) work on frontline employees he called street level bureaucrats and Gutek's (1995) work on the changing dynamics of service delivery patterns lead me to examine this

particular group of academic professionals. Although most interviews occurred with frontline employees who worked with students daily, a few supervisors and mid-level administrators were also interviewed to gain a broader understanding of how student affairs professionals navigated and made sense of the larger institutional context. Most of the front line employees were protected or buffered the upper level mechanisms that determined institutional level priorities but very few were shielded from the impact of these priorities when it came to serving students.

The Campus Life Office was selected for this study due to their frequent interaction with students seeking guidance on personal concerns and facing code of conduct or academic integrity violations. In addition, several participants in this office were responsible for coordinating programs that enhanced the campus experience for students through interaction with faculty, cultural and educational events, and other experiential learning opportunities. While the services offered through this office were not required for every student on the campus, many students are in contact with the office throughout the course of their undergraduate experience. Students interacting with the Campus Life Office might be in a personal crisis situation, in the midst of a code violation or involved in the campus community through student government or other leadership programs. This office is also likely to be affected by the priority to improve student retention and as such they are involved in designing programs and services which help students get connected to the campus and improve the overall community. Interviews were conducted with judicial officers, mid-level administrators, and program coordinators.

The Academic Services Office was selected for this study due to the high volume of students coming to the unit seeking advice on course selection, major declaration, and policy interpretation. Academic advising, while not required by the university, has become a highly encouraged and monitored interaction within the academic colleges and high numbers of undergraduate students seek it out routinely. The advising office operates in a cohort model which places all incoming students into an online, credit bearing class that is taught by an academic advisor within the college. Students who are assigned to use this advising office are undecided in their major, on academic probation, or in the process of transitioning to a new major or college and could, quite possibly, be in all of the above categories. Because students using this office are at higher risk for attrition, this lends a sense of urgency to the employee's work in this office. Additionally, this office is clearly affected by the institutional priority to retain and graduate students. Interviews were conducted with academic advisors and program coordinators from this office.

The Workforce Training Office was selected for this study primarily due to the fact that it provides a range of services to students which help them transition from the university to the professional world. Another reason this department was selected is that although, once again its services are not required, it is responsible for serving all undergraduate and graduate students across the university. This office is clearly affected by the institutional priority to not only facilitate the graduation of students but to ensure that they are competitive within the job market. The department offers internship placement, job fairs, mock interviews, and resume building workshops. The office is

charged with delivering services to high volumes of clients and employees are likely to feel the press on their practice. Interviews were conducted with a counselor and mid-level administrator.

The Housing and Residential Service Office has over 100 full time employees in business offices, computer support, residential education, conference services, administrative support, and maintenance and custodial departments. Residence Hall Directors within the residential education division were selected for interviews due to their regular and frequent contact with mostly first year students. There are over ten full-time Hall Directors and several part-time Graduate Hall Directors and Community Assistants for a total of over twenty-five employees working in these particular positions within the residence halls. Full-time Hall Directors were targeted for this study since the residence halls they managed housed between 200 and 900 students and they were also responsible for a wide range of administrative tasks. The other positions within residential education were student level positions and they were excluded from the study since their duties were dramatically disparate from Hall Directors.

In addition to the semi-structured interviews mentioned above, some document analysis was utilized to understand how employees use their time and how their department publicly communicated its function and roles. I obtained some employee calendars, position descriptions, mission statements, and training manuals. While the intention was to collect these documents from each participant, I had to settle for collecting them whenever available. While I found most participants accepting of the request for these documents at the time of the interview many failed to follow through on

the request. I did make additional requests for the documents but was hesitant to badger the participants who had already given an hour of their time for the interview.

Lastly, very informal unobtrusive observations were conducted in the offices during my time either arranging, conducting, or following up the interviews. Field notes of these observations were recorded to describe any activity around the office and any materials posted in common areas. As mentioned above, due to the variations in what types of materials were displayed within offices these observations provided richer context for the interview data when available.

DATA ANALYSIS

All data was analyzed using the theoretical framework in the previous chapter. Following the verbatim transcription of the interviews, I searched the documents to look for the “story” contained within the participant’s responses. I specifically listened and looked for excerpts that described conflicts within the participants, expressed hopes and values, frustrations, and coping techniques. I also listened for excerpts that were told in a striking or emotional manner or were connected to their or other participants’ previous responses. I then began to identify recurring patterns or themes that illustrated and described in depth the work practices, values, and experiences of the participants. In particular, I was most interested hearing the participant describe their routine work practices, how they felt about the characteristics of students and the priorities of the institution, and what values guided their everyday practice.

Interviews, once transcribed and reviewed as stated above were thematically coded initially into over twenty-five categories. After further analysis and the search for

connections between the numerous categories, broad themes were identified as descriptive in terms of the work experiences, feelings, and perceptions of student affairs professionals. The themes included: encounter based contact with students rather than relationships, work routines that were out of control, students being described as deficient, institutional policies and practices led to frustration, and routine use of strategies for coping, meaning making and identifying rewards.

For example, out of control work experiences is a theme which arose out of the interview data and is connected to Lipsky's (1980) theory of how service provision within large bureaucratic organizations is overwhelming in terms of the expectations being placed on the professional. Instead of the professionals determining the flow and nature of the work and how best to serve clients, organizational structures determine it. The high volume of clients seeking service and the limited resources that exist within bureaucracies creates demands on employees that are highly challenging to accomplish. I specifically listened for how participants described their work experiences, how their work tasks were prioritized, and what level of autonomy control they exercised, and what were the core values guiding their practice. If a participant mentioned that their work experiences were fast-paced to the point of rarely having a moment between students to make notes, I would code this statement out of control work routines.

Documents were similarly coded by themes and if no documents were available I conducted a detailed and complete analysis of the content of text materials on the department's web site. By coding written documents in terms of reoccurring themes, patterns, or the language used to illustrate the unit's purpose, central function, or goals

study can identify concrete examples of lived experiences (Rubin and Rubin, 1985).

Because written documents as a data source was anticipated to be inconsistently obtained or unavailable across participants, I specifically included questions in the interview protocol about how work practices were delineated between student appointments, meetings, and committee work.

LIMITATIONS

There are four primary limitations to this study that need to be addressed in order to avoid invalid or impulsive generalizations. A single exploratory case study with twenty-one interview participants and limited document analysis cannot be generalized to other campus departments or other institutions. The work experiences of student affairs professionals at a small, rural, private liberal arts college are likely to be significantly different from their colleagues who work at an urban multi-campus community college. The volume, characteristics, and needs of students seeking services on these campuses could result in professionals having different experiences, challenges, and perceptions of their work. One might expect that students at a small liberal arts institution could be more interested in social justice or environmental issues since they chose to attend a school with similar values and priorities. If that was the case, student affairs professionals on this type of campus may describe fewer students as uncertain in terms of their majors or field of study. Professionals at a smaller campus may also be less inclined to feel overwhelmed during their work day since we could assume that fewer numbers of students would be seeking their advice. Additionally, professionals working within other student affairs departments such as cultural resource centers, learning support centers, or

campus recreation would likely report alternative understandings, meanings, and feelings regarding the students they encountered.

Secondly, a further limitation of this study is the lack of control I included for different employee types and classifications. I interviewed predominantly front line employees but there were also a several mid level administrators and one graduate research assistant. The differences between the functions and responsibilities of the participants can clearly confuse and obscure the conclusions that may be drawn from the study. For example, a graduate student working specifically on a research project involving undergraduate students may not experience the same types of demands or pressures on their practice as a full time professional nor would they likely experience the need to shift work priorities as a result of a campus crisis.

Thirdly, the depth and comprehensiveness of the data could have likely been improved by a multiple interview approach that involved the opportunity to develop a greater rapport between the researcher and the participant. Taking this approach would have allowed the data to reflect more accurately the ebbs and flows of the participants' work experiences over the course of the academic year or cycle. Almost all segments of the academic labor market are affected by the rhythms and high activity periods of the academic calendar. The fall season welcomes a new cohort of students who need assistance navigating the campus environment both inside and outside of class. From there the next cycle is mid term exams, then class registration for the future term, finals, graduation for some and then grade reports. Student affairs professionals experience and get to participate in how the entire process unfolds each term for many different students.

I am certain that multiple interviews would have resulted in richer data that more accurately described their work experiences, the core values guiding practice, and perceptions held about student affairs work.

POSITIONALITY

It is critical to inform the reader that the principal investigator has worked in student affairs in various roles for the past fifteen years. I began my career as an academic advisor within a community college advising office and was responsible for new student orientation programs. My next series of positions were all within student services or student affairs at the same institution where I conducted this study. I moved from advising to a learning support center where I was a counselor for students with learning challenges. More recently and for the last seven years I have assumed the role of administrator for a student affairs department.

As a result of my own professional experiences on this campus, I was familiar with the primary roles and functions of some of the departments included in the study and had collegial relationships with some of the participants. Over the years I have attended the same meetings, conferences, training sessions, and candidate forums while struggling with the same campus issues as many of the participants in this study. Declining resources in departments, a new general education curriculum, endless campus construction projects, dipping retention and graduations rates, leadership changes, campus tragedies involving students; I have experienced them all along side of my fellow student affairs colleagues. In a very real way, I have personally lived and experienced

the very research topic I am studying for the partial fulfillment of my doctoral degree requirements.

While I assumed a very interesting role of being both an “insider and an outsider” in terms of this study, it was not without its advantages and disadvantages. To begin with the positives, I feel that my own personal lived experiences within the student affairs profession offered a deeper understanding of what the work of a practitioner is truly like on a campus such as this one. My professional position on the campus also offered a more easeful entrance into the community and specific departments from which my participants were recruited. On the alternative side however, it is likely that my membership in the student affairs cadre on this campus resulted in bias in terms of a higher level of empathy that I may have felt for the participants. I can personally relate and understand what they experience at work because I too have walked in those shoes. I felt a tremendous responsibility to strive for the most accurate depiction of the experiences that my colleagues were describing because I did not want their words to be misperceived nor did I want their experiences to be considered as a negative in any way. These participants are good people doing amazing work with students and any limitations regarding their impact are, in my perspective, are an outcome of the organizational structure they work within on the campus.

For example, one of the most likely biases that I, as a member of this community brought to this study was to unconsciously assimilate the stories and experiences of the participants into my own personal situations or mental schemas. Given my own professional experiences in student affairs it would be natural to assume that others had

similar experiences, reactions and perceptions to the same events or situations that I had experienced over the years. In order to control for that bias, I explicitly forced myself to avoid impulsively trying to fit the participants' words into my own existing explanatory categories. I felt the most effective method to accomplish this was to listen actively to what the participant was saying while not passing judgment too quickly on which one of my personal experiences it might have been similar. I also explicitly refrained from contributing my own experiences as a student affairs professional during the interview process. My goal was to acknowledge their stories about their work but to do so without interjecting my understanding during the interview so as to avoid moving the interview in the direction of my comment or elaboration. My positionality as simultaneously being a member and non-member of the student affairs profession on this campus is a critical validation measure that I must state up front as a potential bias.

CHAPTER FOUR BEHAVIOR PATTERNS ACROSS DEPARTMENTS

Student affairs professionals expressed a variety of feelings and interpretations regarding their work with students and colleagues at a large public land grant institution. This group of professionals is responsible for providing a comprehensive range of programs, services, and learning opportunities to undergraduate students. Like most complex and dynamic institutions, colleges and university environments bring together a unique mixture of competing values and priorities among students, faculty, administrators, and the array of professionals charged with providing services to students outside of the classroom environment. The research project undertaken here focused on learning about the routine work experiences of student affairs professionals and what values guided the practice of this segment of the academic labor market. In addition, this study sought to understand how these professionals made meaning of their work with students and colleagues within the campus environment. In addition, this investigation sought to understand how student affairs practice was impacted, including how it was enhanced or impeded, by student characteristics, campus tendencies, and organizational structures present within the work setting. Several themes and patterns emerged out of interviews with 21 student affairs professionals operating out of four different departments.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The overarching findings of this study indicate that the core values of the student affairs ideology; educating the whole student, placing individual students at the center of the educational process, and designing intentional interactions between students and the

campus environment are not routine practices for participants in this study. Institutional priorities that value efficiency, cost control, and the competitive acquisition of external resources are the context from which student affairs professionals deliver services to undergraduate students. On the other side of the equation students arrive on campus with a multitude of interests and often time are not interested in receiving attention or being guided by campus professionals including faculty and student affairs professionals. The dynamic institutional context is framed by a business model of management and combines with diverse student interests and engagement levels. This reality of the environment presents student affairs professionals genuinely interested in developing students' potential in a struggle with significant internal tension and dissonance. The profession's ideology encourages and emphasizes the development of relationships with students but the organizational environment of the campus and the students themselves are forcing these professionals to reexamine the principles which guide their work.

THEMES THAT INFORMED THE FINDINGS

The responses from the interview data with student affairs professionals clustered around the five following themes: (1) encounters with students are the norm and not relationships; (2) students are described as deficient; (3) the work routines and expectations for student affairs professionals are out of control and chaotic; (4) frustration with institutional practices is common and (5) professionals cope with their work environment by identifying new values and rewards. All of the above themes were identified to some extent within the interview responses across each of the four student affairs departments and will be addressed in detail in this chapter. The next chapter will

address particular variations on these five themes when applicable, by analyzing different characteristics and responses within specific departments. Because some themes took on distinctive variations as a result of the functions provided by the professionals within particular departments, they will be addressed in detail in the following chapter.

ENCOUNTERS WITH STUDENTS, NOT RELATIONSHIPS

Almost every employee that was interviewed in this study spoke about attempting to make some kind of connection with the students they were working with regardless of the context within which they were meeting. They often mentioned their goal was to share some resource or information or perspective that was, in their opinion, of potential value to the student's growth, development, and success. Academic advisors spoke about using their 30 minute appointment to establish some foundation for a future relationship with the student and often used personal information about the student in order to spark a conversation. Something as simple as mentioning a student's home town or state could catch the attention of the student and lead to continued contact at a later time. Below a male advisor speaks about his approach for connecting with students.

MB: Just a matter of when a student comes in, a few minutes before they come, I go on to the Student Information System (SIS) to find out a little bit about them and when they come in I use it. You know you'd be surprised how blown out of the water they are, its kind of like you really know something about me. For some students it catches them totally off guard it's like have you been following me around?

Student affairs employees, in trying to connect with the student on the other side of their desk, will use anything at their disposal to make the student feel like they really know something about them. Unfortunately, from the student standpoint, it can sometimes feel like this person is trying too hard to make them feel comfortable. In the above passage the participant speaks to the value of sharing some bit of personal information during the advising session but acknowledges that students are often caught off guard by the approach. For students, the attention from student affairs professionals may not be welcomed and considered strange or inappropriate. Someone they do not know at all whom they are meeting for a particular reason shares knowledge of personal details about their life during a brief encounter in a campus office. For some students it may actually feel like stalking!

What is also interesting is that participants in this study are striving to make a connection with students by any means necessary. Some common techniques include referencing a small bit of personal information or by appearing interested in them and what is happening in their life. Although these surface exchanges can be critically important to the professional and possibly the student, participants acknowledge that these interactions are somewhat less than ideal.

The ultimate goal of student affairs work as stated within its literature is premised on the notion of ongoing, consistent, and genuine relationships with the students so that individually tailored learning opportunities are presented at the appropriate time. However, another possibility is that student affairs work needs to adapt to changing student and campus cultures. Students coming to college within the current generation

see education as another product or service that they consume on their terms. The academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime influences student behavior too and the consequences are seen with students not expressing interest in “being developed” since they perceive college to be another service they are purchasing. Clearly the current context and structure of large, public higher education organizations and the students who attend them creates a challenging situation for student affairs professionals.

The student affairs literature has a long standing philosophical and ideological commitment to developing the whole student, not just the intellectual or cognitive growth of that individual. Many of the core values and principles of student affairs practice can trace its roots back to the pragmatic philosophy of John Dewey which stresses the importance of placing the development of each unique student at the center of the educational process. Ideally, this is achieved by caring greatly and knowing about each individual student, understanding the important role that experiences play, and crafting beneficial interactions between the person and the environment (Lloyd-Jones & Smith, 1954). The student affairs literature and professional ideology of the past and present assumes that all professionals working with students must have consistent and ongoing relationships for educational opportunities to be crafted between the student and the environment. However, what appears to be the more accurate picture of the interactions between students and student affairs professionals are brief, transitory exchanges or encounters that hopefully, will lead to more ongoing, in depth contact in the future. The differences between making a connection with a student during a discrete encounter and a

more regular, recurring relationship over time are dramatic will be addressed throughout this analysis.

The method for connecting with students used by many participants in this study mentioned using whatever information, structure or opportunity you have within your work function or routine in order to show the students that you know them and care about them. This rationale for service delivery is driven by the reality of very high student numbers, a limited number of possible interactions, and short windows of opportunity.

A good example of this reality occurs within the Housing and Residential Services Office (HRSO) where residence hall directors are responsible for managing a community of student residents between 200 and 800 individuals. One of the primary ways these professionals stay informed about the needs, issues, and progress of their high numbers of residents is through weekly meetings with the resident assistant (RAs) assigned to every floor or wing of the building. Often times these one-on-one meetings, as they are referred to, are focused on supporting the work of the RA by the hall director showing interest in them both as a student and as a paraprofessional employee under their supervision. In order for hall directors to have effective outcomes in terms of managing their building and the residents living there they must use their time with resident assistants strategically. Below a male resident hall director speaks about his practice when working with the staff in the building.

LO: Also with my staff, I want to support them and what they are doing. I want them to be successful so I talk to them a lot about their classes. I talk to them about the different things that they are involved and on-campus or about outside

jobs those sort of things. I try to keep somewhat knowledgeable about their relationships and their friends. Different resident assistants have different levels of comfort with us and with what they want to share. But I feel like that impacts their job performance that impacts their ability to do what they need to do here so those things I wanna know about.

In this situation, the hall director sees the ability to know about what is going on in the lives of the resident assistants as helping him be more effective at supporting their work. If they know about other interests, outside jobs, goals, and relationships then they are more able to know what resources may be of help to the success and development of the RAs.

By getting to know their RAs, hall directors are informed about the individual students living in their community. What is very interesting is in some ways, hall directors are actually developing the type of ongoing, intensive relationships with RAs that they are unable to develop with individual students. The student development agenda that appears in the professional literature has an improved likelihood of being part of everyday work experiences between hall directors and a very distinctive subclass of students, the resident assistants. One female hall director from a smaller residence hall had this to say about the importance of making a connection with resident assistants.

JC: I focus on where they are at in their college career, I'll look at their majors. I try to connect what they are learning as a resident assistant and how they can implement that into where they want to go. I really try to bridge the gap, I try to do a lot of self searching with them, kind of help them see different perspectives

help them get to know themselves a little bit and what they want, where they wanna go and work on communication skills and listening skills. We work on mediation and conflict mediation and I really try to help develop their leadership so they can do the same for our students.

Hall directors see the resident assistants who report to them as a proxy for the entire population of students who live in the residential community. Another element to consider here is that RAs are not typical undergraduate students and that is precisely what leads them to seek out the opportunity to become an RA, they are a self selected special sub group of the entire student population. These students who apply to become RAs are often the most responsible and well adjusted undergraduates on campus and as such are ideal and preferred employees just for this reason. As a result, hall directors find themselves working more in depth with these types of preferred “students” and actually developing genuine relationships because they are more like them in terms of their personality, commitment, and maturity. This preference for working with clients similar to themselves relates directly to Lipsky’s (1980) work with street level bureaucrats and is one way that employees ration services in high demand work settings.

Because there are such large numbers of individual students living within campus housing units, hall directors are unable to develop ongoing relationships with each student. Therefore, hall directors are strategically developing ongoing relationships with their RAs as a surrogate. As such, student development principles are being worked toward more routinely between hall directors and their RAs than between the hall director and all residents in the community. Most hall directors are committed in principle to the

concept of student development but are unable to effectively accomplish the task with any consistency due to the multiple competing demands for their time and high numbers of students in their community. As such, we find the work experiences of hall directors reflect the constraints that exist within their institutional setting and professionals lack the real opportunity to genuinely impact the high numbers of students who are not employed as RAs.

Student conduct violations are one of the consistent elements of the work routine and are viewed by hall directors as one of those critical opportunities to make connections with students albeit under somewhat challenging circumstances. Students living in the residence halls are expected to adhere to a range of behavioral expectations that, according to the department of residence life, help to establish and promote an inclusive and safe community for all residents. Typically, each hall director is responsible for reviewing a certain number of student conduct cases each week. These conduct violations are submitted in writing to the hall director by their resident assistants which then leads to a face to face meeting with the student to hear their side of the story and determine outcomes and any related sanctions. Some typical violations for which students are cited include excessive noise after a certain hours, using unauthorized entrances or exits to certain parts of the building, alcohol and drug use, theft of property, and disruptive behavior toward others.

Hall directors are required to have discussions with every student cited for a conduct violation and they then proceed with writing up findings in an online system used by the department. Regardless of the specific violation in question, several hall

directors mentioned the conduct process as a way to get to learn something personal about the students, possibly connect with them on some level, and ideally lay the foundation for future contact and possibility an ongoing relationship.

LO: My philosophy with conduct. I want to spend the first two minutes getting to know the student. A lot of times they don't wanna do that because they're here to get this over with in about 10 minutes. I wanna know where they're from, I wanna know what their major is, I wanna make some sort of connection. The ones that are from California, I'll ask what part of California they are from? Oh you're from southern California, well my brother lives in Irvine. Just something really simple like that can make a lot of difference. Those are the sort of opportunities that I can get if I can create some sort of minor connection they are more likely to work with me I think. Those of the students that I tend to get completed sanctions from.

For this hall director, connecting even in a minor sort way with the student is considered positive because it lays the foundation for helping to have more productive work outcomes, completed sanctions. What is striking in this passage is even though the notion of connecting with a student in a few minutes sounds absurd, the participant implicitly accepts that as a reality of the work environment and moves ahead regardless. Here we get the real sense that what is happening between students and professionals are not relationships that have the best interests of the students at heart but transitory encounters that have a specific tangible outcome. The additional element of the conduct interactions is the sheer volume of cases that are delivered to hall directors and this once

again makes connections with students let alone genuine relationships decidedly superficial. A male hall director speaks to the volume in the passages below.

LO: Depending on the conduct caseload each week and then the paperwork that goes along with that that, it tends to take up quite a bit of my time in a building with 800 freshmen. This means that we tend to have a higher number of incidents. Part of that is just based on numbers and part of it is based on where our students are developmentally testing limits and things like that. So I tend to hear more cases in the fall I heard somewhere in the neighborhood of 130 conduct cases.

Within this passage we also begin to hear and understand a bit more of how student affairs professionals think about their work and how their practice is impacted by the structure of their work. High volumes of students living in the residence halls are routinely cycled through conduct violation process which then creates very small windows of opportunity to make connections with students. Due to the emotionally charged nature of being cited for a conduct violation, students are often reluctant, scared, and angry when they come to these meetings. On the other side, we have the hall director who needs to use this unpleasant encounter with a student to foster more acceptable behaviors while also trying to establish a connection that will be perceived as positive by the student. For hall directors, the goal of connecting with students while proceeding through conduct situations is critical because it can lead to a more responsive and engaged student which then leads to imposed sanctions that are actually completed rather

than dismissed as unimportant. Another male hall director describes his approach to working with students in conduct situations.

BS: I start by saying here's what I'm thinking in terms of finding you responsible or not, the litany of sanctions you might have to complete, but I'll let you know what my decision is in a couple of days and I'll send them a letter in the mail. But we have a half an hour scheduled and I'm done with that in four minutes so for the next 26 minutes its how are classes? How is your resident assistant? How are your roommates? Are you in a club or pledging a fraternity? All these kinds of things. By the end of the time they're laughing with me enjoying their time. Because they come in shaking, sometimes crying, they're worried I'm gonna throw them out, they're worried I'm going to suspend them. In the end hopefully they feel like there is somebody who really cares.

Another real impediment to establishing relationships with students goes beyond the sheer volume of students and returns to an earlier point about the student's perspective on the time spent interacting with campus student affairs professionals. Not all students desire connections or caring concern from campus professionals let alone genuine relationships with them. Based upon some of the stories from participants in this study, it would appear that the level of value or emphasis placed on the encounters between students and professionals is not reciprocal or mutual. The analysis will return to this point under a theme described below.

In reviewing the student affairs literature and ideology, the emphasis is clearly upon professionals reflecting upon the distinct needs of the individual students and

learning about their students' needs during ongoing student contact. In theory, student affairs professionals are charged with designing individualized learning opportunities for students by considering the campus setting and the unique needs of the particular student. This type of expectation in terms of functions and outcomes is once again predicated on having ongoing and repeated contact with the student, a connection that happens occasionally may not be sufficient. On the contrary, for students and the professionals that work with them, it may be the best that can be expected within the current organizational context.

High Student Volume Leads to Fast-Food Exchanges

Based upon review of interview transcripts from this study, many student affairs professionals talk about how they are expected to serve many students within very short windows of opportunity. In fact, many see themselves as a technician of sorts attempting to provide students with the information they seek or answering a specific question rather than venturing into territory that could be considered developmental or anything beyond the narrow scope of their defined function or unit. During some specific programs in certain times of the year, student affairs professionals have as little as fifteen minutes to spend directly with individual students due to the predetermined structure of the particular interaction.

For example, during new student orientation, college academic advisors address a large group of their students pursuing a common major through a presentation format for information delivery. After the presentation they meet briefly with small groups of students to review their degree requirements and help guide the selection of relevant

courses. It is rare for any student to have any duration of contact with their college advisor at this entry point of the college experience however many advisors speak about the importance of that first contact. A male advisor talks about his approach to the first meeting with a student.

MB: When you come in as a student, I've got like 15 minutes with you because we are in orientation and that 15 minutes is a luxury during that time. So I've got five to seven minutes to tell you what the requirements are and I'm hoping that maybe within those five or seven minutes that you and I, as a student and adviser that something will click and you will see the value of that relationship. So I am finding that is really one of the hardest things is that it makes it very difficult in terms of the time I have to interface with that student to make a connection with that student to show them that look I'm somebody that you would probably be dealing with to help you with this.

Clearly in this case, the advisor is forced to work within the constraints of the orientation program that is coordinated by colleagues that don't work with students in the same capacity or understand what advisors are attempting to accomplish. This is a good illustration of how the organizational environment and its related structures, in this case the New Student Orientation, allows a short period of time to work with new students. Another male academic advisor had this to say about how he approaches his limited time to find out what is going on with a student.

INTERVIEWER: DO YOU EVER FEEL THAT YOU DON'T HAVE THE TIME TO GO INTO DEPTH WITH THE STUDENTS THAT YOU SEE?

PC: I always give analogies, metaphors whatever. I say it's the fourth quarter we gotta score. I've had people follow me to my car you know. That's the exciting part of the job is managing that half-hour. It's like a two-minute drill. I get it all in. I have a thing that I run through living situations, work, mental health, substances.

This professional talks about “getting it all in” during his 30 minute meeting with a student but this is certainly not the intensity of relationship between a student and a student affairs practitioner that is espoused by the professional ideology. Another student affairs professional speaks about the way he approaches his work with students and how his colleagues might perform the role differently. This is a good example of how student affairs professionals might prefer to work in a certain way with students but due to the high number of students they must serve they are forced into other styles and values that guide practice. Here we can see that this employee acknowledges that students respond more favorably to a more personal touch in service delivery rather than, “take this and call me in the morning.”

PC: There is a huge difference when you go see someone and they say hey how's it going? How is that going with that roommate or you're working, how are you balancing that? How do you manage your time? Rather than saying take 15 units for four years each semester and you'll graduate. I see a lot of that prescriptive, I call it fast food advising, the student doesn't take anything away from that.

Certainly this reference to prescriptive or “fast food advising” is not a type of service or practice that can assist or enables students in developing skills outside of the very narrow

competency of understanding what courses they need to take for graduation requirements. However, what is very striking is that this participant speaks about that dynamic of the assembly line or manufacturing approach to student services as though it is very common among his colleagues on campus.

Barbara Gutek's research (1995) lays the foundation for emotions expressed in the passages above when she describes how societal changes in service delivery patterns have changed ongoing relationships between service providers and customers to brief encounters. Although Gutek's research spotlights the service industry at the societal or macro level the concepts are applicable to the services delivered to students in student affairs departments. Within the higher education setting, it's been a long time since students have had the type of apprentice based, intensive relationship with a single faculty member that existed in the early years of academe. Since the focus has shifted toward research and the prestige associated with those endeavors, faculty have stepped out of the intensive relationships with students and turned that responsibility over to student affairs professionals. Gutek further suggests that service providers have been forced to shift from regular and consistent interactions with a small number of individuals with whom frequent contact is expected to encounters that are characterized by anonymity on both sides of the interaction. Think about ordering your lunch from a drive through window versus sitting down at the counter of your local diner and telling the waiter you'll have "the usual."

In the context of student affairs practice, students don't see the same student affairs professional on a regular basis. They might see one person for a financial aid

question, someone else for course selection, and another person for more emotional needs. On the other side of the equation, the academic advisor, hall director or career counselors don't know much about the student across the table because they may only see them one time for a brief encounter. Here a male academic advisor speaks to the making brief contacts with students meaningful.

MB: So I am finding that is really one of the hardest things is that I'm spread so thin, it makes it very difficult in terms of the time I have to interface with that student to make connection with that student..... that doesn't exist in the university of almost 40,000, and if that keeps going we're going to become a McDonald's of academic advising. So my role as I see it at this point is although I may not have a lot of contact with those students, initially I make it as meaningful as I can.

References to the assembly line feeling of student affairs practice are frequent within the interview transcripts and in a large part are the outcomes of the high demand for service from the student population. A similar dynamic exists within the Housing department where hall directors are addressing the needs of very high numbers of both students and staff. A veteran male hall director comments on this in the passage below.

LO: In my particular job, I'm in a building of 800 students. It's a coed hall and I supervise 24 resident assistants (RAs) and a graduate complex director and technically I directly supervise 18 are a resident assistants and the graduate complex director supervises six. Technically oversee the entire staff of 26 counting myself. So that's one of my primary roles and that means that each week

I meet with half of my 18 reports in a one-on-one setting for an hour. So each week I have 9, 1-hour meetings. To prepare for those meetings we have them do weekly reports so I usually read the reports in advance just so I can know what things I'm talking about.

Because hall directors have so many individuals reporting to them it is often a challenge just to keep up with what is going on with their RAs, let alone the 800 students themselves. Here again we get a sense of how the volume of students and responsibilities can create a manufacturing mentality in the professional and they are barely able to keep up with the reports coming from their staff let alone develop any kind of lasting relationship with their student residents. As a result the professional practice of student affairs resembles the transitory encounters of a drive through fast food chain rather than the intensive, thoughtful conversation upon which the field's ideology is premised. Clearly the core values driving professional practice are in transition and student affairs professionals are at a crossroads.

Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) suggested that universities and colleges are routinely taking a market-like approach to managing the organization as they acquire and compete for critical external resources. Students also have become a sought after resource since they not only contribute tuition dollars but they are also commodities that can be tapped for other institutional assets. The rise of enrollment management units and administrative positions charged with strategically leveraging financial aid packages and admissions offers speaks to this dramatic shift toward the academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime. Large amounts of institutional resources are expended on

advertising and marketing materials like college view books, admissions' officers speak about making a certain "number of touches" on prospective students, and mailings are targeted toward affluent zip codes that are purchased by the institution. Explicit strategies and a range of supplementary behaviors focus on yielding students who can contribute to the institutions revenues beyond just their tuition and fees to include luxury residence halls, designer meal plans, and a range of other services that were formerly subsidized or provided at cost.

One of the many outcomes of this shift toward a more competitive approach to delivering postsecondary education is how nature and structure of the work of academic labor is being permanently altered. The fast food reference from the above participant responses certainly speaks to the evolution that student affairs have experienced along with the rest of the institution environment. In addition, the volume of impersonal contacts with high numbers of students results from how the organizational structure of individual student affairs departments adapt to the changing incentives at the institutional level.

INTERVIEWER: DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU WORK WITH THE WHOLE STUDENT?

PS: I think that's really important to do but really it becomes really difficult to do when you have a 400 student caseload plus. Because obviously the intellectual aspect of student is not in isolation of their personal lives, or family, girlfriend/boyfriend, financial issues whatever. Because all of that impacts their ability to be in school, but it's really when you see a student once a semester, it's really hard to do anything with that and just time and the number of students we

are seeing and just sort of overload. But I mean in theory, I agree with that. I think it's hard to practice and unless you are at a really small liberal arts school or you have a really small cohort of students that you see on a regular basis.

Based on their responses, student affairs professionals are striving to make a connection with their students but even the word they are using, connection, implies something that is turned on and off as needed. I heard many participants speak about their work with students as analogous to *planting a seed* within their exchanges with students in hopes that the idea they talked about will germinate over time. The student affairs professionals in this study worked diligently to establish a connection with their students by using each student contact as an opportunity to plant some ideas, information, or resources that they hope will benefit the student at a later point in time. A female academic advisor who works with probationary students talk about her approach to practice in the passage below.

PS: I am a little bit more hands off than some of the advisors are. I really think that if you put something out there and work at connecting with the student even if it is only one appointment, I leave it very open. If you have other questions or problems definitely come back and see me. My hope is that the student will come back some of the other advisors are much better at calling and e-mailing to make sure they come back.

The approach to practice described above is certainly not the same intensity or the kind of developmental relationship suggested by the literature in student affairs. However, it is important to keep in mind that the professionals in this study are striving to accomplish

goals consistent with the best practices in the professional literature. The impediments to reaching these goals are many and can be identified within the institutional setting and within the students themselves.

MB: So you always try to find something that is going to either from an artistic or scientific or sports or social, find something that will engage them. If you make that a point and you make that a connection point, it's not that hard to remember their name it's not that hard to come in and to connect with them in the event or an aspect or an item in your office or even an interest that they might have. It's about building relationships but it gets very, very, you get very, very strained in doing that with the numbers and the way that the system is working now.

Ideally, according to the professional ideology of student affairs, a seamless learning environment the goal, one that is punctuated with consistent and individualized educational opportunities that are coordinated on the behalf of the student. What is actually occurring in student affairs practice based on this small sample of interviews sounds to be more like the general disbursement of relevant information and supportive resources in a very encounter based transaction and true relationships are rare. In the passage below we can hear specific reference to this practical approach of working with high numbers of students. The idea is that what is shared with them will come together to click or impact positively at a later time, so in the present time it is the connection that is critical. A male hall director speaks about his philosophy about ambiguous outcomes with students.

LO: When you're dealing with freshman, I typically don't see sophomores they typically move off-campus, I may see a very minimal amount of development.

But all I can hope is that even if it's August and I planted a seed they are at some point in their college career it's going to help them especially, I guess that is what I would hope for.

Returning to the plant a seed approach, these professionals are delivering critical nutrients and providing protection from environmental factors so that their seedlings (students) grow and avoid general demise (attrition). The plant a seed approach appears to be one of the most common rationalizations and meaning making processes that student affairs professionals take in their work. So again we see the core values guiding practice are not directly aligned with the field ideology as represented in the literature. They are not uninterested or unwilling to help students and they care tremendously about students. However their ability to impact students in the ways described in the professional literature is inconsistent to say the least and limited by many numerous factors within the institutional setting.

The student affairs professionals I interviewed appeared to be aware of the ideological underpinnings of the field regardless of whether they were trained in a designated student affairs preparation program. I heard participants frequently referring to connections with students, caring about them, and trying to help them succeed at college and in life.

PC: Basically what I try to do is get students to come see me. Not make it mandatory, they don't have to come, they get to come. So I create a database in

access and we use that to try to get connections with them. I need to know the students. I contact them through face book and other ways. I need to know what they look like I need to know who they are. My brother-in-law is a car salesman and I had talked to him he's done it for years. I just treat each individual student like they are like prospects so to speak.

Here the participant speaks about his work in terms of working through a list of prospects and in many ways using a cold calling technique in order to establish contact with students assigned to him. It was of particular interest to hear how ideas bantered about in the rhetoric of professional associations and the field's literature, were thought about within the everyday practice of student affairs professionals. Many participants acknowledged that they infrequently implement student affairs principles into their practice. The pattern of responses tended to cluster around the notion of making the connection with students in some form and hoping that when the time is right students will return to them with questions. The intensity of the contact and depth of knowing about each unique individual student that is suggested by ideology of student affairs work requires was not a routine part of the experiences for these participants.

LA: I think one of the biggest goals I have when I meet with students is just to have a connection. To help them to hopefully feel like they have someone who cares about them on this campus. Someone who is interested in how they're doing here, if they are having any troubles, if I can help them to address those, refer them to different resources on campus just to be able to have that connection and for them to be able to hopefully think well I don't know where to go for this. So

hopefully they would think to call me and find out what they should do. And I think that's my ultimate goal maybe a little bit idealistic but it doesn't always work out that way but that's where I'm coming from. When I work with students that I would hope that they are left with some kind of impression like that.

Overall, the element important from the first theme is that participants are not building meaningful ongoing relationships with the majority of the students they work with during the day. The high volume of students that they are assigned or expected to serve leads their practice to resemble fast food exchanges with students that are concrete, restricted in scope, and more like the encounters described in Gutek's (1995) work.

STUDENTS AS DEFICIENT OR LACKING

One finding from the research questions posed within this study was our increased understanding of how students were conceptualized by those professionals delivering services. Like many public sector employees providing services, student affairs professionals experience many of the same constraints and demands in their work while also embodying the altruistic values of the helping professions. Lipsky (1980) in his study of social service professionals, describes the work of the *street level bureaucrats* as being characterized by high demands for service, ambiguous or conflicting goals, vague outcomes that are difficult to measure, and inadequate resources. Lipsky's (1980) work would suggest that akin to the street level bureaucrats in his research, student affairs professionals may exhibit many of the same feelings, coping strategies and service rationing techniques that he describes with the social service sector.

The intensity of participants' feelings about students and their characteristics was striking and was highlighted by persistent mention of the range of deficits that existed within undergraduate students at their institution. The emotionally charged responses within this theme was surprising given that in theory, student affairs professionals understand and are inclined to be supportive of all of the diverse needs of undergraduates outside of the classroom. At times, the participants echoed the sentiments of the faculty who have been known to bemoan the skills and motivation level of students within the classroom setting.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT IS THE MOST FRUSTRATING THING ABOUT WORKING WITH STUDENTS?

BL: The students who don't see the necessity, for advising, or for major exploration and all that. The major exploration class I teach, they think it's just and easy "A", and they'll say why am I here? I don't wanna student to come and waste my time you know?

The intent of this study is to understand the core values guiding the practice of student affairs professionals and to what extent the everyday work experiences align with the professional ideology of student affairs work. Could the charge of developing each student's unique competencies in the very ambiguous areas of intellectual, interpersonal, and moral growth combine with high demands for service to lead participants to respond to their clients like Lipsky's street level bureaucrats? Is this expectation for practice realistic in the current context of higher education?

Lipsky's (1980) characterization of street level bureaucrats is instructive when examining the experiences of student affairs employees working in residence life,

academic advising, career services, and judicial affairs. Student affairs professionals are charged with building meaningful relationships focused on the development of each individual student and creating seamless learning environments; clearly not goals or outcomes that are easily measured or even identified.

A significant pattern surfaced during the interviews when participants were asked about the characteristics of the students they worked with throughout the course of their work days. Interestingly enough, these feelings about their students' abilities, interests, and motivations could be assumed to be another factor that made connecting with students a challenge. Student affairs professionals are charged with establishing productive working relationships with high volumes of students through very limited windows of opportunity. The participants spoke at length about the deficits existing within their students or the things they didn't bring to the table in terms of the college experience. Often they perceived the students they encountered as lacking motivation or interest in the process of learning. Even more explicit mention was made in terms of students' lack of ownership for their behaviors, their educational pursuits and related outcomes. Lastly, the image of the entitled consumer or client of educational services included with it the not subtle expectation to have problems solved for them or to be given the answers when asked. Here a male hall director talks about the personal characteristics exhibited by one of his residents.

BS: There's a whole lot of them who are not seeing beyond the end of their noses or what every one of their actions means for everyone else around them.

A second long standing value of the student affairs profession according to Evans and Reason (2001) analysis of position papers is the ultimate respect for individual differences and treating each student as an individual. Understanding and being sensitive to the needs of different types of students and educating all students about diversity and the appreciation of differences is closely tied to this value. Here is what a female hall director had to say about students and their perceptions of racial and ethnic differences.

DR: I'm also seeing a difference in these freshmen. I'm getting students from all across the board, all across the races who don't know how to interact with one another.....they come with this attitude as you owe me. Granted we do owe them somewhat. They owe themselves more. They need to fight for what they desire and want. I'm seeing a change in students that I'm not liking, the apathy they don't see the need for anything.....the students have definitely changed the students are coming with the mentality this is our world, this is what we do. They don't look at race, its not a part of it anymore.

The ideology of student affairs espouses that professionals welcome and value all types and levels of students and their accompanying interests and motivations, not just the mature or prepared ones. Here is one area where participants' responses were surprising but also understandable given the institutional context. Participants in this study do not have the opportunity to design unique learning opportunities for each student because their time is such a precious commodity due to the mounting demands placed upon them at work. Students who require more of their time because of diverse and growing needs become a burden to the overworked student affairs professional.

Repeatedly, student affairs professionals in this study spoke about students who had high level of need, and varying levels of interest and engagement in the college experience. A veteran female academic advisor speaks about her perceptions of undergraduate students on the campus.

SS: Students, I find they are less directed, aren't able to start as much on their own they need more handholding. The instant gratification group they want everything done right now, push a button and have this done and aren't you going to register me for classes? I'm not going to do that, they expect more from you and to do more for them.....over the years they were more independent and over the years I've seen what they expect the advisors to do is more.

However, some participants developed alternative explanations to understand students and their accompanying diversity of needs and expectations in somewhat more neutral or even favorable light. It was clear that the student's investment in the academic environment or campus milieu minimally, was a signal and cue to the student affairs professional. Students exhibiting an interest and desire to put in some effort were in a more favorable position because the employee was more interested in providing relevant resources and had a great opportunity to feel successful in the outcome of the interaction.

BL: So when I kind of feel positive in student interactions are with students who are invested versus not so much invested. And really I'm not invested unless they are but it's hard. Its harder for me to see a student who is not invested because I want to encourage them to be and so and that's where a friend of mine in graduate school once told me that you have to connect with them in a way that you find, it's

not about your level of interest it's about where you can connect them with their level of interest and the system.

What is being expressed by participants is that they are engaged when the students are and if not then they don't lose sleep over it. Certainly it is easy to empathize with this approach given the high volume of students but this practical approach to their work is in direct opposition to the tenets of the student affairs profession. The concern for the unique individual, their needs and abilities, and the ability to customize a valuable learning experience for them is not present within this organizational setting.

The third characteristic of the position papers reviewed by Evans and Reason (2001) are the goals of helping students develop a sense of agency. Student affairs professionals are charged with providing students opportunities to increase self-awareness and self-direction. Providing students with significant choices and meaningful educational experiences that enable them to reflect and engage in meaning-making was stressed throughout the position papers created in the profession. A female hall director speaks about her experiences with conduct discussions in terms of developing agency within students.

PJ: I think students largely come in and maybe are like fix this for me or this is not my fault because of blah, blah, blah. When really they do have an active role in what they are doing. Things don't happen *to you* most of the time. So helping students feel and figure out what they are doing and what their role is and their responsibilities are, I think that is huge. Conduct is a really good time to have those conversations but they can happen wherever.

The above passage is a good example of how participants remain committed in practice to the tenets of the student affairs profession despite what may seem like difficult circumstances. This employee is aware of the importance of helping students make sense of their personal roles within a specific conduct situation or a larger outcome. However, we hear a sense of frustration with specific reference to students not taking responsibility for their actions or the situation they find themselves within at the time.

Throughout many of the interviews the researcher was surprised to repeatedly hear professionals speak about the characteristics of their students from a deficit perspective rather than one which is expected given their chronological age and stage of development. Student affairs professionals expressed concern over students' the lack of ownership for academic and personal outcomes, a sense of entitlement, and their minimal investment into their education. In many ways, the very aspects of students' lives where student affairs are expected to play a significant role actually became impediments to accomplishing their work effectively. Mostly this seems to be the case because the time and ongoing contact that is required to work through those complex student need areas is unavailable due to high student volumes and other demands placed on the professionals' time. A female academic advisor discussed how she felt about the lack of direction in some of the students she has contact with on campus.

PS: There are so many students that really have no, even a fuzzy notion of why they're in college other than the fact that they are here. They don't really have any goals and they don't have motivation to really do the work or what they need to do to figure out the pieces of the major or a career or anything. And they are really

difficult to work with, students that are not motivated. They want you to tell them what they need to take, and you tell them well you're done with geneds (general education requirements) so I have no idea what they need to take but they haven't done any research and they're really not interested in doing their research they just want an answer.

While the participants in this study spoke about their work in terms of how they focused on having a positive exchange or interaction with students at the time they were often concerned with the number of issues that students presented to them in their meetings. Many participants expressed frustration and resentment with students who were just not prepared or interested in assimilating to the norms of college behavior. Here we get an example of how at least some undergraduate students are not interested in what student affairs professionals are offering; the engagement level is not mutual or reciprocal. A striking element of the interviews was the intense emotion embedded within many of the participant's responses in terms of their feelings about students. As a result student affairs professionals often felt helpless in their ability to assist and support students whose interests, needs, and abilities were not aligned with the expectations of the institution. A female advisor talks about her perceptions of her advisees.

LA: I just think there are different levels of, students are just different. I mean there are some students very plugged in to their education, are just really committed to being successful and want to follow up with advising to make sure that they are taking the right courses they're just really on top of things. And then

there are students that aren't as much as engaged and who might not ever come and because they don't have to and it's just something we suggest.

INTERVIEWER: THE COMMITTED GROUP VERSUS THE NOT SO COMMITTED GROUP WHAT DOES THAT LOOK LIKE TO YOU IN YOUR WORK. IS THAT A 50-50 SPLIT?

LA: well (pause laughing). Good question yeah I guess it's probably 50-50. The optimistic part of me wants to say it's more than that are really engaged and committed and I guess I shouldn't label them as committed or not committed because that's not fair of me to do. I shouldn't have made such a leap with my words but I guess... (pause).... It feels like there are a lot of students who are in not maybe as actively engaged in their education as I would hope (politically delicate here) but I don't think it's the majority.

Here we can see a strong illustration of how the belief system of student affairs with its emphasis on the individuals' growth is in direct opposition to the reality that students bring to the encounters. In many ways the perspective shared by the participant above echoes the feeling of some faculty who say there are two groups of students; the good ones who are interested in learning and the poor ones who do not have the skills or motivation to learn. As a result, faculty and student affairs professionals focus their efforts on those that are engaged and those that need intensive academic, emotional, or psychological remediation are marginalized by necessity. Neither group of professionals feels good about that marginalization of unprepared students but the organizational environment and its accompanying structures facilitate a kind of survival of the fittest rationale.

Overall, first two themes identified in this study had participants having encounters with students and striving to make connections and not the intensive relationships referenced in the student affairs literature. The high volume of students these professionals are expected to impact coupled with the diverse range of student motivations, skills, and levels of interest seems to create an overwhelming task and results in a decidedly deficit oriented perspective in terms of student characteristics. If the ultimate goal is to go beyond connecting with students and develop an ongoing collaborative relationship as suggested by the literature, student affairs professionals face many impediments in their work. The next dynamic impacting the student affairs professional and their practice is created by the structures and priorities of the institutional context within which they operate. The institutional level factors result in a pace and intensity of work that is out of control and results in frustration with policies and procedures as they strive to deliver services to students that incorporates some elements of traditional student affairs values.

OUT OF CONTROL WORK ROUTINES

Student affairs professionals are charged with playing a critical role in the complex puzzle of student development in college. Most of the participants in this study acknowledged their role in theory but the practical application of similar core values as part of their daily routine were not frequent. The work routines of student affairs professionals were described by participants as out of control and this made the core values of their profession, building relationships, nearly impossible to achieve with any consistency. It could also be suggested the core values guiding student affairs practice

are evolving into a new set of principles as the profession adjusts to changing institutional contexts. Multiple work responsibilities that change frequently and need to be juggled simultaneously were dictated by institutional priorities, structures of the campus environment, and policies of their individual units. As a result, student affairs professionals expressed varying levels of commitment to the traditional core values and principles of the profession. High numbers of students and limited opportunities to develop lasting relationships combined with institutional factors to make participants feel like they had little autonomy in a chaotic work environment. A male hall director speaks to his time commitment in a typical semester.

LO: The way my schedule has been at least this fall and this year is I have all these meetings during the day so I can't get any paperwork done during that time. So I have to stay in my office until seven or eight o'clock at night to get the paperwork done which, by that time, I'm so exhausted that going to a program with one of my resident assistants no longer seems like something that I can do because I wanna go home. And I feel bad because then my resident assistants are like oh I wish he would come to one of my programs and I really do want to come. Sometimes with all those things it can just drag on you, you can easily put in 60 or 70 hours a week I feel in this job if you wanted to. If you didn't set limits.

In the passage above we begin to get a sense of how many, often competing expectations are placed upon student affairs professionals. A hall director often faces many diverse priorities in a given day that include building maintenance, committee work, student

conduct, and administrative tasks. It is also important to remember that these professional positions managing residence halls are salaried positions that include a room allowance so any hours in excess of forty are not compensated.

A central principle and core value within the student affairs literature and ideology is the importance of developing the whole student, not just their intellectual capacity. Chickering and Reisser (1993) further defined this notion when they identified seven vectors of development that are ideally occurring throughout the college experience. Included among these vectors are elements of each individual that go beyond mere intellectual competence in academic content to such things as emotional, interpersonal, and moral abilities. The primary function of student affairs professionals if one looks to the literature and the publications of its professional associations is centered on this notion of building strong productive relationships with students so that development along several different continuums can occur. Practitioners are urged to work toward designing intentional learning environments specifically tailored to the unique needs of undergraduate students by considering a college's physical, intellectual, and social environment.

A major assumption within the field of student affairs is that cognitive, moral, and emotional development in college students can be prompted and achieved if student affairs practitioners consider the unique needs of the student within the context of the organizational environment of the campus. However, many participants spoke about the challenge of balancing the administrative aspects of their positions, campus level expectations, and the direct contact with students. Keeping up on making notes in

students' files, writing emails, and other related record keeping tasks are often the role that most professionals cited as having a lower priority.

INTERVIEWER: HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF YOUR POSITION? DO YOU PREFER SOME ROLES MORE THAN OTHERS?

BL: I guess prioritizing is important. I really do feel like my students and my staff or the people in front of me are most important. So if I need to let the voicemail pick up or if I need to fall behind on notes then that is going to happen. So my office and my notes slide but the interaction with the people is the most important.

Another participant alluded to the challenges of keeping up with the expectations of her position and as a result was fearful of forgetting to complete some role or function. This professional had similar things to say to the passage above in reference to what the biggest priority in her work and what was the biggest burden in terms of her responsibilities.

SS: Because then the paperwork doesn't get done and you feel that's waiting but you learn, you hope you don't drop anything. I need to treat them (students) all the same in so far as being fair. Giving my best at that time when a student comes in and they are with me for be it 10 minutes or a half-hour. I need to be there for them in that moment with them, not thinking about other things. Which is about focusing on what they need and meeting those needs whatever they are to the best of my ability.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE ABOUT YOUR WORK?

SS: Less paperwork yes I think so. Right now less travel but that goes away in the spring, I won't be doing as much travel. Less paperwork, more support for backup. To have an actual coworker for the pre law program who would see the big picture and be invested in it, that would really help me.

Another common work routine for student affairs professionals is committee work and spending time in a range of different meetings. The perspectives on these activities was divided with some looking forward to meetings as being productive and worthwhile where others saw them as a waste of their time.

INTERVIEWER: HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR WORK THAT DOES NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVE TIME WITH STUDENTS?

PC: I dislike those parts, for example on Thursdays we had a meeting from 8:30 to 10 and we had a meeting from 10:30 to 12. That is three hours out of my day. I don't enjoy the procedural aspects of the job the note taking..... I wish I could just talk to people and say here's my advice take it or leave it. The focus should be less on all of that planning, planning and review. We can review this, lets just meet with students let's get the appointments in, we have 4000 students.

In the passage about we hear this participant express a strong preference for service delivery to students and the fact that there are thousands of students awaiting his availability. We also hear him express displeasure for the record maintenance, planning, and program review aspects of the position in a way that suggests that his priority is to serve all the masses of students out there needing help.

The most commonly identified characteristics of Lipsky's (1980) street level bureaucrats were people saying that they had too many things to do, clients to serve and

not enough time or resources to adequately fulfill these daily expectations. This was found to be the case with participants in this study, as student affairs employees found it difficult to provide quality services to students within the existing constraints of their department's structure. Employees spoke about the challenges of having a specified set of work expectations to meet but having to adjust their daily schedule in order to accomplish all the required tasks.

LA: Obviously we like to have as much time available for students' appointments as possible but yet know that we all need time to just take care of administrative kinds of tasks. Like now that we have started teaching this class, we all have four hours a week that we can put into our schedule to devote to the class. We can use up to four hours a week and we can figure out where that goes within some guidelines, preferably early in the morning because that tends to be lower student traffic time.

What is interesting to note about this passage is that as suggested by Lipsky (1980), street level bureaucrats and likewise, student affairs professionals, often feel like they have little control over their work routine because their offices are structured to deal with a high volume of clients. This student affairs professional feels obligated to place her project and course planning time during a time of day when student traffic is lighter rather than at a time that works best for her as a professional. Of specific interest is that this employee has no objection to that departmental recommendation and sees it as reasonable. So not only is the department expectation that in addition to meeting

individually with students you will develop and teach a course but your time for grading course materials will occur when it will not interfere with service to students.

Overall, the general trend heard throughout the interviews was the fact that individual employees routinely felt overwhelmed by the amount of tasks they were charged to complete. For some it was the number of students they were expected to meet with in a given day and the amount of administrative priorities that needed attention. The ultimate outcome for the student affairs professional was the necessity cut corners and to prioritize their time very strategically. A female hall director references the amount of paperwork that is expected of her staff and her struggle to even read it prior to meetings.

JC: I have weekly reports that I expect from my staff. I have a weekly report that I turn into my supervisor and I have conduct paperwork that has to be filled out for each meeting that I have, so there is administrative work that needs to be done along with everything that I do, and notes need to be taken. I have noticed our department communicates a lot through e-mail so unfortunately I check e-mail, like 18 times a day and I am trying to manage my time a little bit differently or manage myself and my time a little differently by checking three times a day. I have failed this week however there have been really good times when I've done that.

Another employee mentioned her approach for navigating an out of control work routine by thinking primarily about the needs of the person in front of her and letting all the other tasks fall as they may. The interesting thing to note in this passage is the professional has

preferences for aspects of the role that they are unable to complete due to pressure to see students.

INTERVIEWER: HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE ASPECTS OF YOUR WORK THAT DO NOT INVOLVE STUDENTS DIRECTLY?

BL: I enjoy those aspects because I am very much detail oriented person and so it drives me crazy to have my desk look like this (gesturing to her space) which is why I have it all behind me. Have you noticed the front is clean? I have this immediate work in front of me but really I cut off the whole space behind me (laughing). Yet it drives me crazy but sometimes, some things have to slip, it's priorities so I think that the reason that I love my job as an advisor is my interaction with students. And some of the outside work is great and I enjoy it, but not as much as the basic interaction with students and helping them become successful here.

The reoccurring theme of being overwhelmed in an out of control work routines results from increasingly mounting work load and student to staff ratios that are impossible to manage. The challenges described above are well illustrated by this response from a hall director as he speaks about making tough decisions between equally compelling tasks.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECT OF YOUR WORK?

BS: Easily the most challenging, people talk about having to put out fires. For me the hardest thing is identifying what is a fire in what is not. We talked about people coming in here 20 times a day with something going on. So I've got right there on my desk I got a stack of letters that need to go out. They are

congratulations letters to the people throughout the building that did better than 3.0. That is something that central office does for us we write up a form letter and put in the individualized student name on it and all I have to do is sign them except for a little handwritten note on the bottom saying good job or something. I should have had those out a week ago but they've been sitting there because I have been diverting my attention from that pile to go deal with some maintenance need or the person at the desk is not sure how to answer somebody's question. Or my resident assistant swears they smelled marijuana so I run upstairs to see if I can smell it. So identifying what is a fire in what is not a fire and then prioritizing do I drop this stack of really valuable congratulations letters or do I keep going with that and maybe miss an opportunity to solve a problem before it begins or address a problem that is ongoing?

This participant is almost frantic about determining which of the multitude of tasks are most deserving of his attention. While signing the letters to students who are achieving good grades is important for cultivating an engaged student population in the residence, his time is pulled away to address clogged toilets or students violating behavioral guidelines.

The practical goals and interests of student affairs professionals are frequently forced to take a back seat to other priorities, connections, and influences from within the campus environment and external to it. This reality contributes to the chaotic and out of control feeling expressed by many participants. In the passage below we hear how the number of connections that exist within many student situations can potentially impact

decisions and how these connections are another aspect of their work routine that is beyond their control.

ST: Not that there aren't thorny issues out there and as you know there is the basic issue and then you throw in well it's this department or that department and then you throw in it's this faculty or that faculty member. Well that one is connected to this one and the provost said this, the president winked (laughing). Oh did you know about the donor thing? And you just sit there and all these connections all come into play. But also a lot of times we just go get rid of the connections and say what are we dealing with here, what's our standard operating procedure?

Even though this participant is able to understand the best way to proceed is to eliminate all the campus connections it is clear his practice is affected by the fact that they exist. The effort and agency exerting professional autonomy in situations like this is not something all participants felt comfortable doing. As a result, the work routine for student affairs professionals is chaotic.

Similarly, other participants also faced work expectations and routines that were chaotic, overwhelming, and ambiguous in terms of what goals or outcomes were obtainable. Often student affairs professionals were placed in interactions with students that had little opportunity for a positive conclusion because factors outside of their control dictated how the exchange unfolded. Advisors working in a college for undecided students were expected to serve all students regardless of where they are officially classified within the university structure. Students who are uncertain in terms of major field of study are often blocked from taking certain classes within academic

departments because these departments have been forced to take a restrictive posture on seats due to resource constraints. The outcomes of these restrictive environments directly impacts student affairs professionals as they work with transfer students who are faced with narrow options in course selection. Here we can hear how the situation plays out between student and a female academic advisor.

PS: We've had transfer students that we've admitted undecided and they come in and they're sort of interested in something and I have to say you can't take the classes because you're not in the major and you're done with your general education and there's nothing you can do. Or there are literally no classes out there and they're like well you admitted me so why would you admit me if there are no classes? And I can't really tell them well it's because you had a check in your hot little hand or cash or financial aid and that's why we admitted you because we wanted the money. But it really is difficult when students are here and they have nothing left to take they're just sitting there taking stuff.....

A similar sentiment is expressed by a research assistant within the Campus Life's office as she spoke about the various projects she is working on, the role of her colleagues within the office, and her feelings about the quality of her analyses. Once again, we hear professionals expressing an overwhelming work routine that makes their professional role difficult to achieve.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT WOULD YOU CONSIDER THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF YOUR WORK?

FS: Generally that there is a lot of work and very few resources, if you look at any one of the projects, it's a five-year study, the research team is four people. Its

huge we created this very exciting project and then you put four staff on it?

You've got three or four people working on it and each person has about 10 hours a week to work on it, then it's a little overwhelming. It's not overwhelming, you are rushing through things your time, your coding is rushed, your analysis is rushed. A byproduct of that is maybe you are not getting your quality. One of the things that you need to look at when you're developing projects is what takes thirty hours to do, not the opposite. It's a disconnection.

Other times elements of the campus culture and student characteristics can lead professionals working in student affairs to feeling out of control in their work and with little ability to influence change or determine how they spend time during their workday. The passage below illustrates how an upper level administrator in the Campus Life office can have his entire work routine impacted by one concerned parent and student.

ST: The student and parents complained to the vice president so what that means now is I have to write a brief for the vice president. I have to meet with the vice president. They complained to my vice president that I was indifferent to them and uncaring. They said that I didn't wanna listen to their story and I thought, I was being nice, instead of having you waste your time going through all the processes that are going to amount to nothing when it comes to the end I thought I'd save them the trouble. It can be aggravating because you know, you gotta go meet with your boss, meet with the vice president then you have to brief the president's staff, yes it's like there goes the week and in the meantime you are trying to deal with other issues that really are pressing.

In summary, the responses of student affairs professionals suggest that their work routine is often out of their control in terms of the volume of work, multiple competing demands, and the inability to determine what tasks they pursue in a given day. In general the unpredictable and chaotic nature of the work of student affairs professionals leads to feelings of being overwhelmed and impeded in their ability impact students. Another theme that surfaced and is discussed in the next is the frustration that professionals express regarding the decisions, priorities, and policies of their institution and how those factors affect their work.

FRUSTRATION WITH INSTITUTIONAL POLICY AND PRACTICE

Many participants in this study directed comments about their work toward the volume of encounters, the characteristics of the students, and how they often felt like they were navigating a work environment that was out of control. The next theme that was frequently cited in the interview responses was the participants' frustration with their campus environment and institutional policies. It's not surprising that many spoke about the bureaucracy of working on a large campus and how difficult that made their work in several respects. According to the perceptions of many participants, decisions made at the upper levels of university administration did not fully consider the impact on the street level bureaucrat, or in this case the student affairs professionals charged with carrying out specific functions and enforcing policy with individual students.

Student affairs professionals are often in the position of enforcing institutional or departmental policies as they interact and have encounters with students. They are the front lines employees that explain and clarify the policies and then enforce any violations

of the policy. This role often leads to conflicts in terms of how much of their input is operationalized into a formal policy or whether the input is even considered. It also creates conflict when professionals are charged with enforcing a policy while at the same time expected to build a productive relationships with students, it's almost as if the role requires individuals to be good cops and bad cops simultaneously. Below a female hall director talks about the nuances and nebulous nature of enforcing the zero tolerance policy related to marijuana in the residence hall buildings.

JC: It depends on *where* they smoked marijuana if it was in the building or outside of the building. If they have it on them or if they have evidence of it on them, I don't even know all the ins and outs of it because I have to refer to my cheat sheet. It's not something that is final and still evolving and changing but that is one thing where I had nothing to do with that change and it was presented to us so I'm still adjusting to that.

Another participant mentioned a similar challenge when it came to her ability to assume a more influential role in impacting entrenched student behaviors that tend to perpetuate themselves within residence halls. Participants are interested in utilizing their professional expertise to develop policy and contribute their experiences to a policy that is enforceable and educationally relevant. In this passage, we have a hall director that is charged with managing her particular building, addressing conduct violations, supervising her staff of resident assistants, and supporting her student leaders but has little control over implementing her professional expertise to benefit students.

LW: I would like to have more control over how students living on campus are programmed. Put students with common interests together in various wings of the building to deal with the culture of a hall that is known as a party dorm. More creativity in how we try to work with students in residence halls.

The student affairs professionals who participated in this study face similar roadblocks in terms of having little input into the policies they enforce and are expected to adhere to these policies by their supervisors. The frustration and potential conflict results as their own professional feelings or judgments about a situation or process are overlooked by the institutional and organizational structure leaving them helpless to practice their craft in ways that believe to be in the best interest of the students. A male advisor speaks about his feelings regarding a policy for undecided students.

PC: It's one thing to say that if you block a student at 55 units that's going to force them to declare a major, well how do we know that works? Let's track that..... rather than offering a one credit course between 40 and 55 units that they get a grade in that guides them through these personality tests gives them some experience on occupations they don't know about. Where do they get the education? It's a learning process not a hammer process where you're undecided @ 55units. If you haven't acquired the knowledge for whatever reason you can blame them or you can blame us.

The advisor in the passage above is describing his feelings about the policy of blocking a student's registration for future terms if they have earned 55 units and are listed as undeclared in their major. He strongly believes that instead of pursuing this somewhat

punitive process that the institution should offer more resources to these students. In this case, he would like to see more students having opportunities to enroll in a career and major exploration class which offers resources for helping students identify and declare a major.

PC: I find that amazing it's like an institutional conflict to say you can come in here be exploratory and undecided but then not to put the resources into that group. The best example is we offer six sections of major exploration which seats 120 students out of 4000. That's a Band-Aid on a mortal wound so you've got 120 students.....

In the passage below we hear from a professional who feels like the institution needs to consider the characteristics of the students who are coming to campus as they develop policies. The implied suggestion here indicates that this hall director sees students coming to campus with histories of alcohol and drug use. As a result of their previous experiences in high school while living at home there are many students who are surprised and angry when they get cited for these violations in their residence hall. This particular situation once again refers to the complexities of the zero tolerance policy in the residence halls and the challenges faced by professionals enforcing this policy. The policy basically says if you are found in violation one time you are evicted from the residence hall after you are given your due process hearing.

LO: We also have to think of the setting that we are in and the students that we are dealing with here at the institution. I think those are important factors in the way that we develop our policy so even if, as I tell students about the policy, they

are like, well the policy shouldn't be this and their parents will tell me that too and I'll say, I know I can understand where you're coming from and why you might think that however that is the policy and that is what you signed into. It's an opportunity for them to understand even if I disagree with something, sometimes those are the consequences.

Overall, participants frequently mentioned their frustration with the inflexibility of institutional and department policies and would have liked the freedom to interpret the policies within the context of the particular situation. Essentially, they are expressing the desire to use their professional judgment and discretion but this is not acceptable practice within their institution. More often than not they prefer to use their professional judgment in not only having input into policies but also in how they were enforced with individual student situations. This theme related to frustrating institutional policies, priorities and campus decision making was prevalent in the responses of mostly all the participants. From the perspective of the participants successful outcomes with students were often impeded by multiple factors both within and outside of the institutional setting. Territoriality, specialization, and functional silos existing among their colleagues were consistently spoken about as an annoying element of their work experiences and routines.

Many of these institutional level impediments result from complex and shifting institutional goals and their impact on professional networks within faculty, administrators, and appointed staff. Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) have suggested that more institutions are moving toward an academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime.

As market-like tendencies to commercialize information and knowledge into a commodity to be sold move through academia, these activities have become a frequent point of contention as these professionals find ways to coexist on campuses. As traditional professional boundaries expand, shift and transform within the context of academic capitalism an *us versus them* mentality is created between those who believe in and value the public good approach to education and those making the larger policy decisions that align more with a bottom line or managerial approach. Lastly, broader political and economical factors operating at the societal level have made the management of the higher education enterprise more complex as these factors intrude and to a greater extent influence the tendencies and priorities of many institutions.

Some professionals that I spoke to within student affairs were more cognizant than others of the influence of the campus and institutional environment and the affect it had on their work with students. Most frequently heard statements had to do with the bureaucracy of a large campus and the resulting territoriality of their fellow colleagues and how this dynamic made their work outcomes more difficult to achieve. One male student service specialist had this to say about the campus.

MS: The biggest obstacle I run into, the most challenging thing I think you run into is territoriality and especially in the business processes. That has not changed. That's my piece of the pie, that's my box and there is no discussion of giving that up or looking at how we can work collaboratively to make that better. There is some, but it's still very much, well I own that data or no that's ours, or oh no you can't do that.

Similarly a male participant in the Campus Life office mentioned a similar frustration regarding territoriality of a process after he found sending an email to all students on campus after 9/11 was not something that was simple to accomplish.

CB: I would change the number of groups that you have to go through around here to accomplish certain things, most things actually. If you wanna do something there are so many people, there are so many entities around here that have their finger in something or have responsibility for this, that or the other thing. It's just it makes it hard to get stuff done it really, really does.

Understandably since most large organizations are managed from a bureaucratic paradigm there is an implicit assumption that specialization and hierarchy is a prerequisite for the operation to accomplish its goals in a somewhat efficient manner. However this assumption has come under scrutiny for quite some time as management scholars and others have debated the functionality of the structures and processes of large organizations. New paradigms for thinking about organizations and the flow of work are distributed throughout the literature within management, public policy, and education. Total quality management (TQM) and other revisionist models including Continuous Organizational Renewal (CORE) have adapted hierarchical frameworks to include more consensus building among activities and power sharing among employees. These ideas were borrowed from the automobile industry in Japan and applied to educational organizations with minimal success (Birnbaum, 2000). In fact, these management fads as labeled by Birnbaum, have become so widespread in education that many long standing members of this particular institution now jokingly refer to being "CORED" during the

campus organizational improvement discussions occurring during the late nineteen eighties.

The overriding impression from the participants was that a lot of talking and discussion occurred absent of any real change. Below we hear specific mention of how changing priorities on campus are a part of the experience and how this professional feels about it in terms of her own work experiences.

CP: You now I've been here a long time, I've been here 18 years and I've seen us cycle through a lot of stuff and there is kind of an almost a faddishness about what is a central issue. And it circles around, right now its retention. Before it was diversity, do you remember? Not too long ago it was diversity, well what happened to that! Did we solve that no, we're on to something else. So it just sort of cycles through and I think we all kind of follow along and we all build programs that deal with diversity or retention or whatever. I think we do that all over the campus constantly, and partly because dollars are dangled and we're all sort of leaping for it trying to get the money so I'll build this and talk about it in terms of retention and maybe we'll get a piece of that retention money.

The passage above illustrates that this professional perceives the changing central issues or priorities of the campus as being less than transformative in terms of what actually happens within the institution. However her approach to practice or how she works has become adapted over the years in order to become more aligned with the resources attached to the central issue of campus.

The frustrations expressed by the participants in terms of institutional level priorities and tendencies are understandable from the perspective that they are another aspect of their work routine leads them to feel overworked, out of control, and subjected to challenging transitory encounters with students. However, the actions and decisions of the institution are not entirely sinister and can be well explained by looking to several concepts and larger theories that inform this research. Institutional theory is one subset of organizational theory and explains a lot about how higher education institutions make decisions and present themselves to their peers.

Hackman's (1985) notion of centrality explains how political and economic factors operating both within and outside of an institution's organizational field leads to some units having advantages over others. The primary premise in Hackman's theory is that academic or administrative units that appear to be more central to the mission and goals of their institution are more likely to benefit from increased access to resources. For example, units in the sciences and other technical specialties that produce knowledge and ideas that are closer to the market are predisposed to accumulate and attract resources because their outcomes have commercial potential. Academic disciplines in computer science, biotechnology, and science can create knowledge or advances where there is a likely opportunity for a commercial application to an external market.

Student affairs as a grouping of units and services are not clearly aligned with a market that holds much power or influence either internally or externally to the university. As such, student affairs departments are often under funded as compared to other areas, subjected to regular budget cuts, and frequently expected to justify their

continued existence in tight fiscal climates. However as the priorities and goals being pursued on campuses change over time as a result of competition and prestige, student affairs units are given new opportunities to align with the institutional agenda, to become more central to the mission, and to acquire new resources. Students themselves have historically been valued for their tuition dollars and not viewed as a constituent group that holds much influence. However the rise in campus initiatives that value and support retention create incentives for all the student affairs departments that serve the students and enable their work to become more central to institutional mission. Here is what one participant shared in terms of her perceptions of some of the initiatives being pursued within her work that aligned with the retention agenda on the campus.

PS: It's really because we will become another one of the largest public research-based institutions that is concerned about retention so we spend a couple hundred thousand or whatever the heck they paid those people to show how terribly important retention is to us, so it looks good on paper. And we have these University wide commissions and committees and everybody in the dog and pony show to work on retention, we have all this other stuff going on. Now whether or not any of it actually works or is more effective or a good use of peoples' time is not really a concern. But the fact is that we have it so it looks good.

The passage above speaks directly to the literature in institutional theory where colleges and universities are pursuing agendas more because how they look than whether they actually make a difference. Retention and diversity workgroups, strategic plans built upon increasing access to higher education, and a myriad of campus committees serve to

create a buzz about changes or improvements. However, according to participants in this study, these actions are more valuable because they signal to outside networks in the community or nationally, that our campus is making genuine efforts to improve.

This topic of retention brought emotional responses from participants as the current campus initiative focused a lot of time, attention, and resources upon the retention of students. Committees and workgroups were formed, positions were created within academic colleges and administrative units, and several hundred thousand dollars were spent on outside consultants, all with the goal of increasing student retention. Although many understood the importance of retention and the related initiatives many were less than optimistic that they would actually create change.

CP: I find that there's a lot sort of hypocrisy on this campus which bothers me like...like the whole admissions stuff for example we have certain criteria where we say the university will only accept students who are ready to do xyz..... we admit all these people, it think at least a third of them who end up taking developmental math at our local junior college because they don't meet that math requirement and although we admitted those students we won't offer the class that they need here on this campus because we say that they need to be at a different level of math but yet we're admitting them. We're admitting them we're not offering the class that they need, we're telling them that their wrong that they shouldn't really be here on some level, the message I think is that they shouldn't be here but we're admitting them and we're admitting them because of the money. That pisses me off I don't like that I think that is really hypocritical. I

think that's a disservice it gives a terrible message to those students and then we get mad at them when they leave (laughing) and we wonder why we don't retain them. Its like you know, if you admit students at a certain level that aren't ready for that level you know if you're saying they have to be here (gesturing a level or bar) in order to be admitted but we admit them when their not there and then we wonder why our retention on is not good. This is not brain surgery you don't need to bring in a consultant for this I could tell you this and I'm not you know that incredibly clever. So that kind of thing. There's lots of those things all over campus.

Clearly there are many reasons why an institution would admit students who lack the skills to be successful but one of the main reasons is because the enrollment management division knows that in order to have a healthy bottom line that a certain number of students must be admitted and paying tuition. This is a good illustration of academic capitalist tendencies and how they influence institutional behavior in terms of student admission offers. These behaviors directly affected the work experiences of student affairs professionals within the academy.

Leslie and Slaughter's academic capitalism (1997) describes the market-like behaviors that have become more common for public institutions of higher education where a profit driven culture leads to the aggressive pursues external resources. The further development of the concept by Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) suggested that the behaviors of the academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime now co-exist with the public good and social welfare model that values building human capital. Student affairs

units serve a market that is just beginning to be recognized as a potential source of broader, more diverse resources for the institution. Historically, students were not considered as a commodity that could be tapped outside of the tuition revenue and fees they generated. However, as suggested by Slaughter and Rhoades (2004), students are now beginning to be seen in a much different light as another source of revenue and their role is being redefined as not only a consumer of educational services but also a source of an untapped market. Students have become both an input and product of the higher education system. .

Keeping up with and competing with your peer institutions is a key element within academic capitalism and elements of the behaviors have been theorized by DiMaggio & Powell (1983) and labeled as institutional isomorphism. The concept suggests that organizations place priority upon their external legitimacy among peers within their organizational “field” over and above the actual internal coordination of behaviors. So in the case of the retention initiatives occurring on this particular campus we can hear evidence of the fact that even employees charged with carrying out the initiatives understand that their activities have potentially more symbolic value externally to their peers than internal measurable outcomes for students.

Higher education organizations as a whole, individual units and departments are more routinely seeking tangible resources externally through partnerships, collaborations, and technology transfer since these values are central to many institutions’ mission and are funding from states is continuing to decline. Hackman (1985) also suggested that there are latent benefits for departments pursuing goals aligned with their institution’s

mission. Not only is there potential for the intellectual products developed to hold value for greater society and become available for purchase but many institutions acknowledges the potential value in the public market by providing additional resources to departments who pursue these activities. According to Hackman (1985), Slaughter (1998), and other scholars centrality to institutional mission creates another level of internal stratification among academic departments and faculty that privileges those who have ascribed advantages over those on the margins.

DiMaggio and Powell's institutional isomorphism (1983) suggests that organizations are inclined to keep up with their peers within their organizational field by mimicking the same behaviors and initiatives being pursued on other campuses. The factors which drive these copycat behaviors result from coercive, normative, or mimetic influences that provide often intangible incentives for institutions to appear committed to certain characteristics. A good example of mimetic influences is the myth of uniqueness in a liberal arts institution, where many institutions both large and small are trying to emulate the values of the liberal arts environment. In a study of this institutional behavior it was found that although many of espoused values aligned with a liberal arts focus, in reality the programs and degrees aligned closely with traditional professional paths to the applied field of business (Delucchi, 1997).

As a result of the competition that exists among higher education organizations, campus initiatives based upon academic capitalist tendencies become replicated throughout the organizational field. These activities offer student affairs units a new opportunity to align themselves to central organizational goals in hopes of receiving a

new or bigger slice of the resource pie. Despite the rise of these opportunities it is clear from many participant comments that linear processes and hierarchical thinking still dominate the landscape and greatly impede their professional practice. The work environment creates frustration and helplessness among student affairs professionals.

MW: There is no time to improve, the wheel it just spins around here. The problem with that is you've got so many students that you're seeing well it's status quo, well status quo ain't good enough. And part of that is that that's the culture here at this particular university. Well you just do things just to get them done and off your to-do list. But getting to your to-do list is important but making sure its quality work is equally as important. And I don't think that's always seen.....

Student affairs professionals feel disconnected from their work process and frustrated because macro level forces of a balanced budget bring thousands of students to campus with needs that surpass their availability and then they have to navigate institutional impediments as they deliver services. Working with such large numbers of diverse students throughout their daily routines is certainly challenging. However, the institutional layer of politics and associated bureaucracy poses even more challenges to developing the type of connection needed to impact students in a more integrated and holistic manner. Here one participant speaks about his perspective on the campus, the activities of his colleagues, and how funding patterns results in outcomes for individual students that are not sufficient.

CB: So obviously were not doing something, there's problems, our low retention to graduation rate of 55%, there are people working on that, we're all busy putting

pencil to paper and making policy. Retention plans and you know and one of the strategies is of course well let's raise the admissions standards which you know, so now we will have people that are better prepared, maybe. Very possibly still not engaged because there's not a lot places to be engaged. The way student activities and all the involvement stuff works here it's all auxiliary there is no student fee there is no state support it's all from the bookstore. The union profits from fees that students pay to fraternities or sororities all that stuff is really kind of self-supporting. So we piece it all together and we do the best we can but there are students who are missing that, who need those skills and who aren't getting it and I guess they'll get it when they go into the workplace.

The above passage illustrates how student affairs professionals feel about the tendencies of their institutional and how the priorities being pursued often create impediments to their practice. The outcome for individual students is often less than ideal and leaves professionals hoping somewhat idealistically that they will learn the requisite skills when and if they get their first job.

Competitive Silos and Resource Allocation Patterns

Another increasingly challenging situation that impacts the practice of student affairs professionals is the more restrictive and competitive posture that academic colleges and departments are taking in terms of students. Undergraduate students face a complex maze of requirements, processes, and expectations in order to gain entry into academic majors and colleges and even into particular required courses. This type of posture can be partially explained on funding constraints and patterns of resource

allocation that exist at this university and many others around the country. Typically we hear academic deans speak of not having enough faculty to teach the anticipated number of seats being offered in their courses or enough student affairs professionals to serve potential students. However, as suggested by Slaughter and Rhoades (2004), declining resources and intense fiscal crises do not cause academic capitalist tendencies but rather legitimate those behaviors involved in chasing new markets that have the potential for a better rate of return.

Managing the admission and enrollment of students into particular majors has now become a critical process for individual colleges as a way to control costs and minimize expenditures. The overarching goal is to strategically recruit, admit, and financially support students who have the best chance of graduation so that retention and completion rates improve and make the college more prestigious among their peers. Here is another unintended consequence of the impact of published college rankings and another form of competition related to academic capitalism within the academy. The associated prestige with student graduation rates and academic performance provides incentives for academic departments and colleges to avoid foregone effort on student unlikely to succeed in their discipline.

Academic colleges and departments have bought in to the competitive model to the point where very few will take chances on a student who in their opinion is unlikely to succeed. The time, effort, and resources required to developmentally coach and support a student who does not appear on paper to be competitive within their cohort will receive that investment. Again we find a culture based on efficiency rather than one

based upon developing human potential. For colleges and departments, it's a real problem when dwindling public resources leaves them having fewer faculty available to teach fewer courses but the impact on the work of student affairs professional is even more dramatic. Advisors are forced to direct students to the appropriate department for information that is only delivered during certain times of the year and services are clearly being rationed.

MB: The idea now that more and more departments have circled the wagons.

They're not to let anybody even take the introductory courses in their college.

The only way that you can do that is if you attend a general information session and then maybe you attend a session with an academic adviser. They only allow you to do that three weeks out of the semester.

As suggested by Lipsky's (1980), bureaucratic institutions are forced to ration services as a result of high demand from the public and limited resources. In the above passage, departments are acting as gate keepers and have set up an intricate process to gain entry to the department; unfortunately for students it is only available for a short period of time. Another good example of this phenomenon within this particular campus is the relationship and agreement that exists between a professional college and the college for undecided students. Due to the elite status and prestige of the professional college, many students enter the university with the goal of graduating from this college. However, upon admission to this university they are granted "Pre" admission status to the professional college which allows the students into a few of the introductory required courses and access to limited support services. The impact this posture has on both

students and professionals working with students is difficult because it creates awkward discussions when things do not go as planned.

MB: The agreement we have with this college is, one semester a student is on probation, even their first semester, you're out. They transfer them over to us to deal with that. So I think from institutional perspective although you can see the value of raising your standards and wanting to get the best of the best, I think that it's really hard to make a real accurate selection as to who are truly truly truly the diamonds in the rough. Sometimes I think you're throwing out a lot of really really precious stones by discarding those students. They give up on them to quickly.

From the institutional and individual college perspective, competition for the best students and the resources that flow from their success are critical in the current academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime. In many ways academic departments are competing not explicitly for revenues but for students who will be a minimal drain on their limited financial resources. Because the costs associated with educating and supporting students are mounting, colleges and departments are becoming more restrictive as a way to minimize expending resources on students who will not succeed. Competition within the academic capitalist regime expands beyond typical economic markets to, in this case, include the prestige market associated with students who graduate with minimal support and then improve the rankings reported publicly. One can easily understand the goal of recruiting and admitting the students with the best chance of success, however from the student perspective and those professionals serving

students are being internally stratified according to their college affiliation and strictly on academic merit and skills.

The method of resource allocation on this particular campus fosters this type of restrictive posture in terms of students because individual colleges and departments are not awarded more resources if they admit more students. The dollars do not follow students but rather go into a central pool of resources to be distributed by central administration. Resources are not distributed to departments based upon where students enroll or in which disciplines they take courses. All resources are held centrally on this campus in a large pot of money and units are not given more funding if they admit more students or enroll more students in their classes. Responsibility Centered Management (RCM) is a budgeting approach where units keep any revenues they generate through student enrollment in their courses and majors and then use those dollars to pay for all their personnel and operational expenditures minus a small tax. This approach decentralizes power to individual units and could offer new incentives for departments in terms of student enrollment and delivering academic courses. RCM provides incentives and greater flexibility to meet changing priorities but on the downside encourages more competition between units and leads to the perpetuation of the silo mentality of units over the good of the whole (Barr, 2002).

Course availability is a major concern for most large campuses especially when resources are limited in any capacity. As with many public institutions in higher education, this organization has found its state support to be dwindling each year as funds are diverted to K-12 education, medicare, and corrections. As a result, one of the roles of

enrollment management is to ensure that just the right amount of seats in courses exist in order to meet the demand. Course availability is one of those areas that greatly frustrate professionals since they are the people who must respond to students when classes are not available. The goal of the institution is that seats are to be managed so that students have enough seats to enroll in while at the same time there are not high numbers of seats which are left unused. The notion yield management is applicable here with the institution allotting individual academic departments just enough money to offer classes for the student population with the understanding that they are to overbook student enrollment. The resulting political and public relations tango between professionals, students, institutional administrators, and the public at large is amusing to witness during meetings and media stories but it is another example of the how many student affairs professionals find themselves in a battle against their own institution.

PS: I mentioned in meetings several times to the Vice Provost for Instruction that Tier 2 classes were in short supply and he assured me that there were plenty of Tier 2 seats because when they do this census date report 21 days into the term that there are open seats. Well the 21st day of school, that's really nice there are open seats but as of today there are no Tier 2 two seats open for fall or for spring. So it doesn't do the student any good that they're open a month or three weeks into the semester. But it was something like no that's not an issue because this is how we look at it. Because they see things sort of the way they need to see them or want to see them it negates our reality which may not be their reality but they just kind of blow you off.

Here we get a sense of the bunker mentality that student affairs professionals seem to find themselves quite frequently within their work and organizational context. The student affairs professional is being pressed by their clients, the students, and receiving limited support from the institution they work within. As suggested by Lipsky (1980), street level bureaucrats are removed from the decisions that impact their work and often feel helpless and overwhelmed. As a result, they end up empathizing with the perspectives of their frustrated and demanding clients while doing their best to mediate institutional hypocrisy within which they operate every day. In many ways they are helpless in affecting change on behalf of their students but remain charged with providing services based on institutional mandates.

A related frustration coming from the institutional landscape that impacts and impedes the work of student affairs professionals is how information is used to tell a particular story. Often information coming from upper levels of the organizational hierarchy is known and accepted as biased. The comment below reflects the impact of formal administrative networks and silos of professionals working in isolation from their colleagues. In addition, how often information is used to create an intended perception on campus and has little or no relationship to the reality occurring each day.

ST: But anyway, so your information can be very, very biased. The vice president for enrollment management will talk about enrollment, this went up and that went up and I'm sure the academic advisers have something to say about that.....that was a very different experience for them because in essence what we were saying is yeah you can come here but you don't get classes (laughing hard).

But you know what the report is going to sound like, our enrollment is good. Yet what we do with those students is another story.

Once again this passage references limited seat availability and the high numbers of admitted students seeking classes. To one group of administrators, the high student numbers are a necessity to balance the budget but another group is managing the course availability and trying to keep costs down by over enrolling courses. However, to the student affairs professionals trying to find thousands of students relevant classes for their schedules this information being communicated at the upper levels is irrelevant and perpetuates an us versus them mentality filled with unpleasant work experiences. The unique nature and characteristics of the types of positions held by student affairs professionals is the next step in the analysis.

Unique Roles of Managerial Professionals

As mentioned previously, student affairs professionals fulfill multiple roles and functions within their positions and many are critical to their institution. Working directly with students is only one aspect of the position and for some student affairs professionals this variety in their role is a preferred arrangement. The typical routine for many of these individuals includes direct contact with students, delivering course content and workshops, developing programs, attending departmental, campus, and professional meetings, and a range of other administrative responsibilities.

A series of questions within the interview protocol attempted to gain a better understanding of how participants in these positions felt about their different roles being pursued in a routine day and how they made sense of the disparate responsibilities.

Rhoades (1996) coined the term managerial professionals, to describe this rapidly growing segment of the academic labor market that includes those working in student affairs. This group of professionals is responsible for numerous activities that are critical to their campuses but are also more likely to have their professional autonomy managed or restricted as a result of their unique professional status as neither faculty nor administrators.

Managerial professionals like those individuals working in student affairs were, until recently, considered as another form of administrative support to the central institutional mission of instruction, and as such a peripheral part of the institution. However, in today's competitive environment of higher education this group of professionals has become increasingly utilized, influential, and their roles have become diverse and critical (Rhoades & Sporn, 2002). Extended managerial control combined with limited scope of authority are two elements that typify managerial professionals in the academic capitalist paradigm. This dynamic appears to impact not only entry level student affairs professionals but also faculty and mid level administrators. Rhoades' (1996) definition of managerial professionals illustrates the experience described here by a female hall director in terms of the lack of connection to the conditions of the work.

JC: I feel like sometimes in my perspective it seems as though the decisions that have been made, have been made by individuals who don't understand the reality of what it is to be here in the building. I'm not saying I have all the answers and that I know, but I'm here 24 hours a day so I feel like I'm certainly qualified to give some perspective. I think there is a lot of friction at times.

Managerial professionals also express frustration when their work routine is seized by elements within the organizational culture of the campus environment and they are forced to respond according to institutional hierarchy or directives. For example, this occurs when something becomes a hot topic as a result of catching the attention of someone important on campus. Keep in mind this participant is technically a part of “central administration” but still feels like his work routine is high jacked by the priorities of others.

ST: But invariably when someone in central administration all of a sudden starts paying attention. Most likely it's some kind of fluky thing when they start paying attention to a certain area. Then all of a sudden you've got to spend more time because there are more needs. So everyone asks the same questions but since you meet with them at different times you have to answer the questions every time at each meeting and so on down the line.

The overall perspective of those working with students on a regular basis is that they are subjected to the demands and expectations of a wide range of constituents beyond the students themselves. Often their institution's policies, procedures, decisions, or culture itself present challenging obstacles that make their work overwhelming and outright frustrating. While the needs and volume of students are difficult to manage themselves, at times the posture of a campus colleague within another division could create an out of control work routine. Other times the parents of the students are expecting immediate action on something and putting pressure on professionals to fix problems that may or may not be within their realm of influence. Lastly, institutional

priorities and related behaviors of colleagues and supervisors create uncertain and awkward work situations for student affairs professionals. How does the professional doing student affairs work on a college campus make sense of the competing demands, time pressures and institutional agendas that impact their work? Ambiguous outcomes, potential conflicts, and tough decisions appear to be frequent in the space between the values of a service orientation to students and the efficiency press coming from institutional structures and competing priorities. How student affairs professionals cope, make meaning, and identify rewards within their work is the topic of the next section of the analysis.

COPING, MAKING MEANING, AND REWARDS

One of the many unique aspects of the work of student affairs professionals is the fact that many outcomes of their work with students and for students are often not tangible or measurable. Unlike an engineer who knows success once a bridge holds the weight required, student affairs professionals rarely get to experience the immediate and direct outcomes of their work efforts. Lipsky (1980) found that street level bureaucrats often spoke with uncertainty when it came to measuring the outcomes from the service they were providing or whether it made a difference to their clients. Likewise, several participants in this study mentioned the difficulty of knowing whether or not they made an impact on the student during the course of their conversations counseling or discussing issues with students.

LA: I try to just think that maybe I'm not seeing that they're getting something from this conversation but maybe they really are. They're just not really letting

me know that they have. Or maybe something down the line they'll remember something that I suggested or just tried. At least for me I feel like, well I tried my best to get a particular message across, from trying to show them their different options or explain the situation. If I at least feel like I made like my best effort and I sort of feel like well the student has to take some responsibility and make some decisions for him or herself. So that helps a little bit to least feel like I'm trying to do my part and the student has to meet me halfway.

The ambiguity that exists within the profession of student affairs often leads employees to find alternative ways of conceiving their role and making meaning from their work. Similar to how many classroom teachers approach their work, student affairs professionals justify their efforts on the job by speaking about making a difference for isolated students. Lortie (1975) illustrated this principle in his ethnographic study of the teaching profession through what he called the 'spectacular case'. The spectacular case rationale is the process by which a classroom teacher turns around the behavior, attitude or performance of an individual student through their individual and tireless efforts. There are many parallels to this rationale of focusing on individual success versus group outcomes as we listen to the words of this hall director.

BS: The most rewarding things are these little interactions that surprise me and surprise the residents. It's really easy to start thinking about these 225 folks as one thing. And to see it as I'm managing the residence hall and that's just a horrible way to think about it because there's not one person in this building who thinks of themselves only as part of that group. They are at a point in their life

where everything that is happening at that moment is the most important thing they've ever experienced. And they do not have a lifespan from which to draw on similar experiences so the first break up, my god my life is over. So being able to have any little impact on those kinds of folks and things that they're going through is really, really rewarding.

The practical approach of focusing on an individual student and striving to impact them by relating empathetically to what they are experiencing is an example of where the core values of student affairs remain in practice. Despite the high numbers of students, inadequate opportunities to build relationships and institutional policies that can impede their work this group of professionals' remains cognizant of the ideal form or best practice. The notion of expressing care and concern for students as a foundation for their work is something student affairs professionals mentioned frequently.

BS: Maybe the most useful of human abilities to be able to rationalize success versus failure. One of the things I have to remind myself and I'm constantly preaching to my resident assistants is success looks a lot of different ways. I don't think everything I say is really reaching them, hopefully something I said, a year from now something clicks. I've tried as best I could. Hopefully if he lives here again next year or goes to some other community and gets a similar experience or somebody reinforces similar kinds of things he gets closer to understanding or accepting or seeing it from our perspective. When you miss that opportunity as long as you tried the best you could, they're not always ready to hear. Because a

lot are in that dualistic place they are not ready for more than one perspective and trying on somebody else's shoes. We give it our best shot.

One of the primary coping techniques utilized by student affairs professionals is, as mentioned earlier, to plant a seed within the individual student when they are in front of you and hopefully it will germinate at a later time. So as the student receives information during encounters with campus professionals they hope it gets filed away somewhere and that the information may become more relevant or instructive at a later time. Despite the many factors that come into play within their work with undergraduates, student affairs professionals are committed and interested in helping students succeed even when they know it's a challenging task.

PS: Sometimes they're just trying to get out of your office. Are we done yet, you know I need to go to class. I think it's important that we point out the inconsistencies in their life and the things that don't quite make sense and the things that don't tie together. It's not pleasant sometimes but I think you have to do that. And even if they never complete higher education and hopefully and this is really sappy (laughing) hopefully the little pieces will stay with them.

Hopefully they will have learned some lessons that they can use in life whether or not that includes school. That doesn't sound quite as sappy. (Laughing)

The perception of the participant speaking in the passage above is realistic given the typical work routines this study has discovered. However, the participant is almost embarrassed to talk about the idea that students may take something of unknown value away from their isolated interaction and this is not the type of interaction that facilitates

students' developing. Chickering and Reisser (1993) spoke about ongoing relationships between students and professionals so the seven vectors of development could be prompted by intentional interactions between the individual student and their campus environment. The above participant is attempting to ask probing questions and personally challenge the student to confront the issues that limit success but unfortunately it can only be done within short windows of opportunity. However, you don't have to speak to this group of professionals for too long to hear repeated references to many of the core values of the student affairs profession.

PC: Obviously you'd like them to become lifelong learners. You would like them to realize that education is just part of the equation, it's a journey. And we are creating citizens we are creating moral, responsible people. They are here to graduate so that has to be controlling but in the bigger picture it's not a payday every two weeks in college, it's what kind of difference can you make with people to educate them? So it's almost like you are teaching discipline you are teaching these life skills and then hopefully they follow through but graduation is for me, they're here to get a degree and everything else is just gravy. They get a degree and learn how to be honest upright standing people they know how to be professionals then it makes it worthwhile.

While the core values of the profession of student affairs is within their awareness and something they are interested in fostering, participants also realize it's the ideal circumstance and they more routinely limit the scope of their role to ration services in the face of unlimited demand. The participant above mentions values espoused by the

profession in terms of an educated and morally responsible citizen but those outcomes are considered extras or gravy as he puts it. The ultimate goal for this academic advisor is to get his students to graduate, a very specialized outcome directly relevant to his role. Herein exists one of the ways that this group of professionals copes with their work environment.

Techniques for Coping

Lipsky (1980) suggested that one of the ways that street level bureaucrats cope and exert control over the existing constraints and expectations of their work is to structure their interactions and ration services to clients. By doing this they are able to protect and expend their limited commodity of time by working with clients that are most likely to benefit from services. In many ways, street level bureaucrats ration their services by attempting to work more regularly with what they see as 'preferred clients.'

Preferred clients are those individuals that respond well to service delivery by following the instructions provided and not questioning the organizational system or their place within it. These types of individuals are preferred clients and are granted that status because they add fulfillment or satisfaction to the work life of the street level bureaucrat by making their job easier, more enjoyable and less time consuming.

Similarly the responses of student affairs professionals suggest that they also prefer to work with students who have particular specialized needs or characteristics. Many participants were not willing to spend their very limited time with students who were not engaged or interested learning the academic environment. In fact, many

participants developed criteria that they judged students upon and made decisions about which ones were most preferred.

CP: I was telling someone over lunch today that I would love to work with just Ph.D. students for a while. I would love to, I love them, they're great. I also love working with fine arts students because my background is in fine arts and because it's such an enormously difficult arena, I love working with those students whether they're musicians or theater people or artists that's a group I'd really like to specialize in.

The above passage represents a participant's preferences for working with students who have unique needs and specialized interests because of the challenges it presents to her own practice and also offers the opportunity for more in depth level of contact. Another example of preferred students or clients can be illustrated by student affairs professionals finding pleasure and fulfillment in students who have explicit needs and defined agendas.

INTERVIEWER: DESCRIBE WHAT YOU CONSIDER THE IDEAL STUDENT INTERACTION?

SS: A student who comes in with, what I really like is when they come in with a list of questions they have written out. And several of them will do that, I'm telling you. We just check them right off and that's very helpful because I know they are getting what they need. I always tell them if you have a more questions you can e-mail me or come back. It's cute, some of them are kind of cute they'll say well I have some questions written down, fine let's do that we want to make sure you get your questions answered. Very prepared with their questions, know what they need to do, are willing to work with options.

Another technique that student affairs professionals utilize to make sense of the high demand for services coupled with the limited amount of repeated student contact is by limiting the scope of their practice and adjusting their expectations for success. It is too overwhelming and unrealistic for this group of professionals to approach their work with students with the goal of placing every student at the center of the educational process or being responsive to their development as whole students. In many respects, these employees have narrowed their range of impact by focusing on one aspect of the student's life as a college student. Not being sure whether they would even see the student for a second time necessitated a more singular and linear approach to the encounter. Repeatedly, I heard advisors, counselors, and other participants focus their efforts on one isolated function and general concern for the student.

TM: I help assist students in registration. I help assist students plan out their schedules from semester to semester and in some cases from year to year. And in some cases I try to get them to focus on what classes they are interested in versus what classes they are required to take. Because a lot of time students today look at, in particular here, being undecided it's just what do I need to do in order to declare? I just wanna get out of being undecided. Or they feel guilty that they don't necessarily have a path or a direction.

Here an advisor speaks about the very narrow and specialized focus of helping students with course selection and registration processes but also we hear explicit recognition that students have needs that are developmental and as a result practice can't be linear or prescriptive. An interesting phenomenon with student affairs professionals is the desire

and interest to make a broader, more lasting impact on the students they have contact with but at the same time they realize many factors impede that ability. Sometimes it is their own limitations as far how much time they can realistically invest into a particular student but other limitations stem from institutional structures, campus tendencies, and characteristics present in students. These complex variables make their ability to influence students in ways suggested within the student affairs literature a difficult challenge and as such they find techniques to cope with the realities of their work environment.

Residence hall staff focuses on community building behaviors and by citing students in violation of conduct codes. Academic advisors spend most of their time with students helping them understand degree requirements and selecting appropriate courses based on their plan of study. Career counselors stick to resume writing and interviewing skills. The Campus Life staff focuses their efforts on getting students through a disciplinary process or connected to an engagement opportunity that can be a resource for their personal well being. What we see in the profession of student affairs is very similar to how labor is organized in other labor markets where there is a high level of specialization, with each unit and individual within that unit having a very narrow area of responsibility. While functional silos and territoriality are frustrating to some they are also a welcome confinement when dealing with complex issues brought to them by students. When you are pressed for time, it's much easier to refer the students to another department who "owns" that responsibility rather than trying to resolve it yourself.

Making Sense of the Whole Student Approach

Evans and Reason (2001) compiled and identified thirteen recurring themes from each of the major position papers created over the last seventy years in student affairs. The first three themes that were identified focused on the manner in which students are viewed by the on campus professionals delivering service. The notion that the “whole” student must be considered in every educational endeavor was paramount. Specifically, the importance of recognizing affective as well as cognitive processes was a major theme and continues to be referenced in terms of developmental and learning outcomes needing to be holistic in nature. One participant spoke about her feelings of this notion of the whole student being at the center of the educational process.

PJ: I think we like to think that the student is at the center of the process but really the good of the whole is at the center of the process. So we can work with one student and we can really try to work with that person and help them to make better decisions and fit better with the community but really if their behavior is too detrimental to the community we're gonna need to move them.

Here in this passage we can hear the professional is aware of the professional ideology regarding development of the whole student but due to the realities of her responsibilities toward the community of students she is forced to make a choice. When pressed to make a decision between spending time on identifying a beneficial educational endeavor for the affective development of one student versus the safety and wellness of the community its clear the decision is one of doing what is best for the community. Partly, this decision is being made because of the wellness of the group is a priority but an also likely factor in

the decision is the time necessary to impact the individual student. When the time element is factored into the decision, the path of least resistance appears to be the most suitable action for the professional. For this particular employee, the choice that was in the best interest of the individual student's growth could not occur because her work practice is governed by values of efficiency based on a bureaucratic institutional culture versus the professional tenets of her occupational field. Another participant was able to construct meaning around the notion of the whole student approach espoused by the profession in this way.

LW: It doesn't frustrate me. I understand, and even though I might not be reaching the whole student I'm just a piece of that whole package and there are many other people who are part of the student's experience and I just really appreciate that one exchange. I try to say that there are other people doing what I'm doing so I understand it's not just me that's affecting the student. That doesn't frustrate me at all, the ones that are, are the ones I've tried and then don't respond.

Each participant in this study appeared to develop their own rationalization and ways to make meaning of their work experiences and the disconnection between the altruistic values of their position and the constraints existing within their institutional setting. An assistant director within the professional preparation office had this to say about the ideology of the student affairs profession.

CP: That whole orientation, I love that, I think that's great. It's very idealistic which is wonderful. I love that, I mean really I think student affairs in its purest form is fabulously idealistic and really great. It's about sort of supporting and

helping and teaching people how to be good human beings in a community environment, it's great.

Another participant was asked to reflect this concept of the whole student approach and their perceptions regarding the breadth of impact in their work with students. Included in the passage is a good illustration of how she makes meaning from her practice.

INTERVIEWER: DO YOU THINK YOU GET TO WORK WITH THE WHOLE STUDENT?

BL: Yes and no. I think that it's difficult because students are so complex and there's so much. I would be arrogant to say yes I greatly affect the whole student. It's just such a sliver of their experience my work with them here at this institution. Now I think with the student who lives in my residence hall, who is in my success course, and who I see on a consistent basis. I feel like I have a bigger slice of the pie to affect their experience and their development process here.

In this explanation we can hear professionals talk about how a connection and a more genuine ongoing relationship can develop almost arbitrarily or by chance through an institutional structure or policy that puts students and student affairs professionals into regular contact with each other. The more there are opportunities for this type of informal or structured contact, professionals' perceive their ability to impact the student to be much greater. Another hall director spoke about how with certain students, chance connections can mount up favorably to enable more prolonged, ongoing contact with students and this leads to improved outcomes in the eyes of the professional.

LW: I don't think I always work with the whole student, in that is something I

don't get to do. With one student, all these connections came about the first week he arrived on campus. They lived in the residence hall, they were in my class, so I've seen him in all those roles. He is also going through a coming-out process, so the circumstances of the way we have connected and the changes that he's going through, I feel like he's one of the students that I've really been able to impact. That chance doesn't happen all the time, hardly ever. Usually I have one moment with the student and it's over.

Within the course of her routine work practice this professional understands that connecting, let alone making a lasting impact on every student, is not something that happens frequently. Actually she states that making a more broad based, meaningful impact on students "is not something that I get to do" and she even goes on to say that with an individual student there was a whole series of connections that led to deeper opportunities for development. We can hear elements of Lortie's (1975) concept of the spectacular case approach as this participant finds meaning and value through impacting one student.

Similar to what we heard previously from hall directors and academic advisors the often random contact points can mount in terms of putting the student and the professional in more regular contact and as a result there is a better chance of building the type of relationship necessary for development of the whole student. Unfortunately for students and professionals alike, these chance circumstances are the exception rather than the norm.

Rationing Time with Students

All participants interviewed described their basic work practices as encompassing several discrete functions that all had to be accomplished within a normal week or day. Although a majority of the employees conceptualized their role as designed ideally to spend a majority of their time working directly with students they admitted in reality other responsibilities often pulled them away from that direct contact. Interestingly, although many of the participants spoke to the fact that they enjoyed working directly with students many found the other aspects of their position, whether it be committee work, administrative paperwork, or assessment of outcomes to be a welcome respite from student contact.

PJ: But sometimes I might prefer a meeting or my own kind of administrative time because I control that for the most part, where I think with students who knows what they're going to bring through the door. Sometimes working with students can be very challenging and you don't know what they're going to ask you or tell you or yell at you when they enter your office it's a little bit more surprising.

Understandably, student affairs professionals find ways to mediate the frequent overwhelming volume of work they experience by investing in activities that do not involve direct student contact. Several participants saw meetings or administrative tasks as critical to their satisfaction and a nice change of pace from direct student contact.

LO: So that's one of the other parts of the job that I do enjoy. I work with RA selection it's a pretty fun thing. It's really busy in February when we go through

the interviews and selections and things like that it's fun, I really enjoy the committee work because it's a change of pace from what I normally do.

Similarly another participant spoke favorably about his administrative work and actually would allow it to pile up as a way to even out some of his high student contact days.

INTERVIEWER: HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE ASPECTS OF YOUR POSITION THAT DO NOT INCLUDE DIRECT STUDENT CONTACT?

MW: I like the bureaucratic paperwork part its all right as long as it's not out of hand. I think ultimately yes if I didn't have support staff, I would be up to my eyeballs. But I like it. Also it gives me the point in my day when I can unwind a little bit. Depending upon how rigorous the work is sometimes the “to do” list can stack up and times like now I like letting that list stack up. I block off that time to get the “to do” list done and it's more like a (makes smooth gesture) day.

The core concept within the student affairs literature about crafting seamless learning environments for students by working on an ongoing basis over time is just not the reality of how work unfolds for student affairs professionals on a large campus. Student affairs professionals have hundreds and sometimes thousands of students that they serve and with this type of expectation it is nearly impossible to have the amount contact needed to complete the required tasks at hand, let alone nurturing the development of the whole student.

The Importance of Psychic Rewards

The initial theme of this analysis had student affairs professionals attempting to connect with students through discrete encounters that more closely resembled fast-food transactions rather than ongoing relationships. How student affairs professionals identify

rewards within this existing work routine is similar to some findings within the literature on teacher satisfaction. A summary of research on teacher satisfaction completed by Ellis (1984) distinguishes between the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards of the teaching profession. Tangible rewards such as salary and job security were found to be less important to teachers' motivation and job satisfaction than intrinsic rewards that revolved around a sense of accomplishment with students. The accomplishments which gave teachers the most pride in their work were not always directly related to outcomes within the academic curriculum and not always cognitive or intellectual in nature. When classroom teachers were asked what they liked most about their job nine out of ten teachers identified intrinsic rewards like seeing a student develop and making a difference in their life (Ellis, 1984).

The student affairs profession is in many ways similar to the teaching profession in terms of both structural and cultural characteristics. Both groups of professionals are expected to deliver specific information to students with an existing organizational structure of a school or college while each also has procedural norms of service. Student affairs professionals and teaching professionals hold similar values in terms of a strong service orientation with their students.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT GOALS ARE YOU TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH IN YOUR WORK WITH STUDENTS?

LB: I think doing work that has value, doing work that is of service, doing work that helps others. Being kind and considerate to co-workers as well as staff and others, I think we adhere to the golden rule. Definitely not driven by power and money. The meaning behind the work and I have to believe in the cause and I

have to be, it is very much a service orientation. I just have to make a difference, I have to see that I'm making a difference.

The above passage speaks directly to the present focused orientation of the student affairs occupation toward the types of rewards that they can achieve in the moment rather than at a future point in time. The goal and intention of making a difference in a student's life has been labeled as a psychic reward as opposed to an extrinsic reward like salary, prestige, or power. Lortie (1975) found that both structural and cultural aspect of the teaching profession influence teachers to emphasize the psychic rewards for their work. In much the same way, student affairs professionals value and work toward the goal of making a difference with individual students because the cultural roots of the profession have long been connected to a strong service commitment.

TM: Ultimately I want them to make the best decision that suits their personality. So my goal is to work with them to make the decision that they are comfortable with whether it's to stay in school, whether it's to take a math class, whatever decision that's basically what we're trying to accomplish. To make the best decision for that student to feel comfortable, so they don't walk out second-guessing or a walk out feeling intimidated or uncomfortable by what we just decided and talked about. Because really I'm here to serve them, I'm just trying to give them as much information to make as wise decision as possible.

The literature on teacher satisfaction and factors leading to the retention of teachers also provides insight into why the connection between individual students and student affairs professionals is so powerful and gratifying. A study of teacher

satisfaction, dissatisfaction, morale, and retention in the UK found that the desire to connect with children and help them learn was one of the top three factors that kept them in the profession (Rhodes, Nevill, & Allan 2002). Similarly, Shann (1998) studied urban middle school teachers and assessed the importance and satisfaction they assigned to various aspects of their job. What middle school teachers liked most about their jobs first and foremost were their students. Teachers felt that teacher-pupil relationships were the most important and reported that they were most satisfied with this aspect of their job more than any other.

This literature base from the teaching profession and the values these professionals bring to their educational setting are very relevant to this study and inform understanding of how student affairs professionals find rewards and incentives in their work. As a classroom teacher, there is a universalistic approach to your practice in that you must, to the best of your ability, educate each individual in your class despite the fact that each one has different abilities, motivations, and reasons for being there. Lesson plans are created and instructional methods are implemented in hopes of reaching positive outcomes for all students. However, in reality most classroom teachers find reaching and impacting just one individual student to be a very gratifying experience. Student affairs professionals are similar to teachers in that they are charged with delivering informational content to large numbers of students but they do not have as regular contact as their peers in the classroom.

Lortie (1975) found frequent mention of what he called the spectacular case rationale for the work of teachers. Well over half of the teachers framed their discussion

about pride in the craft of teaching around the notion of striking success with one student. It was common for teachers to tell a story about the problematic nature of the student's ability, experiences, or behavior only to have they student make a remarkable turnaround due to the teacher's persistence. Within the interviews with student affairs professionals similar stories emerge about the students that develop from lost and disrespectful freshmen to an engaged member of the community. Typically, the turnaround is experienced and observed by the hall director, advisor, career counselor, or judicial officer during their times they have worked together over a specified period.

BS: A student in the hall thought it would be cute if he began to use his window as an entrance and exit, this very clearly laid out as a violation. After several conduct discussions with him he began to see it differently. If the opportunity presented itself or somebody thought it would be funny to use the window as an exit he might not chastise them for that, hopefully he would say something, but at least he probably won't do it himself. That's a baby step but it's important to get them going and hopefully if there is any greater lesson in that for him about having ownership and responsibilities for the entire rest of the community he can start to apply that to other things and not just the window. It was really cool to see it click.

Student affairs professionals think about their work with students within a framework that originates from the individualistic approach of their practice while emphasizing elements of Lortie's (1975) spectacular case concept. The individual approach to practice and the focus on the present are viable elements of student affairs

work that helps to understand the “ethos of the occupation.” One way to get participants to speak about their work and related sentiments was to ask about their intended goals when working with students. How student affairs professionals define achievement is another way to understand the meanings they attach to various accomplishments.

Achieving success with one student was often discussed as an element of the pride they took within their craft. Participants did not seem concerned with the limited potential for success with all students but one participant did elaborate on his feelings about making an impact with individual students.

INTERVIEWER: HOW OFTEN DO YOU FEEL SUCCESSFUL IN YOUR WORK WITH STUDENTS?

MW: Every day, every day, I am a person that focuses more on the masses. I think it's sometimes a copout when I hear, especially younger professionals, emulate older professional saying oh well if you affected one person's life then you're doing your job. If you've affected one person's life you're not doing your job well. Because ultimately you should've been able to affect more of the masses. That's why I think we have positions here, it feels good to know you've done something or worked with the student successfully. I would assume that would be your mission and your goal, not just the direction, I'll help one.

Another participant was more comfortable accepting individualistic nature of practice and saw her ultimate purpose as assisting individual students within the high volumes of students that they met each day. They often took pride in making a difference in the life of just one student and especially found gratification in hearing from former students who they helped find a resource or a connection to information.

BL: Students that I've taught maybe a year and a half ago in my major exploration course come back and they say oh I decided on a major or I'm changing my mind or I've really decided this time and so it's nice. Even working with students who have been on academic probation or an academic trouble. Like I've seen them get off and go on to declare a major so that's been really nice. Sometimes when I'm doing the notes I've fallen behind on I have to look and see did they register? Oh look they changed their major. I remember that conversation we had, it's been nice.

In a similar pattern of sense making, participants also found reward in hearing about the successes of their former students and often said these were some of the most satisfying aspects of their work.

INTERVIEWER: HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOU'VE BEEN SUCCESSFUL WORKING WITH A STUDENT?

LB: When a student says thank you, that helped or they call back and said I really did get a job or I got in. I had a student just the other day, who came back and said I got into medical school. And I brought my fiancé because I wanted her to meet you (laughing cutely). I got a letter from a student that was a challenging student to work with who actually got a job and sent me his business card and I thought that was pretty darn funny. It said see your work actually paid off, you never thought it would or something like that.

Similar to was found with classroom teachers in terms of their satisfaction with work and the rewards they find gratifying we hear student affairs professionals using very parallel statements. The major emphasis is achieving desirable results with students

during their one on one meetings and when they feel like they have influenced their students in some way. Here one participant speaks about a student that he connected with and assisted her in declaring a major and graduating with a degree in journalism. What made this work especially meaningful and rewarding to the participant is when the graduate wrote to him from the field, which just happened to be a war zone in the Middle East.

MB: That was just like, it's incredible. I mean you know? Knowing you reached a student, but I get a lot of that and that's great that's what renews your batteries. I mean you know it's certainly not to pay itself. I feel like I actually have an impact on people's lives, make a difference.

Clearly the psychic rewards of student affairs work are what bring satisfaction to these professionals. It is of great importance for student affairs professionals to feel they have "reached" their students because their core rewards are tied to that perception. Extrinsic rewards of the pay or prestige associated with student affairs are not the driving force for this group of professionals. The rewarding and gratifying elements of the work routine for student affairs professionals is closely linked to what Lortie (1975) found among classroom teachers. Practice that while ideally is universalistic and reaches all students in reality ends up being focused on present oriented results with individual students or spectacular cases. Those are the activities that student affairs professionals find rewarding, making a difference for their individual students.

LO: A lot of times when students do something that is disrespectful to a fellow resident or staff member, I have them do a letter of apology.....usually it's enough

of an experience for them to get introspective and put themselves in another person's shoes.

The participants interviewed for this study identified closely with the approach of classroom teachers. Despite the fact that the organizational structure of postsecondary settings is fundamentally different from high schools, these two groups of professionals share a common set of values around service to people and find extreme motivation in helping individuals develop.

LA: There was a student that I talked with who just felt lonely. She felt like she was having a hard time meeting people and things like that and the only reason I really got to that was because I asked her a question. I think I asked her do you feel like you're meeting people in your residence hall? And then she started crying, obviously there was something there so it's sort of depends on the student some students are willing to disclose more. I'm just trying to get a sense of how they're feeling academically and otherwise.

Throughout this chapter, I have used the voices of participants to illustrate five major themes that each contributes to our understanding the core values guiding practice and the routine work experiences of student affairs professionals. The themes are interconnected and embedded within each others but discussed as discrete elements for clarity. In essence, student affairs professionals are changing their core values in response to characteristics of both students and the institution. Whether the change is conscious or more of a latent response to the pressures faced in the organization setting is unclear but the whole student approach does not appear remotely practical within the

existing environment. The practice of student affairs professionals is based upon transitory encounters that resemble fast-food exchanges rather than relationships with students. Participants often described the students they worked with as deficient in terms of skills, engagement, and interest in the process. The work routine of participants was out of control and overwhelming in terms of the multiple responsibilities they were expected to complete within an average day or week. Institutional decision making and policy setting also created impediments and obstacles in their work which led to frustration. Lastly, as a result of these above characteristics, the participants had established techniques for coping, making sense, and identifying rewards within their work routine. The following chapter will discuss how these five themes manifest themselves in distinctive ways within each of the four departments.

CHAPTER FIVE BEHAVIOR PATTERNS WITHIN DEPARTMENTS

Due to the variability in functions within the four student affairs departments studied this study presents two analysis chapters. The previous chapter examined aggregate employee behavior patterns across all the participants and not individual departments. This chapter provides an overview of each of the four departments studied and distinct illustrations of how the previous themes unfolded in different units. In order to avoid identifying the specific student affairs units studied this chapter will use pseudonyms to describe the departments rather than their actual name. The departments studied include: the Housing and Residential Services Office (HRSO), the Campus Life Office (CLO), the Academic Services Office (ASO), and the Workforce Training Office (WTO). Each office will be described in terms of the specific functions of the work environment, the roles held by professionals who were participants in the study, and how particular themes discussed in the previous chapter took on distinctive variations in these offices. Findings and behavior patterns from each office will also be presented.

Housing and Residential Services Office

The department provides housing services to over 6000 undergraduate and graduate students who live on campus each year in over 15 different residence halls. The halls range in size from as small as 100 beds to as many as 850 beds. Each residence hall employs at least one full time professional hall director who is responsible for a wide range of functions related to maintaining the physical building, supporting and disciplining the student residents, supervising a paraprofessional staff of Resident Assistant's (RAs), and a range of administrative duties which support the building's

community. In addition, hall directors are also responsible for advising and coordinating the residence hall association, which functions as a hall specific student leadership opportunity where students make decisions about how money is spent on things in their hall. Hall directors also routinely contribute to campus wide and departmental specific committees related to diversity programming, RA selection and training, and a number of other student-based programs.

Upon reviewing the five themes discussed in the previous chapter there are several that take on distinctive variations with the department of Housing and Residential Services; out of control work routines, feelings about students, coping techniques and frustration. The out of control work routine is certainly something that is experienced by hall directors but in their specific environment it occurs as a result of unclear boundaries between their personal and professional time and the often nebulous line between caring friend and institutional enforcer of policy.

Personal and Professional Boundaries

The mention of unclear boundaries between professional and personal time was common and heard from several of the hall directors. The result of the vague boundaries often placed the professional in some type of conflict or dilemma where they were forced to choose between two or more actions or decisions. This certainly led them to feel like they were working within an out of control environment; one that they could not find a solution that would meet all the needs and expectations they were juggling. Typically, the decision was about protecting their limited personal time by making a choice between their residents, their staff, or enforcing a policy. A female hall director speaks about the

difficulty determining what commitment to give existing programs within the building they manage.

PJ: On any given night there could be a program to attend which is where the lines get a little blurry with housing because I feel like the expectation is that we attend as many programs as possible but it's not a formal expectation yet it's an unofficial and an explicit expectation to support as much as possible.

The same participant goes on to say this about her department and the challenges faced when it comes to controlling your personal time and space.

PJ: Because in residence life, there is always that, what is really working when you live in the building that you work in? So if someone catches you in the hallway on the way to my apartment and they say I have a question for you that's work, in an informal setting, so the boundaries are really blurry in residence life. They're better here in this building but the lines are very blurry because with your colleagues, who are my friends and who are my colleagues, where do I live and where do I work? It's all blurry so if there's ever any sort of emergency situation like a fire alarm in the middle of the night and you're up for that, we have to respond to that so there is a lot of after-hours stuff that goes on. And I feel regardless of how much I work, residents expect me to be working more. They say you're never here or I couldn't find you. They just have this expectation that you're here 24 hours a day because you live here and they know that.

Because hall directors are required to "live-in" the residence hall building for which they are assigned many participants spoke about the lack of control they felt when

it came to determining when they were truly “off duty”. In addition, students living in the halls saw their hall directors as being available 24 hours a day for whatever needs they might have and had little empathy or consideration for these professionals. Students just assumed that their hall directors operated on a similar schedule to their own in terms of when they were awake or active and when they were not. Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) would suggest that housing facilities are being organized and run as profit-oriented cost centers which produce resources for the institution. The reality for hall directors is that they are frequently the only professional responsible for a very large building with hundreds of residents. The fortunate hall directors may have a part-time graduate student to support their many responsibilities but regardless universities are squeezing these professionals by expecting them to work beyond a forty hour week on a continual basis. The rationale for this expectation is predicted by the academic capitalist knowledge regime whereby profit oriented activities have become embedded internally within departments as an element of reorganization.

INTERVIEWER: TAKE ME THROUGH TYPICAL DAY IN YOUR WORK?

PJ: I think it's important to say before I start, I think in residence life I'll go through the day and I'll say I've been here all day but I don't know what I did. It's a lot better for me here because the building is definitely more manageable in terms of size and staffing. Remembering back to last year and we're talking 20 staff members and 500 people in the building and really having no idea how I spent my time. So this year of a lot more balanced a lot better because it's definitely more manageable.

The perception held by this professional about her former residence hall environment is that it was out of control as a result of having too many people and students to manage. Although the ratio between student residents and professional staff are more suitable in her current setting its important to consider that some other professional on the campus is facing her previous challenge in the current semester. Again as long as institutions are organized along the profit driven and market like activities suggested by Slaughter and Rhoades' (2004) we can expect to find professionals feeling constrained and out of control in their work.

One of the primary functions of hall directors is to address student conduct violations both in their hall and other halls. Typically a hall director will hear cases from within and outside of their own residence hall facility. This process is very involved and takes up quite a bit of time in both meetings with the students and RA's, keeping notes of the violations, findings, and sanctions, and then following up with the students and families that are found to be in violation to make sure everyone understands the next steps. By examining how hall directors speak about conduct and their interactions with students we can learn more about their perceptions of students and their attitudes about them. Hall directors are routinely forced to make judgment calls on how to proceed with conduct violations and this participant speaks about that expectation and how critical his graduate complex director is feeling some sense of control in his work.

LO: I've got a graduate complex director she does a fantastic job and I trust her 1000% with everything. That's great because then I'll feel like I don't have to do everything, I just can't even explain, it makes my quality of life in this job. You

have to set limits, for example, my apartment is on the east side of the building..... I could sit out there all night if I wanted to and deal with students using a stairwell they shouldn't be but that's not a healthy thing for me to do, so those of the sort of things as a live-in position I think is an added difficulty. If you don't set that limit this job can take over your life really fast. As much as it's definitely something I spend a lot of time on and I take very seriously I also don't want it to take over my life, I wanna have other things.

Conduct decisions and discussions are a strong example of how professionals in housing are expected to carry out competing agendas of both student development and institutional enforcer of policies. The student could be violating policies because they feel isolated or anonymous on a large campus or because these behaviors were accepted in previous environments. The conduct discussion is primarily about what is acceptable to the institution in terms of living within the residence halls but done effectively students believe that their hall director has their best interests in mind and cares about their success. To be effective in this dual role requires a very skilled professional but doesn't result without costs to the employee and navigating a fine line between friend and institutional agent.

An interesting coping technique for student affairs work is the necessity to develop some level of rapport with students in order to have an improved chance at successful outcomes. Many participants spoke about how they would attempt to relate to the students by using general "how's it going" type questions before they got to the heart of the matter. A particular challenging dynamic relating both to boundaries and coping

are the often disparate functions roles being expected from the student affairs professionals. The ideology and literature in student affairs suggests that effective practice is based upon the foundation of relationships however professionals are charged with enforcing policy and disciplining the students with whom they have little more than a connection. A male hall director's comments suggest that traditional core values of the profession are no longer part of the routine and have been replaced by behaviors that resemble policing.

BS: Occasionally, this is an unfortunate reality of the kind of job that we're doing both myself and the resident assistants. We are at the same time trying to be their friend and at some level of confidant, we are also having to enforce policy and police the building to some extent. And we lose a lot of people early on because we have to document them for something and they're in that dualistic moment in their identity development.

In the passage above we can hear the hall director acknowledge that they lose credibility and opportunities for more beneficial relationships because the structure of their work has the tendency to create somewhat difficult situations between students and professionals. Students see these professionals as policy enforcers and professionals would like to be seen as friends and confidants. Herein lays one of the elements of the work in student affairs that creates less than favorable attitudes about undergraduate students.

Students as Entitled, Parents as Pushy

Hall directors consistently mentioned the behaviors and actions of their students as being focused on solely on their own needs and preferences with little concern for the

larger community. These professionals also spoke with displeasure for the increasing involvement of parents and how role in campus situations resulted in feeling marginalized in terms of controlling their work products and outcomes. Lack of student ownership for their behaviors, choices, and the consequences they might receive through conduct violations delivered by hall directors often resulted in a call from the parent.

LO: I try to do the same with parents. I have to remind myself they love their kid more than anything in the world. I can't fault them for that that's fantastic, I'm sure I'll do the same for my kids. The thing with parents, just helping them, guide them into what they can do because that's really what they're looking for. I think in the situations where parents are involved I get pretty good results with conduct because Mom and Dad are there supporting the student side saying yes they made a mistake if you give them a chance they'll change. Mom and Dad, make sure they do it, I'll ask them.

While this response is somewhat supportive of the parent role in student situations on campus others were more negative and framed in language that suggests parents were impediments to the work of the hall director. Specifically, this participant implies that the parents of out-of-state students are more routinely involved in his work and their involvement is typically aggressive and demanding.

LO: The other issue too is, and I know this happens all over the place this is not just here, but when parents choose to go over us, that can be really frustrating and really messes things up. Mom and Dad call the president's office. So the next thing I know I get a call saying you need to move the student into another room.

Just because, there is no explanation. So I have one student who is doing what I've asked them to do and following the procedure for room changes and they are not getting what they want and there is the other person who goes past our process is getting what they want. So all that does is feed that machine of "well don't bother going to the hall director, go above to someone who knows what they're doing because you can just go to the next person and you can get what you want. That's part of the bureaucracy I think of a lot a college campuses but especially at a campus like this where we have a lot of out-of-state folks. So parents are very involved also it's just the nature of the millennial student and with again going back to our students coming from quite a bit of privilege there used to getting what they want and fast.

In summary, the participants in this study from Housing and Residential Services had responses that align with the themes mentioned in the previous chapter. However, unique to this group of professionals working in the HRSO was how the out of control feeling about their work resulted from student and work volume but also from unclear boundaries between personal and professional time. These concerns about boundaries were distinctive to the structure and organization of work within this department. Secondly participants were frustrated by the expectations of the students living in the building that their hall director and RA's should have round the clock availability since they live on site. Hall directors also mentioned that some of their contact with students left them feeling like a personal assistant as demands for immediate action were placed upon their daily work routines. Lastly, as a coping technique, hall directors often made

choices about which violations to enforce and how best to nurture a relationship with their residents so as not to appear as a policy enforcer and more as a resource.

Participants working within Housing and Residential Services are forced to make decisions about what programs to attend, when to enforce policies, and how to navigate the subtle and complex expectations of the position. Put very clearly by one hall director, this dilemma faced by this group of student affairs professionals boils down to the issue of exerting some amount of control in an often overwhelming work routine.

LW: I feel again our week we are told you have 40 hours we should be working which actually equates to 60 or 70. Some of that is fun. There are some times when I question myself should I count this as work or should I not? Because I'm here at an ice cream social and I'm interacting with students so really I am doing my job. I don't know if this is part of my work or do something that I would do. If I didn't have this job I probably wouldn't be at this ice cream social. Maybe that is more work..... In my week I have these hours 60 hours of time to play with and though I'm told these 20 hours need to be conduct, I decide when I do it. There is a lot of control about when I wanna work, I can work almost any hours. I feel I can have a lot of control in when or how I do it but not a lot of control in what I do.

Campus Life Office

The participants interviewed within the Campus Life Office (CLO) were responsible for a number of disparate responsibilities and held positions that were not identical functions. Unlike hall directors, academic advisors, and the counselors in

workforce training, these CLO professionals held responsibilities that supported research, fund development, and customer service in addition to direct service to students. I interviewed two assistant deans, a research assistant, a coordinator of education and outreach, a program coordinator in judicial affairs, and a campus facilitator. The one element that connected all these professionals is that they perceived their role as directly supporting functions or activities that involved students or benefited the campus community.

One of the most intriguing functions within the department is this very active and successful fundraising and development agenda. These functions are coordinated through the efforts of a .75FTE professional whose main role is to distribute the external funds acquired by the office to benefit students and their interactions with faculty outside of the classroom. In addition this professional is responsible for all the written material that appears on the department's website, developing collateral materials related to fundraising pitches, submitting proposals to national conferences, and communicating the story and mission of the Dean's office to the rest of the campus and national peers. Lastly, there was one FT professional known as an ombudsman, whose primary role was to act as a resource to anyone who needed something from the university and might be having difficulty finding what they needed. This professional is the customer service liaison for the campus and acts as a referral point in order to feed people and questions to the correct area of the campus.

Overall the story line of the CLO can be characterized as one of a very eclectic group of professionals who are all completing tasks that they see as either benefiting

students or the campus community directly. Their work with students mostly focuses on those who are struggling behaviorally, academically, socially, and emotionally. The department has secured several grants involving corporate sponsors and then uses those funds to create opportunities for students, faculty, and the entire campus community.

Given such broad mission professionals in this unit often managed multiple tasks, roles, and responsibilities which led them to also feel overwhelmed and out of control in their work routine. Not only were there high numbers of students being seen for conduct and academic integrity violations but this office was responsible for commencement ceremonies, coordinating faculty/student interaction outside of the classroom, and a substantial fund raising and research agenda. The distinct variations on the five major themes are seen in out of control work routines that involve juggling hundreds of student conduct cases with the crisis management role of the department. In addition we hear participants express explicit feelings about the students they work with in terms of their ethical and moral values. Lastly, we hear participants speak about how they cope and make meaning out of their work routines by rationalizing their role in activities that do not immediately impact students.

The Campus Life Office's most visible role and function in terms of student contact were to administer the judicial process and hearings involving code of conduct and academic integrity violations. One assistant Dean supported and a judicial affairs coordinator were responsible addressing the hundreds of violations that were reported to their office each semester.

MW: I see a lot of the lower-level type violations and alcohol violations maybe a petty drug violation, you are caught with paraphernalia but no actual drugs or you're caught with beer in hand. Sometimes you also see some of the limit setting you got a student transported to the hospital for alcohol poisoning. Then you see more pervasive issues like sometimes you see assaults you'll tend to catch a little more theft than usually at the beginning of the school year you might have a handful. You have students needing whatever where they'll hold off buying a book and then catch a lot more in October. October and September are our busiest months of the year predominately because the student will be documented late September or beginning of September and by the time the report trickles to us we get the hearing in October so there is a good amount there. Student behavior over all its pretty similar year by year we've got alcohol and drugs are always are top two.

The appearance from the above passage is that student conduct behaviors are a significant aspect of this professional's role in terms of processing the violations, deciding sanctions, arranging supportive resources, and communicating outcomes to involved participants.

With the number of cases being processed by this participant it is likely a challenge to impact students in a positive way since these interactions are more encounter based than actual ongoing relationships. The volume of cases can certainly lead to a fast food type of exchange between students and professional which leaves both participants feeling less than genuine in terms of their communication or understanding of why the behavior is unacceptable.

INTERVIEWER: DESCRIBE A DIFFICULT DECISION YOU MIGHT FACE DURING YOUR WORK?

MW: The difficult decisions usually come in terms of the sanctions and whether I really believe the student or not. And part of it is the reality that we have a hunch on what's going on from our experience that we have to respond in that way and I think sometimes I know of a couple cases that I'm thinking about students really react negatively. It's not that they disagree with the sanctions so it's that cycle that's been very difficult sometimes it's difficult to not reach the students that you wanna always reach and do the things you wanna do. Because we've got so many cases I heard 340 something cases last year.

INTERVIEWER: IS THAT BECAUSE OF THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR ROLE?

MW: Yes one Dean here deals with a lot of the crisis and a lot of the referrals but her caseload is lower but her intensity is higher. Mine are more like a puppy mills, five or six students a day a lot of the same stuff. So those things sometimes are difficult to work with students.

The above passages illustrate that volume of student cases certainly impacts the professional's ability to secure the kinds of outcomes with students that would align with and be spoken about within the student affairs ideology. However, the difference within the Campus Life Office is that students who have violated a campus conduct policy are in desperate need of someone to take a genuine interest through building a supportive ongoing relationship. Unfortunately, the risks associated with the encounter based

transactions in the CLO are potentially much more detrimental to the individual student's chances of being successful in college and their future goals.

MW: I see the smallest population of referrals on-campus it is also the ones that take a lot of time to work with to change some of those behaviors. We will talk about well how does this help get to the goals that you have? How can this hinder you if you wanna work for the FBI? Well when you graduate the FBI can ask us for this paperwork and compare you to another applicant. They're going to get it because they'll not have a conviction because when they were 17 or 18 years old they didn't partake in that behavior.

Moral and Ethical Traits of Students

A variation on the theme of students as deficient that appeared in the previous chapter is manifested within the CLO office by how professionals describe the moral and ethical characteristics of students. Because this department works with students facing crises of a personal nature it was not surprising to hear them speak with disappointment about the behaviors and choices of their students. A male administrator speaks with candor about his perceptions of a particular group of students.

ST: I find that I'm not sure that there's another I can't point to another group of students out there that so blatantly lie and are so coordinated in their attempts to hide it. And I find that their view of the world is one that rather than dealing with some issue, some basic issue that's popped up they'd rather spend more energy denying it, challenging it whatever. And then after all that's said and done, then trying to negotiate a deal when if they had dealt with in the first place they would

have come out ahead because they wouldn't have ended up wasting so much time and that outcome would've been easier and simpler than what they came up with (laughing).

Here the participant is referring a well established group of students who are involved in a campus organization. It seems clear that he feels the behaviors and actions of these students is unacceptable and that both their integrity and honesty is explicitly questioned as suspect. In the passage below a male conduct officer has this to say about the characteristics of students.

MW: Not seeing the bigger picture (students) and how it can affect them if they come from a background that has a different totally different set of values. Since that set of values completely conflicts with what we're doing at the University they tend to not have as good as experience. Even if they feel a connection to the University usually it's connected through another group of people with that same set of values and if those values are lying, cheating, stealing and do whatever it takes to get ahead then I end up seeing them.

However, all is not negative in terms of how these participant's felt about the characteristics of students they worked with despite the fact they saw many who were not being honest with themselves or the institution.

MW: I think overall our students are here to learn. Learning comes in many different forms, they're also here to socialize to give them a broader network so I think generally students are goodhearted. If you put anybody in a position where they have to fend for their own they're going to go to what they know and I think

that going to what they know and the quality of that is gonna precipitate things. I think at their core students are really out to try to have a good time to get a good education.

What is interesting to note in the above passage is how the participant acknowledges the fact that students come to college for different reasons but he prioritizes having a “good time” over getting a good education. Again the students within the academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime view the entire educational experiences as a product to be consumed for a price.

One of the most interesting aspects of the interviews with professionals within the CLO was diversity of the roles and functions they provided coupled with their holistic interpretation of how their work played a role in impacting students. The responses to the interview questions from this department put an interesting twist upon the previous theme related to how professionals coped with and made meaning from their work. The Campus Life Office had unique understandings of their work which often were not clearly connected to individual students themselves but focused on more comprehensive objectives that would the entire campus community in the long term. For example the unit was actively involved in creating an emergency response procedure for campus crises involving students, faculty, and other campus professionals. As a result of a recent tragedy occurring on campus involving violent and aggressive student behavior the CLO established a national best practice for addressing disruptive student behavior. The passage below illustrates how this participant perceives her role within the department.

CR: The struggle sometimes it manifests itself as taking your attention away from something. Because we do respond to crises here you can have the best laid plans for your semester and it goes out the window when 9/11 happens or the nursing shootings happen as it should be, you have to respond to that and be ready to go. But it does get hard. Whether it is fund development or publications I should've done or a newsletter....that was another big challenge for us.

Each participant from CLO made meaning from their work functions in very different ways. Clearly this department expended a good deal of effort on communicating themselves as a resource to faculty and other professionals on campus in addition to being a place for students to get help on a range of different issues. In fact, the department emphasis on being “something more” than just a place where students go when they are having difficulties and strived to be seen as much more than just judicial affairs. As a result of this innovative perspective on their mission the office was actively involved in research, educational programming, and the entrepreneurial fundraising and development activities.

CR: My predecessor was very good about teaching me how we want to present the department to the rest of the institution if you will. What is important to us that then helps the institution, how much we do that, we then need to make sure especially internally and sometimes externally but especially internally to insure or that they understand the services that are available here. In what ways that we can help? Whether its faculty its non-faculty and ultimately students.

Rationalizing Fundraising and Partnerships as Coping

In addition to the traditional Dean's office functions, this office was actively pursuing three large scale research projects on Millennial students' perceptions about diversity, a campus climate survey, and another project analyzing the measurable student outcomes derived from various sanctions imposed by the office. These projects were all being pursued simultaneously through one part time graduate research assistant and supplementally supported by full time colleagues as time became available. Here that professional speaks to how she understands her department's fund raising and development efforts.

FS: Oh yeah, the Dean is very good at that she grabs money from everywhere.

Lots of it I think comes into this office just by being who we are. Partnerships with a large telecommunications company and other corporate funders are maybe in their third year, the foundation money has been around along with that for six years. I know the Dean does not limit herself to internal funding. They are always looking for outside money.

In this response it is difficult to interpret exactly how this professional feels about the fact that her department is active in entrepreneurial activities. Clearly she sees this activity as something that her department is successful with achieving outside support. More often than not the reality or corporate dollars and partnerships have become internally embedded within the organization and seem to be thought of as just another element of the work environment. The activity surrounding development in the CLO is assumed to be beneficial and required but these values are not aligned with putting the student at the center of the educational process.

The origin for CLO fundraising and development efforts resulted from the very explicit need to fund the campus' new student union but from that point in time forward the functions have become institutionalized and are now firmly established. From the perspective of the participants, fundraising is now critical to the Dean's office in terms of how many opportunities the unit can create for students and faculty to connect, funding those opportunities, cultivating alumni donors, and in terms of the internal and external prestige of student affairs within the organization. Here is what one female program coordinator had to say about these activities occurring within the unit.

CR: We just seem to constantly be scrambling for dollars. Our leader understood that priority and was able to forge some agreement with the foundation to split a salary for development director which I don't think it's really common for a student affairs type of department. We know we have an edge, whether they (the student) had been in student government or they've been a resident assistant or they worked for the school newspaper. They remember that and it's our job to constantly remind them to say you can give back, yes you can give back to this area. It's not a built-in alumni base like the colleges have so that's the challenge. But we certainly have students that we worked with that we have developed relationships with that we remember.

Interesting to note in this passage are the ways that CLO is tailoring their message to potential donors in many of the same ways an academic college might recruit a graduate of their college. Student affairs is mimicking that posture to remind students they can give back to the institution in a general way in return for their overall college experience.

Just the choice of language being in used by professional staff is decidedly entrepreneurial and out of character for a unit that is so central to the student experience.

Capitalizing on a students' affiliation with Greek Life, student government, the marching band or student media send the message that experiences outside of the classroom are what speak to you as an alumnus. CLO is reminding alumni to support the continued availability of those opportunities for future generations of students. It's almost telling a story of, your academics were important professionally but what really made your time on this campus memorable or special? Another interesting aspect of the passage is the reference to the Dean seeing an opportunity or untapped potential in terms of raising funds within the unit and then taking this position to the foundation to split fund a development position. Although many academic colleges take a similar approach its certainly unique in terms of student affairs units. Here in lies the connection to the theme of meaning making, for this particular unit the way of thinking about their role and function are more broadly considered. This framing of their work experience allows the professionals to see the potential and promise of entrepreneurial efforts in terms of benefiting students and the campus rather than a distraction or something only individual colleges could achieve.

CR: A large corporate telecommunications organization gave us an opportunity to be able to spread some money around to put a little more coarsely as a result of their, I believe they're called a strategic partner. Because of our leader's experience in the fund development area she approached that opportunity much differently and was able to get the corporate entity to understand that if the grant

went through this office all students and faculty throughout campus could benefit instead of just having those affiliated with certain colleges be the recipients. So that was exciting too, so we got a really nice chunk of money the summer before last.

This passage provides insight into not only how the participants cope with their work environment but also that they perceive corporate partnerships and fundraising efforts to be a critically important element of their work in terms of how it impacts the entire campus community. When participants were specifically asked about the department's external collaborations and how they felt about them being in place the responses were mostly slightly positive in appearance. However that being said it was clear that some felt they placed unintended burdens on them as professionals and their routine work practice.

INTERVIEWER: HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR DEPARTMENT'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXTERNAL ENTITIES?

MW: I think it's impacted in positive ways in that it's enabling us to help more students reach the end they want to. It's a little frustrating with the bureaucratic process I mean, I always talk about policy with students and why the policies are there so that they can understand the big picture. I also struggle with sometimes that same big picture. Why we have to make sure you have 15 different ways to account for a bill and I completely understand people ripped off the system and the rules of the Board of Regents and stuff but it takes so long in the paperwork it's almost sometimes a whole day to go through a set of grants to make sure that their stuff is in line.

Similarly, another participant from the CLO works regularly with student government and advises representatives. Often he must keep these partnerships with the corporate sector in the forefront of his practice when he is working with students.

CB: Like for example, we have an agreement with the large telecommunications organization, it's like a preferred campus provider it's not like you have to use them exclusively but they give a bunch of money back to campus and faculty and students can apply for grants through our office. Somebody, some business person, contacted the students and he wanted to send text messages out to people's phones and we will get like .0001 cent for each text message that is sent. They wanted to send out thousands so we get thousands of dollars in our budget theoretically. Sounds like a great idea but we've got this thing with the large telecommunications organization so I've got to make sure that were not violating university contracts and stuff like that so students come in here and they run all the stuff by me.

This same participant goes on to describe how he educates students about the political and economic ramifications of the partnerships so that students can understand more about why the institution enters into the relationships.

CB: I really get that one, we're looking at having support from private entities and the university is really driving that, the students aren't. So for example a large soft drink company is a sponsor for our student run carnival and they are because we have to have them because the university has a contract with them and they're given us money. But they're given us all kinds of support besides the money but

the students sometimes say you know our carnival could be better if we did it differently, am I not into that particular large soft drink companies products. And you have to say well, well you're right it could be better but we have a commitment and we can't walk away from that or our hands are tied. Basically sometimes there is a struggle because we have had to turn to the private sector to support our programs and that's a 10 year commitment.

The professionals with the Dean's office clearly understand the reasons that they have become more entrepreneurial in their interest to secure more funding and diversify their resources. The range of services and activities that are supported by this office are only possible because of their proactive posture. The financial support of student affairs divisions from within their own institutions is something that is often considered as a luxury when state support of higher education is barely sufficient to support the instructional mission of an institution. Student development and keeping the student at the center of the educational process is embedded within what the CLO delivers but the way they get there is dictated more by institutional and societal trends than by the professional ideology. Once again, students' successes and achievement are important but the routine work and functions are dictated by political and economic factors more than by the students' needs alone. The core values guiding practice in the CLO are decidedly market orientated and entrepreneurial.

One last coping technique with the CLO is how participants rationalize their approach to working with students. It appears frequent that professionals must walk a very delicate line between acting interested in their students and becoming perceived as a

friend. Many participants spoke about the importance of developing easeful conversations with students by using popular culture as a starting point.

MW: I'll talk without necessarily becoming someone I'm not. I'll talk the way I would speak but keep their lens to it and really try to identify with them. So I walk up to them, hey how you doing the high five, the knuckle, you know the pat on the back the hey what's up what's going on and how was your night how are you doing with this thing and that thing. Instead of, let's talk about what we have to do today in our class (mocking faculty?) We will get to that, we will get there but let's first focus on some other things. Being very current with what kind of they're going through and being current with not only what is popular in the media but what's popular in music. I'll see that they've got an Ipod and I'll ask, what you got on there, 50 cent, waz up? So you have to have that certain approach.

Several unintended outcomes can result from this blurring of boundaries between students and professionals by having practice align with their own interests. Students might perceive their interactions with student affairs staff as personal encounters rather than professional and not realize that the person talking to them in their language is a representative of the university and has a certain level of authority. The alternative problem from the professionals' perspective is that they are encouraged to develop friendly, open communications with students in order to be seen as a resource. Setting and maintaining boundaries in often ambiguous encounters is critical in the role of student affairs professionals. As professionals are striving to connect with students they

are utilizing personal aspects of the students' lives and desperately trying to appear genuine.

MW: Other barriers, I think, sometimes as you move up in a position sometimes a barrier becomes your own age because the way students see you and treat you is predominantly on that face value. I'll go into a room and students automatically are able to identify with me. The detriment is that sometimes they'll over identify with me and think that we're more friends. So setting that limit at the start has been something that I'll do.

The professionals in the Campus Life Office have work experiences that illustrate distinct variations on several of the major themes described in the previous chapter.

While high volumes of students being seen for conduct cases create out of control work routines the addition of the frequent management of campus crises add to the overwhelming nature of their work. In addition, we hear participants from CLO express explicit feelings about the students once again from a deficit perspective but in this office the areas of weakness are moral and ethical values and not general engagement. Lastly, participants from this office cope and make meaning from their work routines differently than their fellow peers. Instead of rationing services to students they perceive their role as broader to include activities that do not directly impact students in the present like fund raising, research, and campus wide initiatives to address maladaptive student behavior patterns.

Academic Services Office

The professional staff of academic advisors in the Academic Services Office is responsible for a range of tasks involving the monitoring and academic progress of students. The office's mission is focused on incoming freshmen who are undecided students, the process of major exploration, and assisting students transitioning from other academic colleges on the campus. The students this office serves also have interests in completing pre-professional programs for nursing, pharmacy, and health related professions. The Academic Services Office is the main advising office for over 4,000 undergraduate students.

The professional staff of advisors numbers over twenty full time employees and they deliver several thousand one-on-one student appointments each year. In addition, the staff coordinates a range of programs for students interested Pre-Law or Student Exchange programs, they determine which students are readmitted to and academically disqualified from the college they serve, they deliver information to students at a counter in the office that is designated for "quick questions", and also manage a cohort of incoming students by teaching a mandatory credit bearing online class for incoming freshmen. Each advisor has a slightly different set of responsibilities but every professional in the office is expected to have multiple appointments available daily for individual advising meetings with students within and outside of their cohort and those students who walk in the office seeking some kind of assistance.

The prominent theme that surfaced through interviews with professionals in ASO is a high level of frustration with students but even more so with other academic colleges and their peers in other advising offices, and internal policies that were too lenient. As

with participants in other offices these professionals expressed concern and frustration with how the institution was setting priorities but the depth and breadth of these emotions were much more dispersed across the above mentioned entities. Additionally, the theme regarding encounters with students as a result of the high volume of students being served appears to more greatly impact the work routine of these professionals. Because their approach to practice is espoused to be more developmental one could assume that there are greater impediments to their success with students during transitory fast-food exchanges.

According to the participants in this study, the delivery of academic advising within the Academic Services Office is more developmental in nature than you might find in the other academic colleges on campus. A unique distinction on the theme of frustration mentioned in the previous chapter is illustrated by this notion of developmental versus prescriptive advising practices. Professionals in ASO are concerned with the fact that their colleagues in other advising offices spend little time to try to get to know the student and merely give them a handout that outlines the required courses for a particular major.

BL: I think that because our department is so developmental and we work and we try and work past the prescriptive advising, here are the classes to take. We often run into emotional troubles of students, in addition to personal issues things like that. I think if it were just prescriptive advising if I were an adviser just doing prescriptive work I think it would be a little bit different. I don't necessarily think that it would be as developmental as what we do in our office.

Specifically, these professionals are responsible for helping students register for the appropriate classes based on their educational goals and interests, interpreting and navigating academic policies on behalf of students, alerting students to upcoming deadlines, and sharing information about the requirements, expectations, and resources for their possible areas of academic interest. Advisors in the ASO are expected to generally know the entry and admission requirements to each college and major on this campus. Currently, this institution has 13 colleges and over 130 different academic departments. In addition to this significant level of technical information, the participant in the passage above mentions going beyond that narrow scope to cover both emotional and personal issues with students. Again the frustration results when these diverse roles and functions have to occur within an isolated 30 minute encounter over the course of a semester rather than through a series of ongoing meetings. Advisors frequently speak about their goal of helping students to see them as a resource and establishing a connection with the student as a foundation for a more ongoing reciprocal relationship. The passage below is a good illustration of what developmental advising looks like in terms of the types of questions an advisor might ask a student.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT IS YOUR APPROACH TO WORKING WITH STUDENTS?

BL: I make sure to listen, like really want to listen. And then ask leading questions. Not just well they're saying they are coming in because they wanna know about classes. What else are they coming in for? What else do they not know they can get help for or they're worried about classes and maybe they haven't talked to their instructor. Are they having roommate issues, a family

influence on major selection, that whole student that you were talking about earlier. It affects everything for them and their crisis may not be a crisis that I can see but it's a crisis for them. I guess my main philosophy for working is I guess it's that I wouldn't have a job if they weren't here. I try even with the difficult students to value their experience and to help them in their process.

Professionals in this office also express frustration with being the institutionally appointed clearinghouse for all students who are at risk but simultaneously feel powerless to set academic standards for progress. The students using the services of this office are often some of the most challenging students on campus to work with according to the staff interviewed for this study. Their reasoning behind this assertion is based upon their experiences with students using the ASO that frequently have undefined academic and career goals, varying levels of interest, skills and motivation for college level work, and multiple personal and familial issues. Combined together these characteristics lead to directionless students who are lost in terms of their path and that leads to poor grades, disqualification or dropping out. As a result of the types of students who use the office's services, advisors often need to spend more time getting at what is going on or not going on with the student including why are you here, what are your interests, why aren't you attending classes, or why are you drinking or gambling or using drugs. However, the participant below acknowledges these factors affecting student performance but still feels strongly that her department needs to set and stick to more rigid policies for students progress.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT IS THE MOST FRUSTRATING ASPECT OF YOUR WORK?

PS: Given the fact that they are supposed to declare a major by the time they're juniors, there are juniors with the 50 unit B deficit. Are we going to house those students for the next three years while they get off probation? We came up with a much more structured set of guidelines that actually did give you three semesters to get off probation. So now we're going to as long as you make progress even if it's one unit reduction in your B deficit every semester you can be here as long as that continues basically as long as it takes, so hypothetically you could be with us for six years. I think we're in a direction that is much more lenient which I don't agree with but that was their choice and I think the fact that the whole retention issue is a problem, we were disqualifying students at a higher rates because they weren't meeting the conditions of their contract.

This participant is frustrated by students not making adequate progress and her department's reluctance to set more explicit standards for progress. She rationalizes her unit's position by connecting it to the political pressures of an institutional priority to increase student retention. Basically it doesn't look good if her department is disqualifying students in a climate that is valuing retention even if the students are not making progress. Due to the fact that expectations from the campus level have recently been very focused on retaining students at all costs, it is clear the decision for a more lenient stance is motivated by political pressures. The frustration results from the out of control work environment that keeps bringing unprepared students to the department in search of answers and an institutional level priority that pressures professionals to keep students enrolled.

For participants in the ASO, it's a very challenging work expectation to serve and retain students from across the campus while maintaining few measurable criteria or expectations for progress and success. That being said however, professionals in this department persist and find ways to cope with their frustrations by focusing on individual successes with what Lortie (1975) called the spectacular case. Developmental work with students produced psychic rewards despite the multiple pressures which chill and impede their ability to work in that same way with all students.

PS: But what I like to do because there are students that have the ability but need a lot of support. And need a lot of assistance and clarifying what their skills are and how that fits with a major here. And that's really rewarding to work with students and they get to the point where they can kind of see the light at the end of the tunnel and they can see where maybe the original thought about engineering that they had that they are so desperately hanging onto that it's not a good choice and that there are other choices that are good. So I think in everything that I do I am trying to push students closer to making decisions and making informed choices so they can graduate.

Another complexity of the role within the Advising Services Office is the high number of students who are designated to use the office that do not have a genuine interest in being within the college. For example, several colleges on the campus have instituted pre requisites for admission to their college and their majors at the advanced or upper division level. Nursing, pharmacy, business, and even traditionally flexible academic departments with the social sciences disciplines are now requiring certain grade

point averages before students can officially declare the major or college. In the interim period while working toward these areas, students are assigned to work with professionals in ASO where they receive advise on what general education courses to consider, who to see and talk to in their intended college/major of the future, and how to make themselves competitive. The passage below has one male advisor putting his frustrations into language that administrators would do well to take notice of the next time annual resources are distributed.

PC: It's amazing for the amount of students that we service how little value we are given in the big picture. My personal opinion we're talking about a group of students let's say 4,000 that are prospects for every other college in this campus.

What kind of impact can we really have on those students?

Advisors in this office routinely see these transitory students and enforce institutional progress expectations on those students on behalf of other colleges on the campus. These participants from the ASO are extremely frustrated in their work routine but unlike the other student affairs professionals, they are directing their emotions toward other academic colleges on the campus and not the institution itself. They experience first hand the charged encounters that ensue when other colleges marginalize students until they have measurable proof that they possess adequate skills to be successful. While this approach is understandable in the current climate of enrollment management practices, retention at all cost, and strategic admissions offers it leaves students and professional advisors with a bad taste in their mouth in many respects. Here an advisor speaks to his feelings about what other colleges are practicing with their students and

what the differences between the type of advising they prefer to practice and what appears to be occurring in other colleges.

PC: Knowing the rules and saying OK take any second language and that prescriptive approach may work well in some fields and it may. I heard it works great in architecture; it weeds people out, maybe in business, not when students have such needs, they have needs and they don't even know the rules.

Another frustrating aspect of the work in ASO and an element that further leads professionals to feel helpless are the number of students who get moved into their office by other colleges. One of the most pertinent examples of this practice occurs within one of the more prestigious and competitive colleges. This college will administratively change any of their freshmen who earn less than a 2.0 grade point average to the college served by ASO. The student has no recourse and has signed this “agreement” to be moved if they find academic probation when they come into the institution during summer orientation. Similar situations occur when students from all over the campus are told by their college that they are no longer competitive in their academic department and if they wish to remain at the institution they must go find another college. The only possible option for these students is the college served by the ASO but this college offers just one degree program in interdisciplinary studies and often ends up as a store house for students who have been unaffiliated with their primary college of choice. One female advisor illustrates how this institutional practice affects the campus culture, the student, and the professional.

PS: I have had students who came in saying “I heard this was an easier place to be.” So they come here because they hear, don't worry about it you won't get kicked out, don't worry it's not a problem just go there. But I think, not for all students but I think for the ones that are in trouble, there is sort of a maybe an emergency room feel. I think we are a place where they can go and hang out for a little bit until they figure things out and move on. But I think institutionally there really is a push for us to accept and keep as many students as we possibly can.

The participants from the Advising Services Office are frustrated by many aspects of their out of control work routine that is dominated by brief encounters with students needing high levels of support. However, unlike their peers in other departments they see their impediments to sound practice to be the policies being set and implemented by other academic colleges on the campus. They are also challenged in their ability to maintain their commitment to developmental advising practices by the institutional priorities and pressures that dictate which students arrive at their office and what standards for progress they can expect. This group of professionals feels helpless as a result of not having the opportunity to establish reasonable criteria for progress which again is an outcome of institutional legitimizing behaviors that espouse and encourage retention of students. As a result, advisors struggle to support students' needs when the campus climate charges them with what in many ways enables students to pursue counter productive behavior like taking electives to raise grade point average in order to possibly gain entry to desired major.

Workforce Training Office

The function and mission of the Workforce Training Office (WTO) is to provide a comprehensive range of career planning services and resources to students. The opportunities offered include identifying and gaining internship experiences, access to job fairs and mock interviews, resume writing workshops, and individual meetings with career counselors. The department serves the entire campus community of 37,000 students and has a total staff of less than ten full time professionals. In fact, the WTO has just four professional counselors on staff whose primary role is direct service to students. The other staff consists of administrative support and managers who supervise the counselors providing direct service to students.

One theme that was highlighted by responses of the staff and distinctive to the work routines within this department was an out of control work environment that resulted from economic fluctuations and their impact on the job market. Unlike the other departments in this study, the additional level of work challenges resulted from an uncontrollable element within the external environment rather just student volume alone. A second theme related to the particular methods that the WTO utilized to cope with the constraints and expectations of their work routine; participants openly pursued fee-for-service and entrepreneurial activities, rationed services to students, and they found ways exert their agency within their everyday practice. The WTO pursued partnerships and collaborations with external entities to generate revenue but the distinction between this office and the Campus Life Office is that the funds were critical to support direct service to students.

Based upon the interviews with professionals in the department they were very concerned about the constraints that exist within their work which led to an out of control and chaotic work environment. It directly impacts their ability to serve students and creates a general feeling of frustration among the staff. Similar to other departments they felt that overwhelmed by the demands for service coming from students and the campus environment.

INTERVIEWER: DESCRIBE FOR ME WHAT YOU CONSIDER THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF YOUR WORK?

LB: I think sometimes one of the biggest challenges that I have felt for the last two or three years is this demand. We don't have the supply to meet the demand, we do not have the staffing or the funding to provide the level of service that we would love to provide. And when people have to wait three weeks for an appointment sometimes they're really pissed off by the time they get to us or they don't even show up because by then they actually found a job or gave up on finding a job. So I think sometimes that's a frustration.

A sentiment of frustration about an out of control work routine permeated the responses and aligned with previously mentioned themes for student affairs professionals. However, unlike the other departments in this study, the WTO readily admitted that they could not be all things to all people and often declined requests. The professionals in the Advising Services Office, the Housing and Residential Services Office, and the Campus Life Office never mentioned turning away students or requests. Clearly this department was protecting their burdened staff from becoming more overwhelmed; time was the only commodity that they still had some control over. The two key participants interviewed

within this unit said that they are often forced to make tough choices and decline invitations to speak to student organizations or classes due to limitations in their personnel. If they did not make these types of choices to exert control over their work and ration services they would routinely be working beyond an eight hour day.

INTERVIEWER: YOU MENTIONED THAT EARLIER ABOUT THE HIGH DEMAND FROM THE STUDENTS TO PROVIDE ALL THESE SERVICES, HOW DO YOU MAKE SENSE OF THAT?

LB: Well yeah the management decides, we throw them all the ideas and they say well can do this and we can't do that. It kind of depends and sometimes they'll say OK you can do that but you have to stop something else and then your in this total quandary, oh god what else am I gonna quit, but everything we do is important (in a mocking tone) so what am I gonna quit? I think that is really tough because you've got a group of people that want to keep on doing and giving service but at some point you just say I can't do it anymore. Every semester we get more demand for workshops than we can possibly do, I'm not going to work three nights a week (laughing, shyly) so I say I'll do one night a week but I'm not doing two or three nights a week where I'm not leaving campus until 7:30. I feel bad but gee the student group did just ask us to do this ten days ago (laughing). This group over here asked two months so, we're more inclined to do them, it's the last minute requests that, gee that sounds like it would be a fun thing to do but you know you want me to give up my evenings and my weekends, no. So I think after a while you kind of decide that's enough.

Again we hear professionals speaking with frustration about the disconnection between the values of service and the reality of their work environment. However, this particular department is explicit in setting the boundary regardless of how it might appear to the campus. There are inclinations for how they would like to work based on their professional values but they are forced to work in a completely different world based on limitless demands and minimal resources. The recurring theme in an out of control work routine is that participants are becoming more accepting to setting boundaries with requests and demand for services. The consequence for their inability or unwillingness to set boundaries is less control over both professional and personal time.

The nature of the work in career services is very much about providing resources to students in order to help them gain a competitive advantage on the job market and to define what career they may pursue. There is also a significant element of their work that addresses the student who feels lost or uninspired by their current major and career path. According to one of the career counselors, she routinely sees students who are under prepared for the professional world of work due to lack of internship or practicum experiences and lack of genuine interest in their chosen field. In order to effectively work with students facing this type dilemma or need, professionals felt the need for consistent and ongoing contact with the student. The best that can be achieved in practice within this department is to connect the student with educational resources in a brief introductory discussion.

INTERVIEWER: LET'S TALK ABOUT VALUES AND PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE THE WORK OF YOUR DEPARTMENT, IS THERE SOME KIND OF OVERARCHING PHILOSOPHY THAT PEOPLE FOLLOW IN THEIR WORK?

LB: We're kind of like the middle man in that we bring employers to campus and we have the students that we bring to the employers but we don't make decisions for the student or the employer. The employer decides who to hire the students are deciding who to apply for or what schools to apply for we're kind of in the mix there. But we do a lot of coaching here, a lot of referrals, a lot of letting students know what resources are available. I don't look at myself as an in depth counselor at all, sometimes I see a student once, sometimes I see them two or three times, and there's a few students you see them the whole four to five years. Its more you deal with them where they are at as opposed to long term.

What is distinctive about the way participants in this department cope with students who are unprepared or seen infrequently is that they have adjusted their practice to a coaching/referral model that is not predicated on ongoing relationships with students. While other participants in this study are striving to be supportive of developmental principles within limited windows of opportunity, the WTO staff has accepted their work environment and adapted their practice accordingly. The professional career counselor acknowledges there is not the time or opportunity to enter into intensive conversations with students and their approach is has evolved to become resource based rather than developmental out of necessity. In this department the desire for more in depth and intensive work with students is present on occasion but in practice it just doesn't happen regularly due to departmental mandates, personnel staffing patterns, and resources. In fact, if it does happen that a career counselor and a student connect for ongoing meetings it is often times kept "in the closet" so to speak.

CP: I think that the staff feels a combination of frustration that they can't perhaps work in the way that they want to necessarily. Actually, I think that most of the staff does the same thing I do, which is that they work the way they damn well please with students and don't let anybody know.

The above passage is a strong illustration of a coping technique whereby a supervisor even acknowledges and supports her staff finding ways to exercise agency by exerting control over how they deliver services to students. The professional can subjectively determine to give some students increased access to their time but the majority of practice fits within the encounter based, fast food exchanges mentioned previously and supported by Gutek's (1995) research.

Another coping technique supported by Lipsky's (1980) work suggests that in constrained work environments with high demand for services, providers develop preferred clients. While this particular method of coping was relevant across all departments in this study, the participants in the WTO created new criteria for their preferred clients. Unlike the preferred clients in the Advising Services Office who followed the policies, did not ask questions, and came prepared; the preferred clients in this department offered the staff opportunities to work in a more in depth manner. One supervisor spoke with enthusiasm about working with Ph.D students because their issues are more involved and require in depth conversations, rather than the typical undergraduate student who needs help writing a resume or finding an internship.

CP: I've gotten very picky about the students that I like to work with see I like to work with really complicated stuff so I like, my favorite group right now are

Ph.D. students, ones that have really complicated issues that they're working with and sort of helping them. The typical average undecided student doesn't interest me as much anymore I mean I empathize with them because I think it's tough where they are at but it's not as interesting to me professionally as say a Ph.D. student who decides they don't like academia, so that kind of thing.

Rationalizing and Coping with External Markets

A distinguishing aspect of the functions in the Workforce Training Office is the routine and regular contact with external entities such as potential employers in private, government, and non-profit sector. The department recruits potential employers and is also sought after by employers as a source for new employees. The professionals in this office coordinate two annual job fairs where corporate and non profit organizations pay a substantial fee to attend, gain access to recruit, and then interview prospective employees. The career fairs are one of the primary ways the department generates additional revenues to support and supplement its operational budget which is minimal for a unit serving the numbers of students it does.

As entrepreneurial activities become more embedded in higher education organizations and their departments, these market focused endeavors have a tendency to create challenging situations for professionals and unintended dependencies for departments. Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) suggested that academic capitalist activities that use educational services as a commodity for revenue driven motives become a point of reorganization. As a result these activities create uneasy partnerships between educational organizations, the professionals that work within them and the external

entities that deliver sought after resources. Especially relevant for career services is the fact that external entities do not come to campus to recruit students if the economy is slow and unemployment high.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT FUNDING SOURCES SUPPORT YOUR DEPARTMENT'S ACTIVITIES?

CP: We get state money and we have local funds. Now our state budget right now, I don't know a lot about budgets, but our state budget right now covers salaries of our staff and our operating budget is five thousand. We get no money, all the rest of it is local funds, meaning employers fees that we charge for, our events that we charge students for, fundraising activities that we do, it is money that we generate. We are in kind of bad shape right now.

In most student affairs departments personnel costs are the largest component of expenditures so having state money for salaries is somewhat of a relief. However, the downside of this funding stream is that when there budget cuts it directly affects staffing and people lose their positions. The WTO is expected to serve the entire campus population of students and to have an operating budget of five thousand dollars for office equipment and supplies is severely inadequate. One way the department supplements its state funding is through fees that they charge to students and employers for events like job fairs and services like mock interviews. Academic capitalist activities that tap into markets for external resources are a routine part of their practice; it is a matter of fiscal sustainability. If it were not for these activities the WTO would be even further constrained in its ability to support its staff and serve the campus community.

INTERVIEWER: HOW CONSISTENT ARE THE RESOURCES YOUR DEPARTMENT RECEIVES?

CP: Its not (laughing) we get the budget cuts you know we get those whenever they come. The state money it is not consistent, it is all dependent, we're very dependent on the economy. When the economy is good we get money when the economy's not good we don't, much more directly than other departments because when the economy's not good employers don't come. They don't hire, so they don't come so they don't come to the fairs, our fair attendance is down our money is down because of that they don't ask for resumes they don't recruit on campus, they don't do any of that. And we generate some money from that so we're really really tied to what the external economic picture is in terms of what money we directly get.

The above passage illustrates the impact that fiscal constraints and academic capitalist tendencies can have on a department and just how critical the resources acquired through external market can be. Resource dependency theory (Tolbert, 1985) suggests that as organizations become reliant on external resources the structure, function, and values of the organization begin to change. What ends up occurring is that the institution or the department aligns itself with the source of the external revenues as a way of keeping the resource stream flowing in the direction of the organization. In the WTO they are reliant on the fees paid by prospective employers, they are critical in many ways. Therefore, some professionals in the department may experience dilemmas when organizations from certain industries seek to recruit students on the campus.

INTERVIEWER: HAVE THERE BEEN TIMES WHEN YOUR DEPARTMENT'S POSITION ON AN ISSUE CONFLICTED WITH YOUR OWN?

LB: Yeah, there's a particular company that was banned from the previous two schools that I worked at and they were allowed through this office to be in contact with students. And I was pretty vocal about my disapproval of them because they use extremely dishonest and unethical recruiting practices but they continued to allow them. And I was just, if a student would ask me, see we're supposed to be non partial, when a student says should I work for company "X"? And I'd have to say well you know I can't really judge company "X" but does company "X" offer you what you are looking for? Usually its an ethical issue and we're kind of, we are, we perform or work under the guidelines of the national association which has an ethical principles and standards and guidelines which states the counselor must be impartial and not influence the student. And the employer must be honest and upfront about what they're doing and not give undue pressure to a student. So it makes it kind of a tough line.

The above passage is a good illustration of how this professional makes meaning from her work environment. An area of conflict for the professionals in WTO is the types and characteristics of the industries and companies represented at the campus job fairs. The external entities and the markets tap in to bring essential resources to the department but sometimes the strings attached force professionals to cope with values that are counter to professional and personal ideology. Intelligence agencies, military contractors, alcohol and tobacco companies, and big box stores are all competing for access to prospective

employees and it's up to the WTO to determine if they are suitable for the campus community. Because of their ultimate responsibility to undergraduate students, the professional staff has to be mindful of keeping their values and feelings about prospective employers separate from both the organizations who come to campus and the students' being courted by them; herein lies a distinctive style of coping that did not impact other departments in the study.

INTERVIEWER: HAVE THERE BEEN TIMES WHEN YOUR DEPARTMENT'S POSITION ON AN ISSUE CONFLICTED WITH YOUR OWN?

CP: All the time, oh you bet all the time. You know one of the things that is interesting to me is that I work in career planning, because I'm very anti corporate America, I'm a socialist and so I have a real I have real problems with capitalism and the employers that we bring for our fairs. And those that come for campus interviewing are the most capitalist of the capitalists. So I always, I kind of personally struggle with that. Now its not my job to tell students who they should work for so I'm very clear on that and I don't do that and at the same time I very much work for a department that in some ways represents corporate America, and I have a hard time with that, I don't like corporate America.

The fiscal stability of the WTO is clearly more connected to the external job market and the success of their entrepreneurial endeavors which included courting corporate sponsors and charging fees for service. The passage above illustrates that while participants realized these market-like, entrepreneurial activities were critical for their department they did not hold the values of the employers or those embedded within the

academic capitalist learning/knowledge regime. The way they coped with this apparent conflict or dissonance between their professional values and the values driving their department's activities was to keep silent. The participants abide by the tenets of their professional association and avoid telling students what employers to consider even though they are on the inside they have strong opinions.

In order for the WTO to secure funds needed for new programs for students or to send staff to professional development conferences, they were forced to rely on the temptress of fluctuating external revenues from fees and fundraising activities.

INTERVIEWER: HOW DOES YOUR DEPARTMENT ACQUIRE OR CREATE NEW RESOURCES?

CP: We do a lot of fundraising. Oh well, we go out to employers constantly we get corporate sponsorships for things for our job fairs, for stuff like that we get corporate sponsorships. We charge for our fairs, we charge employers a hefty sum to come, so we do that. The director is constantly doing stuff, she and I are writing a parent grant to the parent's association right now. So we're writing one of those. I think she is getting some money from, the Dean's office, got some money from a large telecommunication company, so I think we're slated to get some of that. We go and write grants, I had written a grant at one point to the Department of Education this was years ago to work with students with disabilities, so we had that. So we do stuff like that as much as we can, a lot of it being corporate though, going for corporate money. Going for corporate money for computers, like at one point a computer company gave us a bunch of computers, so we'll go to that.

Within the WTO, the spirit of entrepreneurialism is fostered by their connection with the external labor market and results in their fee-for-service revenues, fundraising activities, and collaborations that have become an important part of their annual budget and strategic plan. The unfortunate reality of relying on these academic capitalist activities is that they become embedded within your organization and become an irreplaceable aspect of your practice. I'm reminded of one of my former professor's warnings about the Faustian tango where by if you accept something of value from any source you then become beholden to that entity as a consequence of accepting the resource. This faculty member would declare, "he who pays the piper calls the tune!" While the externally focused activities are spoken about by participants in the WTO in somewhat neutral terms, it is apparent that the department lives and dies by the status of the economic picture at the societal level.

Overall, the WTO is exposed to the effects of external factors operating within the larger society in terms of how the economy is doing and whether organizations are hiring or downsizing. As stated by one of the participants, when the economy is slow, employers aren't recruiting students or coming to campus for job fairs. The result for the department is dramatic because the revenues from their fee-for-service components of their programs provide flexibility to a budget picture that is historically bleak. Therefore, the out of control work routine experienced by this department is distinctive because of their reliance on explicit external elements that are not found in other units. What was interesting about the coping techniques and meaning making in the Workforce Training Office was that the participants found ways to rationalize the entrepreneurial activities

being pursued even though they conflicted with their service orientation mission. While they have the similar problems of high student demand and the inability to work in preferred ways they also have the added vulnerability of labor market fluctuations. The core values guiding practice in the WTO are directly premised on a business orientation rather than a developmental approach to working with students.

CHAPTER SIX DISCUSSION

This case study of four departments at one, large, public, research-I institution located in the Southwest has examined the work experiences of student affairs professionals delivering service to undergraduates. The study is conceptually framed by the works of Michael Lipsky (1980), Barbara Gutek (1995), Slaughter & Rhoades (2004), and Lortie (1975). Each scholar describes work processes, perceptions and environments that provide foundational concepts for many aspects of student affairs practice in higher education. Gutek illustrates comprehensive changes in how all services in society are delivered toward a model premised on less personal transactions. Lipsky describes the nature of street level bureaucrat work that is both an outcome of declining resources and increased demands for service while also being an excellent description of student affairs work in a university. Slaughter and Rhoades contribute the theory of an academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime that describes new patterns of organizational activity where colleges and universities actively pursue market-like behaviors in search of external resources. Lastly, Lortie completes the framework by describing the profession of teaching and the rewards and meanings attached to the work.

The research questions are:

- 1) What are the core values of student affairs professionals?
- 2) What are the routine work practices of student affairs professionals?
- 3) How do student affairs professionals feel about the tendencies of their students, department, and institution?
- 4) How do student affairs professionals see these tendencies affecting practice?

The previous two chapters extensively described findings related to this study; first across departments then within each department. This chapter summarizes key findings within the framework of the research questions, provides a conclusion for each office, makes policy recommendations that result from interpretations of the findings within the context of higher education literature, addresses study limitations, and identifies directions for future research. I close on a personal interpretation of the challenges described by student affairs professionals and offer some recommendations for how the profession might proceed in the current context of higher education.

The reality of the student affairs work environment consists of competing values and pressures that coalesce to create incongruity between the values that student affairs professionals bring to their practice and the managerial press for efficient service delivery. To describe the primary purpose of this study one could ask; are student affairs professionals working with students in ways that are aligned with their professional values and the ideology that places the student at the center of the educational process?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This section summarizes key findings within the framework of the research questions. Study observations are concisely described in previous chapters. In order to avoid redundancy, references are made to descriptions in previous chapters wherever appropriate. The research questions are italicized below. Findings follow.

What are the core values of student affairs professionals?

The core values of student affairs ideology revolves around placing the student at the center of the educational process, caring about the development of the whole student,

and assisting the student to become a moral and ethical citizen within our diverse global community. After reviewing the data in this study it is apparent that student affairs professionals are guided more by efficiency as a core value than the development of the whole student. Clearly these professionals are navigating competing values in their work with undergraduate students; processing high numbers of students quickly while simultaneously attempting to nurture student growth and success. A business model approach to managing a university reverberates through all segments of the community and is especially challenging for those charged with working directly in the development of human capital. Faculty, counselors, graduate assistants, and a wide array of student affairs professionals are being forced to practice within a model premised upon efficiency, cost effectiveness, and entrepreneurial activities.

The current organizational context in higher education is based upon many of the principles of the academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime described by Slaughter and Rhoades (2004). Institutional priorities in higher education are focused upon minimizing costs, increasing revenues, and pursuing new markets that have the potential to generate additional resources for colleges and universities. Competitive behaviors are occurring more routinely both within the academy and a range of diverse external markets. Administrators in higher education more involved with seeking partnerships and collaborations with industry, government, and the corporate sector while internal processes related to teaching and other services are being marginalized.

Upon the analysis and review of the data in this study, I would suggest that the core values of student affairs professionals are more closely aligned with the business

model than the development principles of the traditional student affairs ideology referenced throughout the existing literature. It is important to consider how relevant the field's principles are in the current context of postsecondary education. Is it realistic to expect student affairs professionals to strive for the affective and cognitive development of each individual they come into contact with throughout the course of their work days? I would suggest that this is an unrealistic notion for the professional to pursue not only because time is so limited and student are many but because few students are actually interested in what the profession is offering. Most college students within this generation see education are purely a vocational prerequisite and like good consumers of goods and services a college education is just another product they are purchasing. As such the value placed upon the overall experience of developing into a well rounded citizen within our global community is minimal at best and there a larger emphasis on experimenting and having fun than seeking enlightenment.

At first glance it may not appear that any of the traditional core values of student affairs work are demonstrated with any frequency in the routine work of the participants in this study. However, upon closer inspection, we can certainly see and hear elements of these core values as they are interwoven within the work context of this particular institution. The core values of the profession are not being shouted from the rafters of every isolated endeavor but they are finding their way into practice at a latent level almost like water finds the lowest point of a plane.

Student affairs professionals who participated in this study clearly care very deeply about the students they encounter and want to help them in any way they can to

have positive interactions during their college experience. One example of his this caring can be seen in participants' tireless efforts with students in terms of letting them in to their lives. Some participants clearly went above and beyond the functional expectations of their role by giving students their cell phone numbers, letting students walk with them to their cars, and helping students work through issues during all hours of the evening. While these types of examples display a commitment and concern for student well being they are not exhibited in every encounter with students nor do they permeate the professional practice of all student affairs professionals.

Another example of a core value of being demonstrated in student affairs practice is how participants intended to keep the student in front of them at the center of the process despite the obstacles mentioned previously. One academic advisor spoke about students who were isolated socially and he would like to take them home with him if he could but instead settled for taking them to lunch. A hall director spoke about feeling "warm and fuzzy" at the end of the day knowing that he made a difference in the life or experiences of one of his residents. In this example the student living in his building was in need of a resource, which he provided, but the fact that the student stopped him to let him know how much it meant to her made a lasting impression. This example shows as Lortie (1975) suggested, that the psychic rewards of making a difference in the life of that one spectacular case was reinforcing to student affairs professionals and teachers alike. Lastly, one of the participants responsible for adjudicating student code and academic integrity violations spoke with enthusiasm about helping students get out jams that were not a result of their own choices and decisions. Clearly, participants in this study were

interested in student well being and did everything within their power to remind themselves and their colleagues that focusing on the students was the priority. However, in the broader perspective these actions mentioned above impacted small numbers of individual students and only did so when the organizational setting created the opportunity.

Despite the strong statements made by participants regarding the negative aspects of student behavior and the deficits that existed within undergraduates, these professionals remained dedicated to helping them succeed. Several participants spoke about being a positive role model for students in terms of both behavior and decisions. One participant in the Campus Life Office advised student organizations and often hosted alcohol free parties at his home to set examples for students that you could have fun in a social setting without alcohol. A hall director mentioned the challenge of feeling like she was “always on” in terms of her commitment to setting a good example for her students. When she was around personal friends in social settings her goals remained the explicit display of consistent values in both her personal and professional life; another core value of the student affairs profession. In social settings she found herself tempted to confront people telling off-color jokes or making remarks about individuals, a behavior that she would routinely pursue with the residents in her building.

Another significant demonstration of the core values in practice was in the participants’ interest, desire, and commitment to keep talking about and striving to improve student learning and development. Student affairs professionals in this study appear to be the only consistent “voice” for students. While faculty and administrators

seem to be speaking a language of multiple purposes and goals, this group of professionals makes no bones about being “focused on student growth” despite a multitude of barriers that exist in achieving the outcome. The almost singular chorus is demonstrated through the words and actions of study participants in their routine work practices, in meetings, on campus workgroups, and other venues where they carry rather heavy “bucket” of the student perspective.

What was remarkable about this group of participants is despite the numerous limitations and constraints that existed in their work environment and institutional setting many still had their eye on the prize in terms of student development. They were aligning their efforts with the best practices of the profession by working on building learning communities, designing relevant programs, and teaching co-curricular classes. These responsibilities were taken seriously despite the lack of consistent fiscal resources, limited student interest, and the fact that they came in addition to their existing job function often with little notice. The participants in this study persevered toward their desire to foster the growth and development of students by taking on additional duties without any additional compensation and creatively designing opportunities for students through partnerships and collaborations.

In summary, while these participants may not be achieving the goals set out in the Student Personnel Point of View they are weaving the ideas into their practice in words, actions, and commitment. The student affairs professional continues to strive toward the lofty and idealistic values of keeping the student at the center of an educational process that is driven by larger political and economic realities. I would however suggest that the

core values of student affairs professionals are more about efficiency, doing more with less, and acknowledging that their impact on student growth is limited by numerous factors. As a profession they appear to be in transition like other segments of the academic labor market. Professionals across the campus are being forced to expand and adjust their approaches to practice along with the values that guide their work. Almost unconsciously, academic labor is aligning with a competitive, capitalist framework that makes the human capital they have long valued a lesser priority. Student affairs would do well to examine its core values of developing the whole student since within the current organizational context it is a difficult task much like pushing a large boulder up a steep hill.

What are the routine work practices of student affairs professionals?

For the majority of participants, their work consisted of a high volume of encounters with students that were often exchanges that occurred in limited windows of opportunity. In many ways, these professionals more routinely had transactions with students that were similar to fast-food exchanges of very short duration rather than ongoing developmental relationships. All of the participants easily described a very comprehensive range of routine tasks that either offered direct services to students, supported students through programming, or administrative roles that served their department or institution as a whole.

Responses that provided data for this research question varied by both employee and department but there was quite a bit of consistency across all student affairs professionals. All of the participants mentioned that student contact was a significant

portion of their responsibility and could spend at least half of their time in a given day working directly with students. In addition to the time spent with students, all mentioned having significant administrative responsibilities that required their attention on a routine and recurring basis. For almost all the participants maintaining notes in student files or returning phone calls and emails were a common part of their work. A significant number of participants were teaching and managing a credit bearing course that was a part of their work responsibilities and theoretically supported the retention mission of the institution. Almost all participants had significant programming and committee responsibilities that required them to meet with colleagues, define processes, and coordinate events that were intended for students or the campus community.

One somewhat interesting finding about the routine work practices of student affairs professionals was how diverse and fluid some of their roles were and how several participants had minimal direct contact with students. The mid-level managers that I interviewed spent a good deal of time working with their staff to determine and make decisions on how student programs and services would be delivered while they also assessed and communicated outcomes, did marketing and outreach, and generally worked on behalf of the student affairs mission on committees or research projects. Several participants in this study spoke favorably about aspects of their work that did not involve students directly and found this part of their routine to be positive in both personal and professional ways.

Overall the work experiences of student affairs professionals are dominated by discrete encounters with students that often result in brief exchanges of critical

information or resources. The need to effectively manage a complex and dynamic routine of work responsibilities created an overwhelming and out of control feeling for most participants. As a result finding a personal balance, equilibrium, or ways to cope with this work environment was a priority for many participants. The balancing act that ensued from serving high volumes of students through encounters rather than more intimate personal relationships made the identification of coping techniques and the process of meaning making about their work another routine aspect of their work life. The driving force behind this need to cope and find balance in their work was the reality that many participants conceptualized time as a scarce and valuable commodity. These professionals routinely found ways to save and preserve time by setting personal and professional limits, much like Lipsky's (1980) street level bureaucrats and they adapted their work practices to meet the needs of high numbers of students.

How do student affairs professionals feel about the tendencies of their students, department, and institution?

The participants in this study felt that the characteristics of undergraduate students combined with the tendencies of their department and the institution make their positions extremely demanding, stressful, and often overwhelming. I heard a large number of the participants speak about their students as being deficient in a number of competencies that they expected students to arrive on campus having already established. Students were described as lacking in some respect, whether it was in terms of academic or interpersonal skills, interest in college, or owning the consequences of their decisions and behaviors. Surprisingly, the participants spoke frequently about undergraduate students

being entitled and unapologetic in reference their demands for immediate responses and solutions from student affairs professionals. The characteristics of students were more often grouped under a deficit perspective rather than about the unique, positive, and creative attributes they possessed. Almost every participant who maintained routine contact with students acknowledged the highs and lows of their work resulted from if students were engaged in the process or uninterested. One explanation for this perspective is although these professionals do attempt to work with all students regardless of where they are on the developmental continuum; their time is such a limited commodity that students who need more attention become too great a burden.

At the departmental level, participants repeatedly mentioned a work routine that was out of control due to high demands for service to students and work loads that sometimes had one professional responsible for hundreds of students. Additionally, many participants expressed frustration with how their department structured services for students and how frequently they were expected to work in environments that were not conducive to the goals of the department or profession. There was regular mention made about working with many different students in short windows of time and an almost assembly-line approach to practice. Often students were seen only once and moved through their offices within large masses of students and as such retained their relative anonymity. Student affairs professionals appear to be constrained by their departmental structure which is focused on serving as many students as possible. While some find it a thrill to manage the volume of students they see in a day others clearly find it impedes their ability to work with students in more developmental or intentional approaches.

More than a few participants spoke about their interest in getting to know the students as individuals and getting to the root of their needs. Clearly how student affairs work is structured at the department level to serve high student volumes within minimal staffing structures led participants to feel that they were just scratching the surface of their students' needs. The students they encounter are funneled to their offices through a "take a number" and "can I take your order" approach and they see this as impeding their ability to develop an ongoing relationship with the student.

Participants' feelings about institutional tendencies, policies and characteristics can be best described as a hindrance to their practice with students. While most participants were somewhat accepting of the different priorities they held as professionals versus the larger goals of the institution there were some who were highly emotional about the topic. There was a palatable "us versus them" mentality in responses which suggested that institutional initiatives were oblivious to the student affairs mission and most routinely inspired by both economic and political motivations rather than students' needs. Many student affairs professionals provided examples of mixed messages, hypocrisy, and market-driven behaviors that they perceived as indicative of an institution that has lost sight of the public good mission of higher education. Participants spoke about the institutional context and its various agendas as though the development of the human capital within its students, faculty, and staff has been supplanted by the values of efficiency, profits, and the bottom line. In the opinion of these participants, the espoused institutional mission that is described in the glossy marketing materials depicted an untrue reality. From the vantage point of their everyday work experiences they

experienced an institutional climate that paralleled the competitive, market-driven actions of the academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime described by Slaughter and Rhoades (2004). Although participants understood theoretically that the university was a business that charges tuition for an educational service they did not speak favorably about the bureaucratic structures that directly impact their ability to meet student needs.

How do student affairs professionals see these tendencies affecting practice?

The large majority of student affairs professionals that participated in this study were cognizant of the competing values they experienced during their work at the institution. However, not all were explicitly aware of how these competing values affected their routine practice. The biggest affect on practice appeared to be in the rationing of services to students that took place almost subconsciously by professionals. Several participants spoke about how the engagement level and interest of the students they saw had a large impact on how in return they provided services to these students. Once again with such high volumes of students seeking services professionals had to restrict the scope of their efforts and engagement based on the attitudes of the students coming through the door.

The tendencies of the institution in terms of the types of students admitted, how policies were implemented, and the competition between colleges directly affected their professional practice. While most participants were genuinely interested on helping students succeed it often sounded like many just acknowledged they could not help them all and “that is just they way things are.” Participants worked in an out of control environment most of the time and this resulted in an approach to practice of doing the

best they could within the given constraints of their department. For some participants this rationalization was a coping technique for not getting overly involved emotionally in their work and as others said, “not losing sleep over what you can’t change.”

For many of the participants the combined interplay of elements from the institutional, departmental, and student level were set aside cognitively and they singularly focused on making a difference in the interaction happening at the moment. This practice is another type of service rationing technique that was illustrated by the interview responses whereby professionals spoke about prioritizing the individual students in front of them over other tasks. One participant, when asked about the impact of resource limitations at the campus level responded by saying, “I don’t worry about those things and just focus on my students.” Even though student affairs professionals are directly impacted by the priorities and tendencies of their institution in terms of serving high volumes of students with minimal resources, they insulate themselves from those dynamics and focus on students.

Another significant impact on the practice of student affairs professionals resulting from institutional and departmental factors is the specific way they work with students. Because any one day could include multiple, short duration, discrete interactions with high numbers of individual students, participants often had to limit the scope of their conversations. If a student was in their office to talk about a disciplinary violation or an academic policy then that is what the conversation had to focus on despite the understanding that other factors could have led to the initial question. One career counselor mentioned many appointments supposed to be about resumes actually led to

much broader discussions about what the student wanted to do with their entire life! Unfortunately, student affairs professionals do not have the time or availability to wander outside of their functional silos to work on promoting the development of the whole student. Therefore, even though the professional is interested in having more intensive time to help students work through their individual situations, their style of practice is dictated by the fact that their office structures time with students in thirty minute increments. For some participants, this reality of their work is frustrating because their professional values and preferred style of practice is constrained, constricted, and not considered reasonable by the institution.

Participants routinely spoke about doing their best to bring out some personal fact about the students coming into their office because they felt this was the best way to have successful outcomes on both sides of the interaction. The practice of speaking casually with students about where they are from or what they are involved in on the campus was a common practice before getting down to the purpose of the encounter. For the professional, it allows them to appear like they know the student or a bit about them as individuals. It also may facilitate future opportunities to uniquely craft learning opportunities for the student based on their needs and interests. For the student, if they are open to playing along with the conversation, it could offer them access to a professional on campus who knows at least a little something about them as an individual.

While participants spoke about making a connection with students and used that approach as their guiding practice, according to the core values of the profession they

were charged with developing an ongoing relationship with the student. Making a connection during a fast-food encounter with a student is another coping technique that is used routinely in practice. In essence this kind of exchange while not always successful is the next best option because collaborative relationships with each of their students is not possible and impeded by countless factors.

Despite the high numbers of students that student affairs professionals have contact with over the course of a year they more often report a lack of reciprocity as one of the major limitations in their work. Several academic advisors mentioned that if a student appears uninterested or unengaged in their conversation about course registration or other topics then they feel less inclined to make an effort with the student. Much like Lipsky's (1980) street level bureaucrats, student affairs professionals cope with their work environment by rationing services and effort to clients who are most likely to benefit from what they are providing. By focusing their efforts on preferred clients or students who are engaged and seeking growth, professionals manage their out of control institutional context and the broad continuum of student interest.

CONCLUSIONS FOR EACH OFFICE

The five major themes discussed in detail in Chapter Four were found to have distinctive variations in each department in the study. Therefore an additional data analysis was provided in the detailed descriptions of behavior patterns within each office and these were presented in Chapter Five. The data was separated this way because the study uncovered several interesting differences in how the major themes manifested themselves within each of the departments studied. Conclusions for each of the four

departments that connect the data, literature, and context are described below. The most prominent observations for each office are followed by observations on how the behavior patterns affected professional practice and service delivery to students.

The context in this case addresses the priorities surrounding this particular university's efforts to admit, retain and serve more undergraduate students in order to support other initiatives through student tuition and fees. Participants clearly felt that their practice was guided by values of a managerial nature that focused on efficiency while their professional preference for relationships with students fell by the wayside. Student affairs professionals continue to be expected to do more with declining resources, operate with minimal staff, and justify their value and existence frequently. The work experiences of professionals are characterized by encounters with students over actual relationships, students being described as deficient, an out of control work environment, frustration with institutional policy and practice, and lastly the use of coping strategies that ration services and focus on psychic rewards.

Housing and Residential Services Office

Of all the departments investigated, the participants from the department of residence life had the deepest understanding of the principles and values of student development. Almost every participant had earned a masters degree in student personnel services, counseling, or higher education administration and perceived their role as primarily helping students develop as individual members of the campus community.

The one characteristic that appeared to best describe the work experiences of hall directors in residence life was variable; every day was different and their work tasks

depended upon what was happening within their residence hall and with their residents in any given day. Hall directors, more than any other group of participants, spoke about the difficulty of maintaining boundaries or distinctions between their personal, private time and their professional time since they lived within the community that they were responsible for managing. The work for these participants was described as consisting of very long hours, over sixty hours a week was not unusual. In addition, the hours spent working in a day was often subject to increase as a result of occurrences within the building. Fire alarms being pulled as pranks, roommate conflicts, petty thefts, and alcohol and drug violations all had the tendency to add time to any given day. During most times of the year like as residents were moving in or out, when paraprofessional staff were new and had to be trained, when conduct violations were high, or during resident assistant selection time, hall directors' work routinely included multiple roles that needed to be juggled through frequent interruptions.

The work environment for hall directors in the HRSO often placed personal or professional values in competition with organizational values. The department is an auxiliary unit within the division of student affairs which means that it adheres to a business, market-driven orientation because the housing fees it collects from students directly support its personnel, operations, and maintenance costs. The department values efficiency, productivity and customer service and in many ways views itself as business entity that has to fill beds and manage yields. As such, during the summer prior to the fall semester, the department routinely fills its rooms and spaces to beyond capacity so that students who back out of their decision to attend the institution do not leave large

gaps in anticipated revenues. While this practice is understood from a business level, it also forces students to share crowded spaces upon moving in and creates a challenging situation for hall directors to manage from their strong learning and development perspective.

Professionals in this department routinely practice coping strategies that reduce personal stress but are in direct competition with their belief system in terms of fostering student development and growth. Students discovering how challenging it is to share a space with a roommate often request a roommate change if they have made friends with another resident who shares similar interests and preferences. Hall directors are more inclined to want to spend time talking with the student and use the opportunity as a learning experience in terms of getting along with people that are different from yourself; a valued principle within the student affairs literature. However, what more often occurs is that students seeking a change will contact their parents and the parent will contact a supervisor in the department. The outcome that typically occurs is that the hall director is strongly encouraged to move the student in alignment with the customer service orientation which then sacrifices the student learning outcome valued by the professional. The effect this work environment has on the professional practice of hall directors is described both with Lipsky's (1980) street level bureaucrat and Rhoades & Sporns' (2002) managerial professional. The professional autonomy of the hall directors is severely constrained by the organizational values predicated on customer service and efficiency. At the same time professionals working in these positions are being supervised by managers who are held accountable by other managers above them

hierarchically rather than a community of peers. The result is that decisions are often subject to political and economic pressures that are in direct competition with the personal and professional values held by the individual

Advising Services Office

Of the four departments studied, the largest discrepancy between office structure, people, and functional roles was observed in the Advising Services Office (ASO). The large professional staff of over twenty had a comprehensive range of skills, expertise, talent, and professional experiences but the office structure combined with the number and diversity of students served created a challenging setting. ASO employees typically had graduate degrees in education and their position in this office was their first professional position in higher education. The nature of the work in this office was intense and demanding. It was a work environment that combined an altruistic helping framework held by most counseling/advising professionals predicated on one-on-one contact with an office environment that served thousands of students each semester. The office structure of UC was designed to serve high numbers of students through both thirty minute appointments and a walk-in counter for quick questions. The professionals working in the ASO typically had a predetermined number of available appointments each day coupled with a few periods of time where they worked the counter. These employees were clearly in favor of more autonomy in structuring their work time so as to make the greatest impact on students. Attempting to strictly govern and limit employee behavior through departmental scheduling structures was not effective in this office according to the participants.

A second outcome of the office structure in terms of scheduling was that the employees in the ASO were not given enough time or opportunities to work toward student development/learning outcomes. The mission of the ASO is to work with undecided, exploratory, and transitioning students but thirty minute meetings were not effective in terms of this objective. Despite the fact that most participants expressed an interest for working with students in more intensive ways in order to accomplish the espoused departmental mission, the organizational structure of the office directly impeded in their ability to do so.

A result of this counterproductive office environment was the widespread appearance of street level bureaucrat behavior and this clearly affected how services were delivered to student and how professionals practiced. Academic advising is closely related to counseling and as such it requires a depth of relationship and ongoing, repeated contact over time. However, productive counseling and advising sessions were not attainable due to the volume of clients that needed to be seen and the structure of the office. As such, participants in the ASO were forced to provide prescriptive counseling despite the fact that they perceived the department as the one place on campus that was charged with being more developmental with students. As suggested by Gutek (1995), professionals were forced to deliver encounter based transactions with students even though the field within which they identified is based on a relational model.

Under the above described conditions, participants would be expected to engage in coping strategies and service rationing techniques that would reduce their personal stress. The types of coping strategies observed in this study were marginalizing clients

who appeared unengaged, working more with preferred clients who responded well to service, and prioritizing tasks so that paperwork became a lesser priority.

Campus Life Office

The employees interviewed within the CLO office had very unique, individualized, and distinctive roles which made the identification on one prevalent behavior challenging. In fact, no two participants interviewed within the office shared the same role nor were their routine work experiences similar on a day to day basis. The participants included a graduate research assistant, a professional responsible for marketing and outreach, two assistant Deans, one judicial officer, and a customer service liaison. The one unifying aspect of their functions and roles was their critical involvement with several elements of the student experience on the campus and their desire to make the student's experience more enriching.

Professionals working in the CLO had a depth of experiences working with students within higher education and either held advanced degrees or were in the process of completing degrees. The only exceptions to this were the employees in charge of marketing and outreach and the customer service liaison for the campus. The marketing professional had worked in the private sector and held a bachelor's degree and the service liaison did not complete a college degree.

Despite the diversity of roles and backgrounds the professionals in the CLO described their work as service to the campus, to students, and to their colleagues. They supported students and faculty in disciplinary and academic integrity cases, coordinated programs that were designed to foster student faculty interactions outside of class time,

conducted research on campus climate issues, advised student government leaders, and played a role in campus wide events like commencement ceremonies and speaking engagements.

Out of all the departments interviewed for this study, the CLO was most involved in entrepreneurial pursuits and the professionals working out of this office had the most proficient recognition of both the political and economic influences on their work. Almost every participant mentioned their office's partnership with corporate sponsors and how this collaboration impacted their work experiences and routine practice. For example, the participant responsible for advising student government leaders mentioned his need to inform students about institutional partnerships with a large soft drink and a large telecommunications company so that their programs and initiatives would not conflict with these agreements. The judicial officer mentioned that although these partnerships helped the department to do more things with and for students they were often a burden in terms of the administrative processes that needed to occur to keep the resources flowing. Lastly, the political nature of bureaucratic organizations was lamented by participants in this department due to the fact that their roles required them to navigate and compensate for this additional level of expectation.

The impact of the work environment on practice for these participants is best described as a semi permeable barrier that can sometimes impede the goals directed at student growth and development. The bureaucratic context of the campus combined with the political and economic elements that influence the decisions within the department are a nuisance, but the employees still persevere and still remain committed to what is in

the best interest of the student. The bottom line impact on service delivery and practice from the CLO office is that no element of their work routine gets the attention to quality that employee's desire. Because there are so many factors beyond their control add to an overwhelming and out of control work environment the quality of effort can be influenced in any given day. A student suicide or a controversial speaker, a call from the President's office about an off campus party, or a contract with a vendor that didn't get honored at a student run event; any and all of these situations affect the practice of employees. As a result this is the one office where the organizational value of customer service combines with image of the institution to create a significant press on professionals to manage multiple constituencies. Therefore, while they are designed as an office to support the entire student experience they often end up being the voice for students in environments like cabinet meetings where there are a multitude of competing priorities.

Workforce Training Office

The most prevalent behavior among the professionals within the career services office was focusing their limited personnel and organization resources on functions directly related to assisting students in their career development. Out of all the departments in this study, the WTO most explicitly described their role in terms of preparing students for the professional world by providing resources for resume development, interviewing skills, and job placement. As a result of the department's specialized function they were the one unit with the deepest understanding and closest

connection to an external market, specifically the labor market for both corporate and not for profit positions.

Professionals in this department practiced and delivered services to students by targeting both the skills necessary and the accompanying values associated with the careers they were considering. However, they also clearly understood their role had to be limited to short encounters or transactions with students because of the high ratio of student to counselors. Similar to the work environment of academic advisors, these professionals delivered service that is very much grounded in the relational model of counseling and other helping professions. Career counselors are unable to develop the kinds of ongoing relationships necessary to truly help students progress through the series of value clarifications and decisions that must occur to make an informed career choice. Instead these professionals focus on coordinating tangible resources like mock interviews, job fairs, and other concrete workshops on topics like finding an internship or writing a functional resume.

The most prominent outcome from the intentional focus on delivering tangible career development resources to students was the inability to work intensively with students who needed more direction and guidance. Several participants from this department mentioned that although they preferred the more involved work with students that several elements of their department prevented them from openly pursuing those practices. As a result of the low numbers of professionals working directly with students and the high numbers of students seeking services the participants responded with several behaviors akin to Lipsky's (1980) street level bureaucrats. Most interestingly, a code of

camaraderie and silence developed among the career counselors as they found ways to by-pass departmental policy and work with students in their preferred ways. Some students, once they established contact with a counselor and responded positively to the previous recommendations, could become a preferred client and obtain recurring appointments with their career counselor.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important to state that responsibility for many of the unmet professional goals espoused by the student affairs profession does not reside within the individual employee. Taking a sociological perspective leads one to look to the organizational culture and structures existing within the environment which greatly affect how employees perform their functions. Clearly, the work practices of Lipsky's (1980) street level bureaucrats are a result of the constraints and demands placed upon individuals by clients, office structure, the ambiguous nature of their work, and how individual employees make meaning from and cope with their work environment. It is critical to remind the reader that the student affairs professionals in this study are competent people trying their best to impact students in a beneficial and positive manner. It is not the fault of the individual that their work routine is out of control and leads to behaviors, perceptions, and emotions that may be counter to the core values of the student affairs profession.

The increased specialization within student affairs has opened up numerous opportunities for professionals interested in working with students outside of the classroom. Academic advising, counseling, financial and legal affairs, leadership development, judicial affairs, learning support, recreation and leisure are just a few of the

specialties that now exist on almost every campus. However, this expansion has resulted in several unintended consequences including professional silos, similar to what is found in discipline-based academic departments, where student's needs have been compartmentalized in a way that student affairs departments have been forced to claim them as territory in order to justify their continued existence.

Another unexpected consequence of this growth in student affairs is the organizational and cultural separation that exists between academics as the responsibility of faculty and student life as the responsibility of student affairs professionals. At large institutions like the one in this study the competition for the student's attention and institutional resources to keep endeavors moving forward on both sides of the continuum have become routine and heavily contested. Similar to academics, specialized groups of student affairs professionals have their own terminology, professional associations, and definitions of successful outcomes. While academic departments view success in terms of scholarly research and publications in refereed journals, student affairs administrators view success in terms of student programs designed and activities organized. Both faculty and student affairs professionals have become accustomed to evaluating success based on the quantity of published articles or student programs rather than the quality. In the fiscal reality of many college campuses tough decisions have to be made about who gets what resources and what will be done with those resources.

Before I describe the specific policy recommendations from this study it is critical to prioritize in general some ideas for practitioners to consider as they reconsider their practice. Practitioners need to begin valuing dualisms and adopt a *both-and* approach

rather than an *either-or* approach. We need to stop thinking that academic affairs and student affairs are at opposite ends of a continuum. Student affairs professionals need to learn more about their colleagues in academic affairs and begin to see the connections between the work that happens in class and out of class.

Practitioners also need to get more accustomed and comfortable with practicing within two paradigms that coexist in organizations. The business management paradigm is premised on Newtonian principles which describe the world as machine-like, orderly, rational, and manageable through fragmentation and hierarchy. Unfortunately for student affairs professionals this is how institutions of higher education are organized and the characteristics of this structure are necessary at some level but a hindrance at other levels. The alternate conception of organizational life and the world is built upon quantum mechanics and chaos theory. The new science approach as it has been called is premised on interconnections, networks, and viewing the organization as an open system and a living organism (Love & Estanek, 2004).

The results of this study suggest that an out of control work environment dominated by encounters is the routine. It is time for student affairs professionals and administrators to stop trying to control the chaos through structures and a myriad of functional silos. What needs to happen is that professionals should strive to become more comfortable recognizing and appreciating the benefits that each paradigm and alternative sides of the continuum brings to higher education. Academic affairs and students affairs is a social construction that individuals have demarcated and in order to

reach the goals espoused for students educators need to begin imploding that conception and many others.

The policy recommendations below focus on the work setting primarily since if one were to address organizational structures it is likely that the ability of student affairs practitioners to work more routinely with the core values and principles of their profession would increase. Suggestions to student affairs unit directors and upper level administrators in both academic and student affairs focus on reversing the explicit segmentation between academics and student life. The recommendations from this study focus on bridging and eliminating the divide between academic and student affairs and using institutional resources in collaborative and non competitive ways.

- 1) Examine and reassess the ratios between students seeking service from departments in student affairs and the number of professionals available in units. Reducing the proliferation of encounter based transactions that focus on a specialized needs and moving toward more holistic approaches can be achieved by making intentional decisions about available programs and services.
- 2) Establish a collaborative process involving all areas of the campus community to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum in terms of both cognitive and affective development. Strive to create opportunities to include the expertise of both academic and student affairs professionals. Team taught general education courses that involves a faculty member and student affairs

professional could give students more opportunities to experience a collaborative, seamless learning environment in and out of class.

- 3) Student affairs and service professionals need to establish and organize a skilled marketing campaign for internal and external constituents. All campus administrators need to understand the power and strength of the student/parent constituency both as enrolled students and as future donors.
- 4) Create informal opportunities for senior level administrators in academic and student affairs to discuss issues related to student learning that impact both groups equally. An opportunity for professionals in both academic and student affairs to begin hearing and speaking a similar language could lead to a commitment to strengthen every structure and resource that can support student learning in both cognitive and affective realms.
- 5) Senior administrators, in partnership with the President, should review current administrative and organizational structures to determine whether they support the desired student outcome and consider alternative funding structures to refocus organizational priorities on the education of the whole student.
- 6) The campus should internalize the goal of redesigning every student learning opportunity so it includes both affective and cognitive components regardless of the costs or impediments. By having academic and student affairs leaders collaborate upon the foundation of shared goals the organization and all its members will be in a better position to achieve mutual goals of learning, research, and service.

- 7) Encourage student affairs employees to explicitly develop and communicate a common voice for student learning by collapsing functional silos and working collaboratively. Consider reevaluating all existing programs and services for students to avoid duplication of efforts and find creative ways of working together to meet students' needs.
- 8) Explore if professional associations within the field have considered unions for their constituents as a way to promote autonomy and agency in advocating for students needs.
- 9) Provide genuine opportunities for shared governance structures that cut across academic and student affairs to offer input into decisions affecting the entire campus. Employees will feel empowered and less inclined to rationing behaviors if their input into the structure their work is considered and implemented according to their ideas.
- 10) Regularly solicit, assess, and evaluate student feedback as a way to understand how students are using and perceiving the existing student services on the campus.

STUDY LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings from this study can be appropriately used as an additional source of information among other research for administrators, managers, and student affairs professionals to understand more about the basic work experiences of this group of employees, how their practice is impacted by organizational context, and how the core values of their profession are in transition within their dynamic campus environment.

This study has just scratched the surface to illustrate the basic work experiences for these employees, how they feel about their work with students and colleagues, and how they make meaning from their organizational context. However, as a case study of one institution, findings should not be generalized to other departments not investigated in this study or to other institutions. With participants coming from only four departments in an institution of this size, it could be asserted that findings cannot even be generalized to even include this institution.

The study is also limited by the different types of employees interviewed. Some were front line employees like academic advisors while others were mid level managers. As a group, the front line employees who worked frequently with high numbers of students on a routine basis were much more critical of the pressure to see high numbers of students during transitory encounters. The other groups of employees were also critical of aspects of their work environment but hall directors were much more concerned about long hours and conditions of employment issues like having to live in the building they manage. Mid level administrators were also critical of the institution but they most often illustrated issues resulting from the bureaucracy and competing priorities that existed and how this impacted their work. Future research should either control for the different employee types and titles or undertake a much more comprehensive sample across the entire student affairs division.

The richness of the data could have also been improved from both a multiple interview approach and including more than one institution. It was a critical necessity to develop rapport with each participant. The single interview approach, while efficient for

scheduling and other practical reasons, may not have allowed adequate time for the researcher to probe deeply into their feelings about their work experiences, professional practice, and values. Any future study should include multiple interviews to allow the research to gain insight into how over the course of a set period of time these employees made meaning from their work in student affairs. In order to increase the generalizability of these findings it would be wise to include at least one other institution from a similar Carnegie classification.

Implications for student affairs practice that can be pursued from this study would be for this segment of the academic labor market to get more assertive within the campus environment and among their colleagues. The student affairs profession needs to concisely communicate their expertise about students to others on campus and make their case for how they can work collaboratively with faculty both in and out of the classroom. Practitioners also need to begin to more explicitly focus on global and external networks and how their profession can begin to venture out of the house occasionally. Exploring the potential positives and negatives from unionization would be a good starting point and examining the effect of unions on the teaching profession might provide a good starting place. This might be a worthwhile endeavor in order to exert their professional autonomy, agency, and judgment when it comes to how services are delivered to undergraduate students. In addition, this group of professionals is critical to the mission of their institution and they need to continue to develop and promote a common and consistent voice for student learning and development. One of the most frequent methods for doing this involves partnering with academic affairs but often these relationships take

on more of a supportive role to the institution's mission rather than an equitable one. Student affairs professionals need to get more assertive and unapologetic about their expertise and ability to help their academic colleagues and administrators understand what students want and need to be retained and eventually graduate.

COMPETING VALUES

Despite the best intentions of student affairs professionals and their professional ideology focused on student development, many factors and associated values guide their practice with undergraduates in the university setting. Most prominently, the sheer volume of students on the campus, the diversity of their accompanying needs, skills, and motivation levels, and numerous institutional structures have a major influence on the professionals' style and approach to their work.

As a result of the context out of which they operate, helping professionals like those in student affairs are finding their ability to affect change in students is often limited at best. The volume, demands, and needs of students are becoming increasingly complex and they are then magnified by the institutional environment within which students and professionals coexist. Limited resources in public higher education have led to a greater reliance on raising student tuition revenues and the need to admit large number of students. More students are coming to campuses with greater needs and who may be less prepared for the rigors of higher education. As a result, student affairs departments and the professionals hired to work with students, have been stretched to the limit in many respects while still being held accountable for developing and delivering

personalized programs and interventions so undergraduate students are retained at on their campus.

The current trends in the financing of higher education have resulted in less state support, more market-like behaviors, and larger portions of the operating budget consisting of external funds acquired through competitive practices (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). Additionally, general shifts away from service delivery based on relationships (Gutek, 1995), which is most suitable for successfully obtaining advising, counseling, and student learning outcomes, has left student affairs professionals squarely in the middle of two opposed philosophies; one being student development and the other of the business model. This problem is not unlike what is faced in the medical field where physicians in HMOs are forced to deliver care to patients within the framework cost effectiveness rather than what might be best for the individual patient. The nexus of dilemma for student affairs professionals resides in space between what they expect their role to be upon entering the field and the actual reality of the routine work experiences.

Individuals develop expectations for their professional functions through a combination of formal education, prior work experiences, and the actual job description and interview process they complete. For the many student affairs professionals who have entered the field through a formal educational program they have become very familiar with student development theory and somewhat reasonably expect that it has a professional application once they complete their degree. Unfortunately, courses in administration, strategic planning, and resource management have just begun find their

way into masters level programs and typically they are not emphasized as much as they should be given what we know about the context of higher education organizations.

Observing organizational structures and processes at this one large public institution it is clear that decisions related to students or student services are not grounded in student development theory but within the context of cost effectiveness and the Newtonian model of orderly, mechanistic organizations. One former professor of mine once said that carrying the “student development bucket of water” could be a detriment to both your credibility and professional career within some circles of the institution. This is clearly the reality on most campuses where decisions are made with the bottom line as the guiding principle rather than what is best for students.

Student affairs professionals are service employees that operate within an educational setting and most are guided by human interaction and development models. Whether this orientation resulted from educational training or previous professional experiences, or political beliefs it is apparent that many prefer to deliver services to students in a holistic, collaborative, and developmental approach to practice. The reality of their work environment ends up forcing them to think about both their work and their clients in an entirely different way as a result of the widespread bureaucratic structures and the unlimited demands on their time and services. Lipsky (1980) calls this dynamic the street level paradox with helping/educational professions being incongruent with the need to control and process high volumes of clients. The best way to approach this dilemma would be for the student affairs profession to take a hard look at the core values and determine whether they are still relevant with the academic capitalist

knowledge/learning regime. It might reduce the stress and dissonance felt by this group of professionals to incorporate an innovative new lens on their practice that prepares them for working with millennial students within a bureaucratic business model based upon competition and market influences.

APPENDIX A INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Name

Position Title and Department

Number of years in this position

Gender

Personal History: Background and Professional Journey

Tell me about your educational background, how you came to work in higher education, and in your current position?

Work Practices

- Tell me about your current job duties, roles, and functions?
- What activities make up the majority of your work day?
- Describe a typical day for me, as close to the minute as possible-what is the sequence of activities from the time you come to your office until the time you leave?
- Does what you do at work change on certain days of the week or during different times of the calendar year?
- In a typical week, how much of your time is spent with students as compared to other responsibilities?
- What is your favorite aspect of your work?
- In a typical day, how many students could you meet with and what is the nature of the interactions?
- Thinking about your work with students, what exactly are you trying to accomplish?
- Are there particular outcomes that indicate you were successful?
- How often do you feel successful in your work with students?
- What prevents you from reaching intended outcomes with students?
- Describe what you consider an ideal student interaction?
- Describe the most frustrating part of working with college students?
- What is the most challenging part of your position on this campus?
- Describe a difficult decision you might face during work? What made it difficult?

- Tell me about any times when your department's or institution's position on an issue conflicted with your own? What did you do?
- If you could change any element of your work environment or position, what would you change?

Academic Capitalism

- What funding sources support your department's activities?
- How consistent are the financial resources your department receives?
- What happens if your department is running short on resources in a given year?
- How does your department acquire or create new resources?
- Has the emphasis placed on student success changed during your time in the position?
- Have partnerships or collaborations pursued by your department or institution impacted your work with students?
- Has a business orientation impacted your work as a university employee?
- What does the phrase "student-centered research institution" mean to you?

Managerial Professionals

- Describe a value of student affairs work? What does it mean to you?
- What principles guide the work of your department?
- What values inform your practice as a university professional?
- What work practices get recognized and rewarded in your department?
- Describe your experiences when collaborating with campus colleagues outside of your department?
- Do you view yourself as a generalist or specialist when thinking about your professional practice?
- What amount of autonomy exists in your position during a typical work day?
- What sources of information do you consider when making important decisions in your work?
- What factors have the greatest influence on the work you do in a given day?
- How do you make sense of institutional priorities like Focused Excellence, Retention, or Diversity and their impact on your work?
- Is there a strong connection between your professional values and your routine work experiences?
- Is there a guiding philosophy that informs your practice at the university?

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