

Chapter 5. The Structure and Design of Student Affairs Organizations

The telephone rang, and Dr. Pat Harris, the Vice President for Student Affairs answered. The University President began the conversation by saying that he was calling to let her know that he has decided to restructure the University and that she will be reporting to the Provost effective tomorrow. He continued by saying that in his new role as President he has determined that he needs to spend more time in external relation activities and cannot devote as much time to having all five Vice Presidents reporting to him. He also believes that students will be better served if Student Affairs had a closer alliance with Academic Affairs and that this can be achieved by a direct report to the Provost. He indicated that he intends to make some additional structural changes that will create a flatter organization and will also result in a more efficient and effective overall organization. He went on to state that he had asked the Provost to study the matter and to make recommendations within the next two months as to how to achieve this goal. He states that it is not clear how these changes will directly impact the Division of Student Affairs, but it is likely that they will have an impact on the division. The President then asks Dr. Harris to work with her staff to ensure that the transition goes smoothly and that the up and coming changes are accepted with a strong commitment by everyone. He ended the conversation by stating that this information was likely to be in the morning paper and he did not want her to see it there for the first time. He assured her that he would continue to have contact with her and her staff, especially around issues that required his attention.

Tinkering with the organizational structure of collegiate institutions is very common, especially for new leaders. Dungy (2003) stated that organizational structures in higher education have changed more often and more frequently in the last three decades than in any other time in US history. A number of experts in the area of organizational studies believe that we are in the midst of organizational change related to the design and structure of work related organizations (Ashkenas, Ulrich, Jick, & Kerr, 2002; Bowditch, Buono & Stewart, 2008; Galbraith, 2002; Goold & Campbell, 2002). Clearly, these changes will have an impact on student affairs and higher education organizations as well.

Now in the midst of serious economic constraints, increased accountability and concern about organizational efficiency, higher education leaders are questioning their ability to sustain current organizational designs and support institutional programs and services. As changes in the external environment accumulate, existing organizational forms are becoming less able to

address the issues and demands placed on collegiate organizations. As this happens new organizational forms will begin to emerge to address the external environmental challenges and opportunities. Organizational change within higher education is to be expected and will likely occur. However, simply tinkering with organizational structure by moving units and people around like pieces on a chess board is not going to necessarily result in the goal of enhanced organizational effectiveness as desired by the president in the scenario. Although reporting relationships are an important element, they are only one thing to consider in an organization redesign process.

It is also true that organizational structure and design are not cookie cutter processes where we mold organizations into a common form. Each organization is unique and requires a design that best meets its needs, challenges and mission. As a result, fashioning effective organizational structure can be enhanced by having an understanding of organizational behavior, structure and design theory that can be applied to organizational design processes. Through the application of these ideas organizations can be effectively designed to meet the organization's specific challenges and goals, as well as enable it to enhance the goal of being effective and efficient as it relates to its changing environment.

Organizational Structure Theory

The basic theory of organizational structure is that an organizational structure should divide the work of the organization, *differentiate* and then effectively coordinate, *integrate* the work at all levels within the organization to best meet the mission and goals of the organization. Organizational structure should be viewed as more than the physical or structural frame of the organization. It also defines the decision making processes and connects the strategy and

behaviors within the organizational cultures of the institution. It aligns resources and navigates them toward accomplish the tasks and mission of the organization. In some cases, it is used to define the boundaries of the organization from the external environment and helps foster the organization's identity.

What has been rapidly changing with regard to organizational structure is the way in which the two principles of *differentiation* and *integration* are able to be accomplished and how the interaction with the external environment occurs. Early organizational theory viewed organizations as mechanistic, hierarchical entities that had boundaries between the organization and the external environment. Hierarchy and functionality were the means for achieving organization success. Within higher education organizations, campus life and even the entire collegiate institution were viewed as being sheltered from the "real world" and conceptually were labeled as the Ivory Tower.

In today's organizations, the boundaries between the organization and the external environment are beginning to blur and in some cases merge. Dynamic changes in the external environment are forcing organizations to move away from controlling, hierarchical structures to ones based on shared decision making, and a focus on process, flexibility and collaboration. As a result, organizations are being seen more as open, organic systems that are in a constant state of change and require the ability to continuously transform themselves (Wheatley, 2006).

Organizational theories generally describe organizations as either mechanistic or organic in their structural design. Most student affairs organizations can actually be found somewhere on the continuum between the two concepts. Mechanistic organizations are highly structured, with centralized decision making and vertical information flow. There are clear definitions of jobs,

standardization of policies and procedures, and rewards come from adherence to instructions from supervisors.

Organic organizations are viewed as loosely structured; decentralized in their decision making, with lateral information flow. They are designed to be more flexible, and able to function within a rapidly changing environment. There is less emphasis on formalized job descriptions and specializations. In organic organizations horizontal relationships across organizational units are just as important as vertical relationships with supervisors and subordinates. Rewards are made on the basis of sound decision making at all levels, as well as for collaboration and adaptability.

Research has found that there are four main factors that influence decisions about how organizations are structured: 1) the environment, 2) the size of the organization, 3) its dominant technology and 4) the organization's strategy (Bowditch, Buono, & Stewart, 2008; Galbraith, 2002; Goold & Campbell, 2002). The nature of the external environment and the challenges that it presents to the organization will greatly influence how and organization is structured. The size of the organization and how it orchestrates its work has an effect on the need for differentiation and specialization of work.

Many theorists agree that strategy should drive structure (Galbraith, 2002; Goold & Campbell, 2002). However, this idea is complicated for organizations by the existence of different operating strategies at different levels within the organization. Within higher education organizations, the development and implementation of strategy is even more problematic in that the creation of strategy is not generally systematic and well coordinated. Planning is often seen as a process independent of daily activity and takes long periods of time to create and implement.

Various units set their own goals and implement them independent of other units. In other words planning is not really integrated nor is it viewed as strategic. For example, many student affairs organizations do not have strategic plans, and few institutions actually use them to make daily decisions (Kuk & Banning, 2009). This organization phenomena has led some theorist to suggest that senior leadership should spend less time crafting strategy and structure, and more time and energy developing the knowledge and competencies of their managers (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1990). This is especially true if organizations are going to enable front line staff to have more direct decision making authority and they are going to adapt to changing needs and issues within the environment.

As a singular structural form, the functional hierarchy is increasingly viewed as not being able to address the challenges of modern organizations and many new structural design alternatives are beginning to appear. The trend is toward less specialization and greater job rotation, except in areas with high skill tasks where the focus is on greater specialization in order to pursue greater depth. One example of this can be found in university legal counsel units where legal issues are becoming more complex requiring complex specialization.

Decision making power is shifting to those with direct client contact and creating flatter structures with more of an emphasis on lateral collaboration and fewer middle hierarchical layers, resulting in greater spans of supervision. Also there is a greater focus on eliminating fragmentation and more emphasis on end-to-end work responsibility. For student affairs organizations this could be applied to creating structures that emphasize the use of more generalists, cross training staff across units, having fewer middle managers in specialized functional areas, and working with the same students throughout the student's college experience.

While hierarchical, functional structures are still the dominant structures being used in organization designs, this model is increasingly being combined with alternative structures and new structural forms are also emerging. Examples of some of the new structural models offered by Galbraith (2002) include:

The Product Structure Model

As a result of diversification, this model creates multiple functional organizations, each with its own product line. The college organizational structure within universities is an example of a product structure currently used in higher education.

The Market Structure Model

This is a rapidly increasing type of structure, based on the customer and their demand for individualized attention and products. This model makes use of outsourcing and scale of function to optimize the use of resources. It utilizes market segmentation to focus on specific markets. Banks and telecommunication have been leaders in the use of this model. Its current use in higher education is unknown, except possibly in modified form within admissions and alumni relations units of collegiate organizations.

Geographical structure Model

This model is generally developed as organizations expand their offerings across territories. It is generally adopted when the service needs to be performed on location. This model is represented by multi-campus institutions that have programs and services at branch campuses that report to the local campus administrator and also to a central administration.

Process structure Model

This is the newest generic structure and may take a number of different forms. Essentially it is based on the complete flow of work process. This is also often referred to as a *horizontal structure*, where a single team is given end to end responsibility. This structure is demonstrating great application in terms of the redesign of processes leading to efficiencies and overall quality improvements. It is also very useful in assessing both product quality and performance. It may appear in modified form in higher education as assessment or accreditation review teams that engage in self assessment unit performance reviews and also in advising/mentoring centers where advisors work with the same student for all of their undergraduate experience.

Hybrid structure Model

These are organizational structures that are designed by combining the principles and structural elements of two or more organizational models. It is also useful in designing subunits of organizations that may use one organizational structural form and other subunits may use another. Choosing the most appropriate and effective structure should be decided by matching the organization's strategy with what is done best by the specific structure and its applications.

Matrix Structure Model

This is a specific type of hybrid organization that is designed by merging the functional structure with the process structure. It provides for functionality and also enhances cross unit collaboration and communication. This model applied in a number of variations may be a sound approach for student affairs organizations to consider.

In some cases a basic functional structure can be effectively augmented by adding a lateral structure. For others, creating a complete hybrid structure made up of components of the various structures can produce the most effective structure for an organization.

The current organizational design of most student affairs organizations has evolved over many years and has emerged from adding new programs and services as stand-alone functional units when new demands and challenges occurred. These organizations for the most part continue to operate as mechanistic, hierarchical structures that are based on the principles of providing functionally based programs and services to students. For example, student affairs organizations consist of a variety of functional units such as: housing and residence life, student activities, counseling, student health services, etc. and each of these units have their own program and services and function independently of each other.

In some cases, they are being restructured to meet new challenges. These changes are appearing in the form of hybrid and matrix structures. These forms are most evident in larger organizations where integration of functional units and sharing of division wide resources are needed (Kuk & Banning, 2009). For example, some divisions have adopted technology, student assessment, fund raising and marketing units that span the entire division and serve all of the functional units needs. They may even be funded through shared funding by the units that are served.

Refocusing attention on the design of organizational structures could effectively address some of the shortcomings of traditional hierarchical structures within student affairs organizations and help them address the challenges emerging from the external environment. Adding new dimensions of structure could increase collaboration and foster greater efficiencies

in the use of resources. Both of these issues are critical to student affairs organizations (Kuk, 2009) and are likely to continue to be emerging issues as greater strain is placed on institutional resources.

Organizational Design

The basic idea behind organizational design is constructing and changing an organization's structure to more effectively achieve the organization's mission and goals. The theory behind organizational design is based on organizational behavior ideas and research. It has emerged as ideas, models and processes that focus on the elements of organizational design and change. These ideas can be effectively applied to student affairs organizations. (A discussion of Design theory follows and Change theory and process are discussed in Chapter 6).

Organizations of the past century focused on a variety of issues that were thought to promote organizational success including: 1) size of the organization; 2) differentiation in roles and responsibilities; 3) increased specialization; 4) vertical chain of command; and 5) span of control (Ashkenas, Ulrich, Jick & Kerr, 2002; Galbraith,2002; Goold & Campbell,2002; Wheatley, 2006). Institutional structure was used to help address organizational issues by creating boundaries, where levels of authority, definition of roles and spans of control became critical issues for an organization. As a result, the organizational structure became a critical focal point related to organizational design. Over the years, higher education leaders have come to believe that systemic and organizational issues can be solved by changing the organizational structure and internal reporting lines. However, in most cases, changing reporting lines is not the sole answer to addressing current organizational issues.

In the past few decades the factors important to organizational success have changed or have combined with existing factors to create very different ones. Emerging success factors for organizations include: 1) speed and response time; 2) adaptability and flexibility to the external environment; 3) integration of work at all levels; and 4) ability to innovate (Ashkenas, Ulrich, Jick & Kerr, 2002; Galbraith, 2002; Goold & Campbell, 2002; Wheatley, 2006). These new factors also require a new way of viewing organizational design and seeing structure as one component of effective design. Theorists have proposed a number of strategies for redesigning organizations to address current issues:

Some theorists (Ashkenas, Ulrich, Jick & Kerr, 2002) are addressing the issues related to organizational boundaries and propose changes that would confront and reshape four types of organizational boundaries: 1) vertical, 2) horizontal, 3) external and 4) geographic. Such changes would result in organizations that are flatter, more cross functional and lateral in focus, more engaged with the external environment, and more globally focused. All of these types of boundaries currently exist in student affairs organizations and attending to each of these can provide guidance on areas that may require changes to current organizational design issues.

According to Gallos (2006), the design of an appropriate system to achieve organizational mission and purpose requires that four ongoing tensions be addressed: 1) *Differentiation and integration*: how to divide up the tasks and work to be done and then coordinate the diverse efforts of individuals and groups. 2) *Centralization and decentralization*: how to allocate authority and decision making across the organization. 3) *Tight boundaries and openness to the environment*: how much to buffer and filter the flow of people and information in and out of the organization. 4) *Bureaucracy and entrepreneurship*: how to balance the

requirements for consistency, predictability and clarity with the need for autonomy, creativity and flexibility (Gallos, p.352-353).

Helgesen (1995) proposed creating a *webbed organization* as an alternative to hierarchical designs. This structure would disseminate through relationships and web-like communication channels that link everyone in the organization together. This would replace the pyramid structures that focused on vertical communication and leadership control. Instead, decision making and leadership would be transparent and include everyone at all levels of the organization.

Galbraith's theory of organizational design (2002) focused on the components of organizational design and new and emerging structural models. In his model, strategy was the first component to be addressed in the five point "star" model for designing organizations. These points included:

Strategy – Strategy is the basis for organizational success. Strategy is important because it established the criteria for determining among alternative organizational forms. Strategy dictates which organizational activities are most necessary and sets the stage for being able to make necessary trade-offs in design.

Structure - Structure determines the placement of power and authority in an organization. These arrangements include: specialization, shape, distribution of power and departmentalization. *Specialization* refers to the number and type of specialized jobs needed to perform the work. *Shape* includes the span of control (size of reporting groups within a unit) at each level of the organization. *Distribution of Power* has two dimensions. Vertically, it addresses the issue of centralization or decentralization related to decision making and control. Laterally, it

deals with moving power to the unit dealing with the issue or situation. *Departmentalization* addresses the dimensions on which a department is formed within the organization.

Process – Process addresses the functioning of the organization through vertical and lateral managerial activities. Vertical functioning deals with the allocation of resources and budgeting. Lateral processes address issues of work flow.

Rewards – Deals with aligning the goals of the employees with the goals of the organization. They provide the systematic approach to providing motivation and incentives for completion of the strategic direction. This generally includes salaries, promotions, and recognitions, enhancements to work or positions. Such systems must be congruent with strategy and structure to influence goals and direction.

People - This area of design focuses on building and sustaining the organizational capacity to execute the strategic direction of the organization. It produced the talent needed by the organization through hiring, training and development, and rotating human resources. Again this area needs to be consistent with the strategy and structure of the organization to be effective.

Goold and Campbell (2002) view organizational design as being more comprehensive than focused on reporting relationships. They believe design should include a focus on the “skeleton” (structure) but also on the “connective tissues”, which include the behaviors, the values and the culture of the organization. These include: 1) a focus on the responsibilities allocated to units, 2) reporting and lateral relationships, 3) accountability within a unit, and 4) key reporting and coordinating processes. The authors have fashioned a set of guiding principles that can be used to guide the assessment and design process.

While each of these sets of ideas focuses on organizational design elements from a somewhat different perspective, they each offer ways of viewing organizational design related issues and can be used to create an intentional and systematic assessment of current organizations. Essentially they provide strategies for pursuing a redesign process. The most important idea presented by all of these models is that design is a *process* that should be intentional and systematically engaged in by the organization's members. It is not simply moving the old ways of doing things into new reporting arrangements or creating new units to take on new responsibilities and attaching them to the current structure.

Another level of organizational design focuses on the level of work by looking at work related responsibilities and work flow. Wiesbord (2006) focused the concept of organizational design regarding the way work, specifically jobs, are constructed and structured in organizations. An effective way to enhance respect, value and create community in a workplace is to involve people in redesigning their work. This can be done through the creation of design work teams that cut across organizational levels and functions. Together they can look at the whole organizational operation with the goal of optimizing both the technical and social systems. This can foster a form of social learning not found in traditional organizations, can change managerial approaches, and the perceptions of the problem and the nature of the solutions. Work design needs to be an action research process and not a predetermined structure. For example one approach to design might include the following. A design team is created from the various units. It would conduct three interacting analyses of the work system. One analysis would create a map of environmental demands, a second would develop a flow chart of how the system(s) functions, and the third would create a social analysis, which looks at current jobs and focusing on making every job an effective one (Wiesbord, 2006). Based on these analyses new

supervising, reward and management systems would be created as the work flow and interaction is understood. All elements of this analysis would be needed to understand and to make effective change in the current work system.

This type of overarching work flow analysis could be very helpful to student affairs organizations. In many cases job responsibilities and work flow are seldom analyzed in a uniform and comprehensive manner. Generally, job responsibilities are assessed when vacancies occur or organizational responsibilities change. In these cases the focus is on the roles being changed, not the entire unit or organizational system. While it is important to conduct vacant position analysis, position analysis is rarely done across a unit or organization and it rarely includes the factor of how work interacts with other parts of the system or with the external environment. These components of analysis could be helpful in identifying areas that can be redesigned to make work flow more effectively, streamline cross unit collaboration and impact the overall design of the student affairs organization.

Organizational Design from the Social Constructionist Perspective

A slightly different perspective of organizational design emerges from the social constructionist perspective which holds that structures are created and recreated from the interaction of organizational members. Weick (1969) was among the first to argue that structure was “enacted”. This differs significantly from the “positivists view of structure as something tangible that the organization possesses (signified by boxes on an organizational chart). Enactment theory claims that “structure is something that the organization does” (Orton & Weick, 1990). From this perspective, structure exists in the minds of organizational members. It is a *cognitive map* that preserves previous actions, sorts and arranges current experiences, and

produces expectations of future actions (Bess & Dee, 2008; Weick, 1988). These cognitive maps become social structures through ongoing communication among colleagues in the organization. Thus, organizational structures may actually be the result of individual perceptions, shared by colleagues within the organization and reflecting the social relationships among members, rather than a structure prescribed by the organization's leadership.

Within this concept student affairs organizations would actually be the result of the interactions that occur among staff and can be changed by changing the cognitive maps of how staff interact within their organization. This could be done by changing the language and ideas related to organizational structure, and discussing the values and expectations associated with more lateral and collaborative organizational designs as well as rewarding and recognizing these types of behaviors among staff. Eventually, the actual design of the interactions within the organization would change to conform to the new cognitive maps that staff create as individuals and among their collective understandings. This approach to redesign appears to be more realistic than simply redesigning an organizational chart and expecting that everyone will easily conform to the new diagram in terms of day to day behavior.

Coupling (Weick, 1976), defined as tight or loose, is a concept that explains the relationship and interconnection of units within an organization to each other. Loosely coupled organizations are not held together through management control, but rather through the interactions that members construct together. There can be both tight and loose coupling within the organization. When units are not responsive or connected to each other the system is decoupled or loosely coupled. Tight coupling occurs when units are essentially controlled and given little autonomy in determining their own direction and actions. Higher education is

considered to be a very loosely coupled structure with various systems or organizational units operating fairly independently of each other (Birbaum, 1988; Bess & Dee, 2008).

Structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) provides another way of thinking about organizational design. It suggests that both individuals and groups are active agents who create the structures in which they work, but they are also constrained by the previous structures that they created. While they create structure through daily actions, individuals and work groups also exist in the context of the current structures they have created before. Thus, organizational structure becomes fairly stable and resistant to change. If change is to occur the behavioral pattern that created the structure in the first place must change. As a result, organizational change must not only provide a sound organizational model to adopt, it must also disrupt the daily behavior that created the current structure and enhance behaviors that support the new design.

In accord with this theory design changes within a student affairs organization must not only offer a new model of change, but they must also alter the behavior and cognitive processes that created the current structure. This could occur by providing rewards and recognition for engaging in new cross unit collaborative behavior and for engaging in new cross training activities as well as discouraging reliance on the old ways of interacting and utilizing resources.

Student Affairs Organizational Design

Unfortunately there has not been a lot of research and attention given to understanding organizational design and behavior within student affairs organizations. While early references to student personnel services were descriptive of the type of services and programs that should be provided, these efforts did not clearly discuss what organizational structures or reporting lines

should be used to organize and provide these programs and services. More recent student affairs literature has offered several general models and guiding principles related to structure and design, but have not extensively applied existing organizational theory to student affairs organizations. This is a general summary and discussion of the organizational theory and research that has appeared related to student affairs organizations.

Kuh (1989) identified four conventional models for examining different organizations. These models included: 1) the rational model, 2) the bureaucratic model, 3) the collegiate model, and 4) the political model. This model and the work of Ambler (1993; 2000) were among the few early discussions of student affairs organizations.

In 1992, Ambler conducted a survey of more than one hundred student affairs divisions and found a wide variety of unique and different organizational structures. Just prior to his 2000 publication, he repeated the distribution of the survey to the same sample of student affairs programs and found that many had experienced institutional changes that impacted the divisions' structure. Some of these changes include the adoption of the provost reporting model, establishment of an executive officer for enrollment management, increased use of technology within the division and the privatization of some services. He found that despite these changes the four basic models of management structures previously identified for student affairs organizations remained in the institutions he surveyed (Ambler, 2000).

The Revenue Source Model. This model was based on the fact that auxiliary units in public universities were often required by law, to cover all the costs associated with their operations from their revenue sources. Similarly, excess revenue and reserve funds generated by auxiliary units may not be used for other functions within the institution. The impact of this model on

organizational design depended on the number of auxiliary units, the financial restrictions and requirements of each auxiliary unit, the amount of funds involved, and the extent of other student affairs functions that were funded by general or state appropriated funds.

The Affinity of Services Model. In this model, the services were clustered by the nature or similarity of their purpose, usually along the lines of some standard classification system that described the nature of the services. This model was generally used in student affairs divisions where the programs and services were quite numerous and diverse.

The Staff Associates Model. This model was viewed as a compromise between a bureaucratic and a flat organizational model. This model permits the senior student affairs officer to provide general direct leadership to the range of units within the division, while controlling the technical and administrative tasks through staff assistants. These staff assistants did not usually have any line authority, and were responsible for an over arching area of the division's administration, such the budget, technology or human resources, etc.

The Direct Supervision Model. Within this model all student service units reported directly to the senior student affairs officer. This model was more likely to occur in relatively smaller student affairs divisions (Abler, 2000).

Ambler (2000) offered a number of guiding principles that were used to consider organizational structure. These principles included: 1) the origin of organizational structure; 2) the role of the chief student affairs officer; 3) organizational symmetry; 4) stability; 5) autonomy; 6) staff involvement; 7) titles; and 8) organizational communication. Kuk and Banning (2009) found that the basic components reported in Ambler's studies were still in place, although some modest changes were beginning to occur.

Allen and Cherrey (2000) in their work *Systemic Leadership*, applied the ideas of systems and learning organizations to student affairs organizations, leadership, structures and student affairs practice. They discussed the idea of fragmentation and its application to traditional hierarchical organizations. They offered the idea of connectivity and networking as a more systems focused view of how student affairs organizations could become more effective. Allen and Cherrey discussed a vision for student affairs organizations based on new ways of relating, new ways of influencing change, new ways of learning and new ways of leading and what needed to change in student affairs practitioners' thinking to integrate these new dimensions of organizing and implementing student affairs practice.

Strange and Banning (2001) created a comprehensive model for student friendly and learning-supportive environments. In this work they focus on the dimensions of organizational environments, their structural anatomy, dynamics and the relationship of these environmental dimensions to creating effective learning environments within college campuses. This model however was not directed at the actual structure or design of student affairs organizations.

In their work on rethinking student affairs practice (Love & Estanek, 2004) used organizational development theory and new science ideas to challenge student affairs practitioners to think differently about their work, student affairs structures and processes, and to adopt new models for change. They provided four conceptual lenses, valuing dualism, transcending paradigms, recognizing connectedness, and embracing paradox as a way of thinking differently. This work was process focused and provided a useful tool for engaging practitioners to think and act differently, but it did not specifically address issues related to organizational structure and design.

Manning, Kinzie and Schuh (2006), *One Size Does Not Fit All*, discussed the organization of student affairs, based on a study of 20 high performing colleges and universities. This work highlighted the history of student affairs organizations, as well as contemporary issues that impact on organizational structures within student affairs. They suggested that there are three approaches to student affairs work that influenced the organization of student affairs: student services, student development, and student learning. They built a strong case for asserting that the structure of student affairs should be closely shaped to align with the mission of the institution.

From analysis of the interviews and their review of student affairs literature, Manning et al. (2006) created 11 student affairs organizational models. Six of the traditional models were developed through an analysis of the student affairs literature and five new innovative models grew out of the DEEP research study they conducted. Summaries of the six traditional models included:

Extra-curricular model. Organized to provide predominately student life and social student develop programs and services in and out of the classroom environment. This model assumed that the mission of student affairs is entirely separate from academic units.

Functional silos model. Organized functions, services and programs operate from a management and leadership approach rather than student development. Units perform their functions and services as discrete entities, and integration and communication is achieved through loose coordination.

Student services model. Organized functions, services and programs operate from a management and leadership approach rather than student development. Functions and services often cluster

together with the focus on providing quality programs and services, with close coordination of like units. There is minimal if any integration of programs and services with academic units.

Competitive/ adversarial model. Assumes that both student affairs and academic units are concerned with what students learn and how they grow, but there is little acknowledgement of the contribution of the other. Student affairs units operate independently of academic units.

Co-curricular model. Assumes that both student affairs and academic units are concerned with student learning and how they grow. Student Affairs and academic affairs have complementary but different missions, but acknowledge the contributions of the other to student learning.

Seamless learning model. Student learning experiences are conceived as integrated and continuously happening across all aspects of the student experience and campus life, in and outside of the classroom. The mission of the institution and those of student affairs and those of academic affairs units are dedicated to the total student learning experience. This model assumes that every member of the institution and the student affairs organization can contribute to learning.

Summaries of the five new innovative models included:

Student centered, ethic of care model. This model centers on care and relationships, with a fundamental response to addressing what students need to be successful. It is geared toward the goal of facilitating student success, integrated services, and policies, programs and practices centered on the ethic of care. This model focuses on students who have the most need of support.

Student driven model. Assumes that student learning is enhanced by greater student involvement and engagement, and identification with the institution contributes to student persistence and

success. Student involvement and leadership serve as core operating principles, and valuing students as integral members of the community has a strong voice in governing the organization. Students drive campus activities and make decisions about campus life.

Student agency model. Assumes students have the primary role and responsibility for their learning and their education. It also assumes that students are completely responsible for student life, and they perform as full and equal partners with faculty and staff in these efforts. Students assume as much responsibility as possible in the development of their learning experiences, by managing campus life and helping to design curriculum. Students serve as workers in providing a wide range of student services and programs.

Academic/student affairs collaboration model. Assumes both student affairs and academic affairs units place student learning at the center of their goals and activities, and create institutional coherence about student success. Students and academic affairs emphasize mutual territory and combine efforts to engender student engagement and success. The work between academic and student affairs is supported with tightly-coupled student affairs structures and philosophies that support student learning and success. This model assumes seamless collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs units on a routine basis.

Academic –centered model. This model assumes both student affairs and academic units place student learning at the center of their goals and activities. This model is organized around the academic core, and promotes the academic experience over co-curricular activities. Student affairs serve as a support to the academic focus of the institution and are almost invisible in the academic focus. Both student affairs and academic affairs units share responsibility for student success (Manning, Kinzie & Schuh, 2006).

This work provides a sound framework for linking student affairs organizational design to the educational focus and strategic mission and goals of student affairs organizations. However, it does not provide any guidance or models on how to restructure organizations to ensure the creation of this link nor does it introduce organizational design theory into the process of utilizing these models.

Hirt (2006) focused on understanding the professional life of student affairs practitioners at six different types of higher educational institutions. This portrait depicted the distinctive differences in how student affairs work is carried out at different institutions and what differing skills and understanding are needed to be effective practitioners. While her work does not directly address issues of organizational structure, it makes a strong case for viewing institutional type and the context of student affairs work as critical factors in creating unique organizational designs and structures, strongly aligned with the institutions mission and goals.

Kuk (2009), and Kuk and Banning (2009), building on the work of Hirt (2006) and Ambler (1993) researched current student affairs organizational structures and found that the most common models of organizational structure were those based on institutional type. The following summary of each type of structure, taken from the *Handbook of Student Affairs Administration* (2009) includes:

Baccalaureate Colleges

The student affairs organizational structure of most baccalaureate and liberal arts colleges are modest in scope and hierarchical depth. These organizations have few professional staff that serves a primarily small-scale residential student body. They are usually led by a Dean of Students or Vice President for Student Affairs with assistants and associates who both manage

functional units and also serve in a generalist capacity. While the assistants and associates may have functional responsibility for a particular area such as housing, student activities, or counseling, the levels within the organization are not very deep, and staff often cross-over various student affairs service areas. For example, a residence hall director may be responsible for a residence hall and also advise student groups or provide advising and/or counseling to the general student population. These student affairs organizations may have closer formal and informal ties with the academic units within the college. In some cases, student affairs may report through a dean of the college or an academic dean to the president or they may report directly to the President and be part of the college's executive management team.

Masters Colleges and Universities

These institutions are generally larger and have more complex student affairs organizations than baccalaureate colleges with more defined hierarchical and functional units. At the same time, they may still retain a level of generalist responsibilities within functional units. These organizational structures are generally not very hierarchical or deep with regard to numbers of staff in each unit. As a result, the staff within these functional units may have a breadth of responsibilities, and serve a more generalist role covering many responsibilities within the unit. For example, residence life personnel may serve as residence hall directors, housing assignment personnel and handle student conduct or other administrative or student development functions within their operation. Student activities personnel may work with student organizations, advise the campus programming board and conduct student leadership activities.

These organizations, while functional in structure, often are served by centralized budgeting and human resource operations, and receive resource services from other institutional

units such as facilities, maintenance and security units. If auxiliary units do exist, they are likely to report, wholly or in part, to the finance or administrative division and collaborate with student affairs where the two divisions overlap such as in the administration of housing or college unions operations. The number of specific functional units within student affairs organizations is likely to vary among institutions, with public institutions more frequently including enrollment service areas and private institutions having a separate enrollment management unit or division. Student affairs organization leaders in these types of institutions more frequently report directly to the president and serve as a member of the cabinet or executive team of the institution.

Research and Doctoral Granting Universities

Student affairs organizations at research and doctoral granting institutions are generally the most complex among higher educational institutions. Serving large numbers of students, these organizations are more hierarchical and specialized within their functional units than other types of organizations. Staff responsibilities are likely to be very specialized. For example, an individual staff member's exclusive role may be to provide training for residence hall staff, or to advise the university programming board.

A vice president for student affairs or an associate provost generally leads these organizations. In addition, there may be a number of associate or assistant vice presidents/provosts managing the day-to-day responsibilities of a number of functional units. This added layer is seldom found in other types of student affairs organizations. The breadth and complexity of these organizations require a number of layers, and may at times have other *matrix* organizational structure overlays, such as division committees or budgeting and technology units that provide for organizational coordination and division-wide services to all functional units.

These organizations are also more likely to have auxiliary and fee funded units that operate decentralized financial systems that generate revenue and expend resources within their own units. The organizational structure of these units is often influenced by state and/or institutional financial laws/ regulations that govern the use and accounting of auxiliary operational funds. Because of their nature, the complexity of these organizations is often increased with the inclusion of accounting, maintenance, custodial, service, and commercial sales/marketing and security personnel that are not generally found in student affairs organizations at other types of institutions. While these student affairs' organizations have more decentralized control of their programs and services at the unit level, the complexity, multiple organizational layers and specialization, often provide for less financial flexibility and staff mobility within the student affairs organization as a whole. In recent years, student affairs organizations at research institutions have increasingly been shifted to report to the provost/ senior academic officer or senior vice president of the institution and not directly to the president. In most cases, the student affairs leader retains a voice on the executive team or cabinet, but does not meet directly on a regular basis with the president.

Associate's Colleges

Student Affairs at associate colleges, also known in the public sector as community colleges, is a relatively new organizational entity than at other types of institutions. Student affairs at most community colleges consist of providing student services and academic support services focused on enhancing student success. These organizations may include enrollment service units, counseling, academic advising, transfer services and student activities, as well as other student engagement and leadership related campus services and programs.

Community colleges generally serve local and/or regional student populations and as a result they have not traditionally provided student services for campus residential students such as residence halls, health centers and recreation centers. As a result, they have not had these types of functional units as part of the student affairs organizational portfolio. Since these institutions are not residentially focused they may provide services for students who take evening classes, but since students leave campus at the end of their day, these student affairs organizations are not required to organize their programs and services to cover a 24/7 operation like residential collegiate institutions.

However, some community colleges are building residence halls and recreation centers and essentially becoming residential colleges. With the addition of these facilities and service units to the student affairs portfolios, the mission and organizational focus of these units will likely change. International students are also having an increased presence on community college campuses and this will require additional support services for this growing population. These programs and services generally fall within the responsibilities of student affairs organizations to provide.

At community colleges student affairs may report to a vice president or a dean responsible for both academic and student affairs or they may report directly to the campus president or campus CEO. In either case, student affairs is more closely tied to academic units within the institution and generally not viewed as being as separate and distinct as may be the case in other institutional types (Kuk, 2009).

These emerging typology-based structural designs may be influenced by a variety of larger organizational changes, including the increased use of institutional bench marketing

practices. The specific elements and units within these structures are influenced by size, history of the institution, preferences of leadership and the challenges presented by the external environment, and although not identical do possess some similarities in the way they are organized (Kuk, 2009; Kuk & Banning 2009).

Organizational Learning Theory

The *learning organization* as a concept is closely aligned with the concepts of systems, organizational structure and organizational design. It is generally used to describe certain types of activities that occur at any one of several levels of organizational analysis: 1) the individual, 2) the team or group, 3) and the organization as a whole. A number of theorists including James March (1991) and Peter Senge (1990, 2005) generally define *organizational learning* as the organization's ability to adapt to change. Other ideas included in this concept are improving performance and increasing effectiveness within the organization. The concept of organizational change will be addressed more specifically in Chapter six.

How organizations learn is an issue that is paramount in today's fast paced constantly changing environment. According to Dibella and Neva (1998) there are actually three different perspectives on learning related questions.

One perspective (*the normative perspective*) is that organizational learning only takes place under a unique set of conditions. Another (*the developmental perspective*) is that the learning organization represents a late stage of organizational development. A third perspective, (*the capability perspective*) presumes that learning is innate to all organizations and that there is no one best way for all organizations to learn. (p. 4)

The theory of single-looped learning and double-looped learning (Argyris & Schon, 1978) differentiated two distinctive types of learning that occurs in organizations. Single-looped learning occurs as part of the feedback loop that is generated from examining the effects of ongoing behavior and organizational processes. This type of learning is used to correct errors and keep the organization running smoothly. Double-looped learning goes a step further in the learning process and attempts to go beyond correcting behavior, to actually assessing if the goals and processes are the correct ones and then makes the appropriate changes to these goals and processes. It assumes that questioning the organization's basic assumptions and beliefs is needed to effectively transform the organization and to create real learning within an organization.

James March (1991) proposed that organizations must constantly balance their need for efficiency with their need for flexibility. He differentiated between two modes of learning; *exploitation*, the use of existing knowledge and resources to achieve value from what is already known, and *exploration*, which is the redevelopment of knowledge and understandings into new ways of understanding, through seeking new options, experimenting and doing research. This process of exploration challenges organizational change theory and introduces the notion of learning organizations to alter how we think about change.

According to Senge (1990, 2005), superior performance depends on superior learning. The need to understand how organizations learn is critical to their survival. The old model of organizational behavior imbedded in most organizations espousing the notion that the tops think and the middles and bottoms act, must give way to integrating thinking and acting at all levels. Learning organizations must focus on generative learning, the creation and expansion of learning, and not just adaptive learning, which is about coping. Today's learning organization

seeks to meet the latent need of the customer focusing on what customers might truly value, but have not experienced and would never think to ask for. *Generative learning*, unlike adaptive learning, requires new ways of viewing the world. It requires the ability to see and understand the organizational system and its relationship to the external environment.

In learning organizations the leader's role focuses on being organizational designers, instructors and coaches. Leaders are responsible for building organizations where people are continually expanding their capabilities to shape their future. Leaders are responsible for designing and building a foundation of purpose, focus and core values. Second, they design, with input from organizational members, the policies, strategies and structures that translate guiding ideas into decisions and actions. Third, leaders create effective learning processes whereby the organization's strategies, processes and structures are continually improved by the organization's members. Leadership in organizations will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter eight.

Senge (1990) stresses the importance of organizational learning as the process of expanding the organization's capacity to meet its goals, and particularly the capacity to make organizational changes and adjustments. Within this organizational learning approach emphasis is placed on systems thinking (Senge, 2005) including the concepts of circles of causality and the importance of feedback, and reinforcement.

Student Affairs organizations have begun to embrace the conceptual ideas associated with learning organizations. They have started to apply elements of the principles associated with these ideas to segments of their organizations; however adoption of these concepts on a large scale throughout student affairs organizations has not been widely implemented.

One of our goals is to assist in making connections among traditional organizational concepts, models like “learning organizations” and the work and literature of the student affairs profession. An instructive link between Senge’s organizational learning and how the concept can be of practical value in student affairs organizational functioning is the ecological learning model of Blocher (1974, 1978).

Blocher’s model focuses on the student-learning environment relationship, but the model is also applicable to the learning processes associated with organizations and their members, like the campus student affairs organization. Blocher’s (1974) organization of learning environments model is an open systems model that includes three subsystems: the opportunity subsystem, the support subsystem, and the reward subsystem. These three subsystems organize seven critical conditions for growth and development. These seven conditions: 1) involvement, 2) challenge, 3) integration, 4) support, 5) structure, 6) feedback, and 7) application are organized within the three subsystems. In this case, the conditions needed within a student affairs organization to be a learning organization that creates “the acquisition and maintenance of new patterns of thinking, that are qualitatively different from proceeding patterns” (Blocher, 1974, p. 19).

The opportunity subsystem provides the available tasks or opportunities to an organization for new learning. This component of the model leads to some very practical questions for the campus student affairs organization. What learning opportunities are being provided by the organization? How important are the staff development activities of the organization? What levels of resources are being provided for professional growth activities, like conference and workshop attendance?

The new learning associated with these organizational efforts is increased according to the Blocher model by the conditions of involvement, challenge, and integration. *Involvement* calls for personal engagement in the learning task that puts at risk significant personal values, like letting go of past thinking to engage new ways of thinking about organizational issues. Student affairs development and training programs that incorporate active debate about campus issues may produce more involvement than an informational meeting about the issue. For example, the pros and cons within an active debate focusing on changing the campus drinking age may produce more involvement and new thinking than a meeting to review current policy. The second critical condition for learning within the opportunity, structure is *challenge*. Are the opportunities presented by the campus student affairs organization challenging? Blocher suggests that in order to increase the challenge of a learning opportunity, the variables of novelty, complexity, abstractness, ambiguity, and intensity need to be present. Typical staff development programs often do not reflect these variables.

Finally, in addition to the tasks needing to be involving and challenging, they also need to provide the condition of integration. How can new learning be integrated with past experiences? For example, staff discussion could focus on the question of does changing the campus drinking age bring about a change in goals or just strategies for the maintenance of a healthy learning environment? What organizational changes need to be made given the outcome of the discussion? Can the new learning associated with these questions lead to an integration of old and new ways of proceeding?

Once the organization provides itself with tasks, programs, or opportunities that create involvement, challenge, and integration, the organization also needs to give attention to

Blocher's second subsystem, the support subsystem. The support subsystem contains two additional critical learning conditions: structure and support. According to Blocher structure "provides a new and higher level way of processing and organizing information about some phenomenon." (1974, p.21). For example, if a student affairs organization in its discussion of its first year student orientation program could elevate the discussion from the nuts and bolts of the current program to viewing student orientation from an "ecological transitions" (Bronfenbrenner,1974) framework where the focus is on change in role and place, new learning might occur for the organization. A second learning condition associated with the support subsystem is the concept of support. Blocher defines support as the "need to provide a relationship network that communicates empathy, caring, and honesty" (p. 21) so that members of the organization are not fearful to engage new ideas and models. Particularly important for organizational learning is the creation of an organizational climate that is perceived and experienced as a safe place for new thinking, new models, and new relationships.

Finally, the third Blocher subsystem is the reward subsystem. The reward subsystem is critical in bringing about two important conditions of the learning organization: feedback and application. Blocher defines feedback as "a condition that gives . . . continuous, accurate, and unambiguous information" (p. 21). The obvious practical question is what are and how do the student affairs organizational feedback systems work? Are new ideas tossed into the organizational mix recognized and afforded an organizational response? Like many organizations, the campus student affairs organization may have its version of the "black hole" for new ideas. The second critical condition of the reward subsystem is the condition of application. New learning will be enhanced if it has applicability. What can organizations find in their learning opportunities that can serve as new lessons for continuing issues?

Student affairs organizations can become the Senge (1990) “learning organization”. The Blocher model (1974) with its roots in student affairs work can help provide one path to organizational learning by giving attention to the subsystems of opportunities, support and reward and the seven conditions for learning associated with these systems.

DiBella and Nevis (1998) also focused on how learning actually occurs in organizations. Their model, *the organizational learning cycle*, consists of three processes: a) knowledge creation or acquisition, b) knowledge dissemination, and c) knowledge use. All three processes are critical for organizational learning to have occurred. If student affairs organizations are going to design their organizations to be learning organizations, they should be conscious of these three processes and ensure that they are intentionally imbedded in day to day operations of the organization at all levels.

Reflective Summary

1. As you construct your student affairs organization in your mind, where do you view it on the continuum between mechanistic and organic organizations? Why do you view it the way you do?
2. If you could restructure your current student affairs organization to a new form, what do you envision it would look like? What organizational form would you use as a model and why would you use it?
3. How would you go about orchestrating an organization redesign process for your student affairs organization?
4. What variables and organizational concepts would you focus on in the redesign process?

5. How might you use the concepts of “tight and loose coupling” and “structural cognitive maps” to influence the redesign efforts in your student affairs organization?
6. How might you adopt the principles of organizational learning to promote greater organizational effectiveness in your organizational design?

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