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## Resources for Professional/Staff Development

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# Resources for Professional/Staff Development

Dennis E. Gregory

*Institutional staff development offerings vary greatly in content, quality, and direction. This article offers mechanisms which may be used to assist planners by showing how professional associations and CAS standards material may be used as parts of these programs. The article also describes several institutional staff development programs.*

The term professional development means many things to those who work in the field of student affairs. To some, it describes the efforts by individual staff members at a certain level to obtain and enhance skills which are specifically aimed at performance of their particular work tasks. For others, it is a much broader term which can be used to describe specific skills and other knowledge which allows persons at all levels to improve their lives both at work and outside of work (Preston, 1993). This difference of opinion and approach may account for some of the difficulty and lack of unanimity in whether, or to what extent, a student affairs program should provide such programs.

In earlier articles in this issue you have been presented with a variety of perspectives regarding (a) what professional development is and should be, (b) how financial and other support for professional development may be obtained, (c) some of the ways in which professional skill development may take place, and (d) how work and supervision styles affect professional development program styles and approaches. It is the purpose of this article to examine some of the resources used as members of our profession develop their own professional development programs.

Three primary focuses will be covered. They include examples of (a) the ways in which professional associations provide support for professional development, (b) how the CAS Standards and related program evaluation materials may be used as a starting point for professional development, and (c) how some institutions in the Southeastern United States have chosen to approach professional development programs on their campuses.

## Professional Associations

A wide variety of professional associations have developed as student affairs has specialized. Practitioners have had to acquire increasingly detailed knowledge about the tasks in which they are involved. These specialized organizations have developed not only around topical areas, but based upon geographical issues as well. The Southern Association of College Student Affairs (SACSA) and a number of non-affiliated state associations, such as the Virginia Association of Student Personnel Administrators (VASPA), are examples of this trend. Also in the southeast, the National Association for Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Region III, the Southeastern Association of Housing Officers (SEAHO), the Association for Student Judicial Affairs' (ASJA) Fourth Judicial Circuit, and other regional and state affiliates of national associations have developed across the country.

Schrank and Young (1987) described the roles which they perceived as important for state, regional, and national professional associations. Their concept is that these organizations build upon each other and provide different types of professional development activities.

Schrank and Young describe how state and regional associations provide a comfortable, and more intimate, opportunity for professionals at all levels to gather to educate one another. They also describe how these organizations, particularly at the regional level, can be weak in some areas if continuity of participation and leadership are at issue.

Specialty organizations have generally developed to fill the perceived need for support and knowledge about a particular topic. The complexity of financial aid guidelines seems to increase every year. Case law and federal legislation dealing with safety and privacy constantly change the relationships which disciplinary officers have with their students and colleagues. Facility management issues, as well as contractual complexities and the latest trends in entertainment, force student activities professionals to continuously stay informed. The need for special supervision of Greek organizations, and the many issues surrounding liability and institutional relationships require special training for those with management responsibility in this area of specialty.

Thus, these specific associations have developed over the years. In addition, the more traditional umbrella student affairs professional organizations developed to represent a broad sample of our colleagues. Nuss (1993) has provided a sample of the large list of professional associations in *The Handbook of Student Affairs Administration*.

Nuss (1993) also described her perspective on the role of professional associations. She cited how membership and participation in professional associations can enhance one's professional development. This is accomplished by (a) providing an "orientation to the profession" (p. 373), (b) establishing a network of fellow professionals from whom learning can take place, (c) staying current on the latest techniques and directions in the profession, and (d) allowing persons to put their particular institutional situations in perspective.

Nuss also noted that participation in professional associations allows practitioners to influence the direction in which the future of the profession many go and to shape professional practice (p. 373).

At the same time, inter-association task forces comprised of members from across the spectrum of specialties address specific and time-focused issues along with the umbrella organizations. Alcohol and other drug use/abuse, campus violence, Greek organization values/ethics issues, and other topics form the emphasis for such groups. This is occurring at the same time that institutional and individual resources are shrinking. Calls for institutional efficiency are more often raised. Parents and students clamor for more consideration for the product consumer, and professionals are seeking to be more involved in the positive development of their students and their staffs. It is hoped that these task forces will help in many of these areas and with professional development activities, as well.

Luna (1994) has described the importance and value of attendance at activities such as conferences, institutes, and drive-ins. This has been the primary means by which many associations have provided professional development services to members. There is, however, a realization that such conferences, even at the state or regional level, may be beyond the reach of many institutional staff. Other means of service provision are necessary in order to reach a broader audience to provide professional development.

Journals and other less formal publications are available from many associations on a wide variety of topics. These can include newsletters, occasional papers, research reports, annotated bibliographies, and announcements regarding legislation and governmental regulations. These come not only from the central organization, but from regional and state levels, as well as from specific committees and focus groups within the organizations. All of these publications can be used as sources of information for professional development activities, as reinforcement for programs and activities, and as mechanisms to reinforce the importance of involvement. The Association of College and University Housing Officers-International (ACUHO-I) has been particularly active in supporting research reports, as well as collections of statistical materials related to housing construction and renovation, staffing levels, professional/student staff development, and a number of other issues. Two examples of these research reports from ACUHO-I, which may be of assistance in the development or implementation of professional development programs are *Strategies for Success for the New Professional* (Bolger, Crahen, & Herzer, 1987) and *Career Transitions: Making the Move to the Supervision of Professional Managers* (Janz, Grider, Evans, Janz, & Henrickson, 1988).

ACUHO-I, as well as other professional associations, often offer articles dealing with professional development within their newsletters and other documents. The *ACUHO-I Talking Stick*, for instance, regularly offers such articles. One example is the article entitled "Staff Selection, Training, Supervision and Evaluation" (December, 1993) by Pleskoff. A similar type of professional development article, which describes current legal issues that are important to

judicial officers and others, is offered in a recent issue of *ASJA Newsletter* (Lowery, 1993). This article describes current standards and relationships established by two pieces of federal legislation.

Many of the publications from professional associations are available in libraries or from the specific associations that produce them. Association members on campus can circulate these publications. Most publications (with the exception of journals) are not copyrighted. Most associations readily grant permission for duplication if the publications are to be used for professional development activity. Certainly, improving technology will allow some of these publications to soon be available on-line through Internet, in disk format, or through some medium other than print.

New technology has also provided for other methods by which professional associations are able to provide developmental activities. Down-links and production capacities at many campuses, as well as networks to provide teleconferences, may change the way in which we interact professionally (Preston, 1993). The developing communication superhighway may soon provide opportunities for more direct multistation interactive teleconferencing. This method is technologically feasible and affordable at many institutions.

More traditional multimedia approaches such as video tapes, slide shows, audio broadcasts, compact disks, and computer CD-ROM technology may be ways in which professional associations provide us with development activities in the future. Many professional associations are providing audio and/or video tapes of the major speakers at their conferences and some of the concurrent interest sessions.

The Association of College Unions-International (ACU-I) has started to market a set of video tapes entitled "Operations Insight" (1994) which are intended to aid in the training of Union staffs. ASJA rents video tapes of the sessions from its summer institute for judicial officers. NASPA has joined with a variety of other professional associations, including the National University Teleconference Network (NUTN) to develop and distribute a series of teleconferences. These programs have limited interactive capability on a variety of topics of interest to student development professionals.

Virtually every professional organization includes a mechanism through which members with interest in a specific subtopic or specialty may take part. The American College Personnel Association (ACPA) utilized Commissions, NASPA has networks, and most other associations have committees on which interested persons may participate.

The work of these committees or other structures are an excellent means for which institutional professional development can take place. For instance, the NASPA small college network could be the source of speakers for institutions that face similar issues of size. ASJA's Research Committee funds research projects which might be developed as part of a professional development project. Several regional and national associations support research through dissertation-of-the-year awards. These awards could be used to support institutional research for a staff member who is studying in a doctoral program.

The preceding examples are only a few of the ways in which professional association resources may be used as a means to provide development opportunities for staff. Active participation by staff in the activities of the associations, use of the materials and programs developed by the associations, and involvement in the state and regional arms of the associations may provide excellent opportunities.

## CAS Standards

In May of 1994 the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) celebrated its fifteenth anniversary with a reception in conjunction with its spring meeting in Washington, DC. This Council is a consortium consisting of representatives of twenty-eight associations representing more than 75,000 employees in the field of higher education student support services in the United States and Canada. According to an announcement for this celebration, CAS was created to establish, disseminate, and advocate professional standards and guidelines on a nationwide basis for higher education programs and services" (Council for the Advancement of Standards [CAS], 1994a, p. 1).

CAS member representatives have developed standards and guidelines, as well as self assessment guides, for evaluation of General Student Affairs Division operations. They have also developed similar materials for 19 functional areas of responsibility which might fall within these divisions of student affairs. CAS members began their work in 1979 and had, by 1986, developed most of the standards and guidelines documents. By 1988, the self assessment guides had also been developed. CAS membership has grown significantly during its existence and member representatives are constantly seeking to identify specialty areas for which guidelines should be developed. Few standards currently in preparation include Registrar Programs and Services, International Student Office Programs and Services, and Student Leadership Programs.

The consortium has started to reevaluate its current guidelines based upon changes which have occurred in the profession since the original documents were developed. An example of this reevaluation is the current study of the General Standards and the standards related to Disabled Student Services, Judicial Programs, and Recreational Sports. Standards and/or Self Assessment Guides are also currently under development for Preparation at the Master's Degree Level and Doctoral Programs in areas related to CAS programs (CAS, 1994b).

Areas of emphasis which are included within the CAS guidelines include the following:

1. General - Division Level
2. Academic Advising
3. Admission Programs and Services
4. Alcohol and Other Drug Programs
5. Career Planning and Placement

6. College Unions
7. Commuter Student Programs and Services
8. Counseling Services
9. Disabled Student Services
10. Fraternity and Sorority Advising
11. Housing and Residential Life Programs
12. Judicial Programs and Services
13. Learning Assistance Programs
14. Minority Student Programs and Services
15. Recreational Sports
16. Religious Programs
17. Student Orientation Programs
18. Student Activities
19. Research and Evaluation
20. Women Student Programs and Services

Each of the standards documents contains thirteen parts. These include the following (CAS, 1988):

1. Mission - This portion of the standards asks that the goals of the particular program be specifically defined and be consistent with the goals of the institution.
2. Program - This portion of the standards asks that the program be "(a) purposeful, (b) coherent, (c) based on or related to theories and knowledge of human development and learning characteristics, and (d) reflective of the demographic and developmental profiles of the student body."
3. Leadership and Management - This portion of the standards refers only to the institution level leadership. This portion of the standards deals with the placement of the chief student affairs officer and his or her training and leadership requirements.
4. Organization and Administration - This portion of the standards deals with the need for a clear definition and description of the way in which the particular program is organized and managed.
5. Human Resources - This portion of the standards deals with the selection, training and evaluation, compensation, and support of departmental staff.
6. Funding - This portion of the standards deals with provision of adequate levels of financial resources to assure adequate provision of services by the perspective operation.
7. Facilities - This portion of the standards deals with the requirement that the functional area be provided with facilities appropriate to fulfill its mission and goals.
8. Legal Responsibilities - This portion of the standards deals with the necessity of staff members to be familiar with the legal parameters within which they must work.
9. Equal Opportunity, Access, and Affirmative Action - This portion of the standards deals with the provision of appropriate personnel policies to assure equal treatment.

10. **Campus and Community Relations** - This portion of the standards deals with development and maintenance of appropriate internal and external relationships to assure the ability of staff to adequately perform their duties.

11. **Multi-cultural Programs and Services** - This portion of the standards deals with the need of program staff to provide education programs and orientations which offer the opportunity to deal with prejudice and the appreciation of difference.

12. **Ethics** - This portion of the standards deals with the necessity for the development, publication, communication, and compliance with ethical standards as identified by the profession.

13. **Evaluation** - This portion of the standards deals with the need to provide regular periodic evaluation of the programs to ensure that they are meeting the previously stated requirements.

The Self Assessment Guide for each of the functional areas provides a six-step process for evaluating the current level of institutional compliance with the standards described above. The guide offers statements regarding each of the 13 portions of the standards and allows staff members to evaluate this compliance on a continuum from *noncompliance* to *compliance* and also offers a choice to indicate whether one does not know about the level of compliance.

This document is rich in professional development opportunities for staff members. It allows staff members to become familiar with issues from other student affairs specialty areas; provides opportunities to develop new tools for evaluation of individual and program performance; offers the opportunity to evaluate the current goals, mission, and planning processes for the division and specific departments; allows opportunities for staff members to evaluate the level of service provided to students; and provides the opportunity to gain knowledge about the legal requirements in their own and other areas of specialty.

When tied to other professional development programs described earlier in this journal, and those offered by professional associations, the CAS Standards offer broad rewards for individual practitioners and their programs.

### Institutional Programs

The history of institutionally developed and implemented professional development programs ranged from institutions with excellent programs to institutions that have no professional development programs. Anecdotal information would lead one to believe that most institutions have some sort of professional development opportunities available for student affairs staff, even if these opportunities consist only of attendance at seminars on campus or state-level conferences of professional associations. Little information is available as to the extent of well organized, structured, professional development programs at the approximately 3,400 institutions across the country.

Many campus libraries subscribe to periodicals that may contain articles of professional interest to staff. Many staff members have joined professional

associations and receive their publications, even if this membership has to be subsidized by their own funds. In short, it is the opinion of this author that a sort of professional development opportunities are available on almost every campus if staff are self-reliant and assertive enough to go in search of this material. It is also, however, this author's opinion that it is the responsibility of chief student affairs officers to provide an organized program for his or her institution. This officer should become familiar with the inexpensive and easily available resources with which a program can be developed and implemented.

As part of the research for this article, a letter was sent to each of the approximately 200 NASPA voting delegates in Region III. This letter asked the voting delegate, usually the chief student affairs officer of the institution, to provide materials that they and their institution have developed and/or use as part of staff development programs. The letter also asked for the name of an institutional contact who was responsible for professional development and for recommendations of institutions who had good professional development programs.

From this request, thirteen responses were generated. Several indicated that either no professional development program existed at their institution, or no specific materials had been developed or used on a regular basis. On the other hand, some of the materials which were submitted were quite innovative and of high quality. Some of the respondents sent no sample materials, however, they did include descriptions of their programs, the groups or individuals responsible for their development and implementation, and recommendations for program models.

These programs cannot be described as a representative sample of similar programs from the region or profession as a whole. They are, however, good examples of programs which have been developed at institutions with different levels of resource availability. Of particular quality were the materials from the University of Georgia, the University of South Carolina, Georgia Southern University, and Shelby State Community College. Further reference will be made to these materials and some of the responses below.

Preston (1993) described strategies for developing institutional programs. He also offered suggestions of programs from several institutions that he believed to be of particular value. E.M. Nuss (personal communication, 1994) also recommended the programs that have been developed at the University of Maryland, De Paul University, Whittenburg University, Longwood College, and the University of Louisville as quality examples of institutional student affairs professional development programs.

Materials from the University of Georgia, provided by R.M. Rose (personal communication, 1994) included a variety of items that were examples from various activities, including a copy of the Division of Student Affairs Staff Manual (University of Georgia, 1993). Among the more creative materials received was a "real" brown bag (University of Georgia, 1992) that was used to advertise the "Brown Bag Lunch Seminar" held to discuss the ADA and its effects on the university and its student affairs staff. This session was one of a

series of brown bag sessions that are common on many campuses and, generally utilize local experts to discuss a wide variety of issues.

Another important portion of the materials from the University of Georgia was a list of the professional development opportunities provided by the Staff Training and Development Center (University of Georgia, 1994) for spring 1994. This document indicates that student affairs professionals are not limited to their own ingenuity but may also rely on Departments of Personnel or Human Development, Computer Centers, and other internal institutional agencies to provide professional development opportunities.

The University of Georgia also provides its student affairs staff with a quarterly newsletter, *Dear Colleagues* (University of Georgia, Winter Quarter, 1990), that updates employees on professional activities of their colleagues, a list of upcoming staff development events provided by the general university and student affairs, a list of upcoming university activities, and small news briefs about issues from one or more of the division departments. Other professional development activities provided by the Division of Student Affairs of UGA include a fall professional staff meeting, a new staff orientation session, a holiday reception for staff, a summer picnic for staff and families, and department head breakfasts. At these breakfasts, department heads "make a 1/2 hour presentation about an issue that they are dealing with that may affect the others, and others join in discussion" (R.M. Rose, personal communication, 1994).

The University of South Carolina has developed a program entitled the "Graduate Assistant Competency Program" that, according to E.C. Bell (personal communication, 1994) has been implemented this year for the first time with great success. The program is "a cooperative program between the Division of Student Affairs and the Student Personnel Services and Higher Education Faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policies in the College of Education. The program is designed to enhance the professional development and growth of students who are graduate assistants in the Division of Student Affairs" (University of South Carolina, 1994).

The program is laid out in a two year progression and consists of monthly sessions designed to approach a particular topic within each session. Each session lasts approximately one-half day or less and deals with a particular competency, such as career development, ethics, or human development theory. In addition, extra voluntary activities of a professional nature are available during each month for those who wish additional levels of involvement and development. The program materials are well researched, developed, and written. They describe a logical progression of activities. While this particular program is focused upon graduate assistants, it is certainly applicable for professional staff as well. The program was developed by a committee composed of members of the student affairs staff, graduate students, and CSP faculty members. E.C. Bell has had administrative and research responsibilities for the development of this program.

At Georgia Southern University the Student Affairs Staff Development Task

Force was established to assess the needs of the student affairs staff and the plan and implement an ongoing staff professional development program. The task force, chaired by D. Onestak, consisted of a variety of representatives from division offices. Prior to beginning the project, the task force solicited ideas from the staff, surveyed the staff to prioritize the interest in various program ideas, established a set of guidelines within which programs would fit, compiled a resource list of program presenters, and defined functions that each member of the task force would fulfill.

Based upon the above developed criteria, the task force has implemented in 1993 and 1994 a series of activities each quarter. These include new staff receptions, brown bag lunches, luncheons with the Vice President, commuter service programs, a program aimed at increasing support staff sensitivity and personal communications skills, diversity programs, and a variety of others. These programs allow a variety of staff to assemble for activities of mutual interest which cross departmental lines. The task force has also developed an evaluation form that has been used to assess the quality and interest in the offered programs. This information will be valuable for future planning purposes (D. Onestak, personal communication, 1994).

Shelby State Community College, in Memphis, Tennessee, has organized and implemented a professional development retreat which was entitled "The Role of Student Affairs in the Education of College Students" (Nichols, 1993). This two day retreat was intended to "(1) clarify the importance of our roles; (2) revisit our important connection and relationship with the other grand divisions of the college; (3) articulate minimum standards of performance; and (4) ensure that all of our efforts will be directed toward the common goal of student learning and development" (p. 2).

Included among the topics for discussion at the retreat were the following

1. Current Status: Student Affairs in American Colleges and Universities.
2. The Goal of Student Affairs at Shelby State Community College.
3. In support of Academic Affairs (similar sections were presented for Administrative Services, Business and Finance, and the President's Office).
4. Standards of Professional Performance and SACS Criteria.
5. Planning for Tomorrow: Unit Goals and Objectives.
6. A One Act Play: "Promoting a Student Friendly Campus."

This retreat included a variety of different approaches to the discussion topics. It reflects an innovative way to deal with a variety of professional development activities in a concentrated period of time. Held in the summer, this retreat allows for a wrap-up of the recently completed year and an introduction to the upcoming year (G.E. Walker, personal communication, 1994).

Other examples of program methods used by institutions in the region include that used by Longwood College in Virginia. At Longwood, staff development programs focus on the institutional mission of student learning along with the college's student development goals. Staff members read current books on various higher education topics and attempt to apply the new vision and concepts to the mission and goals (P. Mable, personal communication, 1994).

At Virginia Commonwealth University, two series of professional development activities are coordinated by rotating members of the professional and support staff. These include luncheons or one- to two-hour sessions on a variety of topics of interest to staff. Support staff and professional staff sessions are separate. Recent sessions have included presentations by the Vice Provost on the state of the University, student affairs paradigm shifts, and investment strategies (H.G. Rhone, personal communication, 1994).

Mississippi State University has a Student Affairs Staff Development Committee that is composed of nine members of the division staff. This committee designs and implements monthly one-hour sessions focused upon issues of interest primarily to professional staff, but may also deal with academic, legal, or other issues. The Vice President for Student Affairs, President of the Student Association, and President of the University are included among the annual presenters. A one day retreat is presented in May of each year to close out the academic year (R.E. Wolverton, personal communication, 1994).

As noted earlier, these programs are not meant to be representative, but do provide options that have been attempted at institutions in the region. Such programs offer alternatives that may be implemented with some changes. Most of the programs described above are cost effective and do not take a great deal of time to prepare or offer.

### Discussion

Key issues to consider when planning an institutional professional development program include the following:

1. Decide early on what groups of staff will be included in the program. Will it include only professional staff or also support staff, graduate students, undergraduate staff, or others? Should there be different programs or focuses for each?
2. Develop a committee to plan the program that includes each constituency to be trained.
3. Make sure that appropriate levels of resources, including money, presenters, space, and time during the work day are available to offer the programs developed.
4. Get input from those affected by the program to ensure that topics are of interest and/or need to those for whom they are focused.
5. Evaluate both individual sessions and the entire program periodically to make sure that it is meeting institutional and individual needs.
6. Be creative in your program topic choices, manner of presentation, advertisement, and locations to attempt to hold your audience.
7. Do not offer so many programs that they begin to interfere with the operation of the offices or lose their importance to staff members.
8. Gain support for development programs by involving institutional leaders as input providers and, where possible, as presenters.
9. Where appropriate, include faculty members as participants and presenters.

Make sure that the programs which they attend are those which are substantial and show that student affairs personnel deal with important issues.

10. Publicize your successes. Make sure that the institutional community the larger audience, knows what you are doing and how it makes you better to serve your students.

Most of all, it is important to consider the special mission and goals of an institution and be certain that the culture of the institution is reflected in the programs developed. Where a culture change may be appropriate to improve services, a conscious decision must be made whether this is one of the appropriate places to begin this change.

### Conclusion

This article has offered two external sources from which institutional professional development planners might draw ideas, concepts, and materials for their own internal programs. It has also provided examples of programs which are currently ongoing in the southeast and has shown how these programs make use of both internal and external resources.

Materials from professional associations are a rich source of staff development ideas and directions. Members of these organizations and their institutional colleagues may benefit from a broad variety of conferences, publications, and other programs as both on-campus and off-campus opportunities to improve their skills and perspectives.

The CAS standards and all of the supporting documentation for these standards also provide a source for professional development materials and ideas. Because of the specific program focus, as well as the division-wide focus of these standards, there are a wide variety of individual and cross-department training functions that may be fulfilled by these standards.

The institutional programs described above provide a wide variety of approaches that may be used as part of a professional/staff development program. These programs may be inclusive of an array of employees from student paraprofessional staff to the most senior level professional employee may be focused on one or more of these groups of employees. It is important to remember to take advantage of the developmental opportunities offered by the institutional human development office, as well as those offered by the Division of Student Affairs.

Professional development is an essential part of the responsibility of an institution, and the student affairs portion of the institution, owes to its employees. While this is true, it is also clear that such professional development programs are of great benefit to the institution. They make for happier, more well-informed employees who can contribute more by being better prepared professionally, better adjusted, and accepting of the work environment in which

they find themselves.

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### Call for Manuscripts

The fall 1995 edition of *The College Student Affairs Journal* will be dedicated to the topic of "Balancing Legal and Ethical Issues in Student Affairs Leadership and College Student Development." Manuscripts are solicited that address such topics as:

- Management and administrative concerns about ethical leadership
- Teaching and modeling ethical and/or legal values
- Student conduct and academic integrity
- Policy and practice in institutions — implementation and enforcement
- Institutional and personal decision-making concerns
- Creating an ethical climate on campus
- Relationships among faculty, staff, and students
- Professional codes of ethics and their impact on institutions
- Issues of staff training and development
- In-depth reviews of current legal and ethical issues in higher education

Questions related to manuscript concepts should be directed to the guest editors:

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Manuscripts should be submitted by January 15, 1995, to:

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