

**Preparing Professionals for Student Affairs/Student Services:
Global Trends and Local Opportunities**

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1. Who are student affairs professionals?

“At its broadest definition, student affairs could be said to consist of advising, counseling, management, or administrative function at a college or university that exists outside the classroom” (Love, 2019, para. 5). Program areas typically associated with student affairs include residence life, admissions, new student orientation, financial aid, counseling centers, advising centers, leadership development, student activities, community service, service learning, career planning and placement, discipline and accountability, alumni relations and development, services for students with disabilities, developmental learning services, and advocacy and support programs.

2. Why and how has student affairs evolved as a professional field in American higher education?

- An American approach to student affairs has evolved out of its origin in the British educational model. The first residential colleges of Oxford and Cambridge were in contrast to the patterns of university life in the medieval learning centers located in the urban settings of Bologna and Paris, where few considerations were made for supervision and arrangement of student life. The lodgings, dining halls, libraries, and chapels were integral parts of the college life.
- The model was based on the British ideal that teacher-student relationships are formed through informal one-to-one tutorials and student-student relationships are naturally promoted through shared living and learning. This so-called “Oxbridge” philosophy of residential education heavily influenced the development of the first colonial colleges in North America. (Braskamp, Elliott, Rybalkina, Shea, & Songco, 2010, p. 2).
- Towards the end of the 19th century, American institutions started to emphasize the preeminence of faculty’s intellectual duties above all other tasks, increasingly influenced by the German ideas of supremacy of research and scholarship, and faculty involvement in student life and provision of student needs (including accommodation, recreation, counseling, and discipline) became minimal and indirect.

- College presidents began appointing non-faculty staff to assume responsibility for attending to student non-academic needs. Starting with an emphasis on student discipline, these new functional responsibilities grew to include personal and occupational counseling, student health, accommodation, recreation, and social programs.
- Many factors contributed to the emergence of the student affairs field, including the rise of land-grant colleges; emergence of public higher education; escalating enrollments and diversification of the student body; and introduction of the elective curriculum.
- Today, EVERY college campus has a clearly organized student services/affairs program, focusing on building the relationship with a pre-applicant, assisting an applicant in pursuing the right degree, orienting a new student to campus life and academics, providing a space in a residence hall or connecting with resources in the local community, offering tutoring and counseling assistance, health and wellness services, an opportunity to engage in student activities, leadership initiatives, and sports programs, and career guidance for future employment.
- With the award of the first professional diploma for an “Adviser of Women” in 1914 at Columbia University’s Teachers College, student affairs work became an area of vocational specialization. 105 years later, NASPA-Student Affairs in Higher Education directory features 281 institutions offering a master’s degree, post-baccalaureate or post-Master’s certificate in student affairs (NASPA, 2019).

3. What are the global trends in provision of student affairs/services and staff preparation?

- Although the development of student affairs globally has been shaped by specific cultural, political, and socioeconomic factors from country to country, its evolution has been driven by a growing commitment to **student support and student learning**.
- Student affairs in most international contexts resists the institutional and societal perception of being merely a service provider and aspires to be recognized as an **educated and educating partner supporting the academic mission of higher education and enhancing human learning**.
- Student affairs within higher education systems in **Canada, US and the UK** have shared a common heritage and have developed similarly over the years (with a coordinated provision of student services embedded in the university itself).
- In contrast, in **Germany**, “the local Studentenwerke (STW, student service organizations) perform public responsibilities related to economic, social, health-care and cultural support to all students. These organizations are completely autonomous and fully independent from the higher education institutions” (Oste, 2009). Likewise, in **Italy**, “responsibilities related to the economic, social, health-care and cultural support to all students are mostly performed by the Regioni or directly by some Universities. The regional administrations instituted local agencies or *Enti per il Diritto allo Studio*; a major agency is located in each

provincial capital or in the regional capital city (e.g., Torino in Piedmont). These organizations are completely autonomous and fully independent of the higher education institutions that they serve” (Brandmyer, 2009).

- **France’s** Centre national des oeuvres universitaires et scolaires (CNOUS) manages the Centre régional des oeuvres universitaires et scolaires (CROUS) network, providing various types of support to college students. “Born of student initiative, the university social services network took its current form under the law of 16 March 1955” (Stepanyan, 2009).
- Approach to student affairs in **Japan** is patterned after the US. “In 2000, the University Council of the Education Ministry... published a report requiring universities to become student-oriented and to accept the value of co-curricular programs” (Omata, 2019).
- Reports about provision of student services by various countries can be found in UNESCO publication *Student Affairs and Services in Higher Education: Global Foundations, Issues and Best Practices* (2009). A new edition is expected to be released in 2019.
- “The field of student affairs and services in post-conflict/disaster countries is an emerging field of practice and study. Higher education can use the decades of research and work of higher education researchers and student affairs and services practitioners as a template for future work in post-conflict/disaster countries” (Shea & Baghirova, 2009).

4. What are some ways to engage in international collaboration and professional exchange with student affairs professionals around the world?

- IASAS, the International Association of Student Affairs and Services, is a worldwide association of University professionals working in the area of student services. IASAS has more than 1200 individual and institutional members representing 85 countries on five continents. The association’s website, <http://iasas.global>, lists numerous student affairs organizations around the world, professional conferences occurring in different countries, and significant literature published in the field of student affairs.
- NASPA International Symposium explores global issues in student affairs and services and higher education. The next Symposium will be held in conjunction with 2020 NASPA Annual Conference in Austin, TX, in March 2020 (specific dates to be confirmed).
- European Council for Student Affairs (ECStA) works for improved cooperation between student services organizations within Europe aiming to increase the understanding of the differences regarding the social infrastructure of higher education. The ECStA is in particular promoting the mobility of students in Europe within the framework of the Bologna process (ecsta.org).

5. How can I advance my professional preparation to learn about global standards and to create robust student support at my institution/in my country?

- Academic training is available around the world (with plethora of opportunities in the US) and increasingly online. Program range from individual webinars, to certificates, to graduate degrees in student affairs and higher education. Please review the NASPA directory to learn more about programs in the US.
- I have designed a Certificate Program, which will be launched in Fall 2020 at Palm Beach Atlantic University. The program is offered entirely online; it offers language support for non-English learners, contextualizes knowledge within the learner's context, and consists of the following courses:
 - **Higher Education, Student Affairs, and College Student Experience: A Historical Perspective.** This course provides an overview of the history, philosophy, purposes, and functions of higher education. Within this larger overview, the course presents the history and philosophy of student affairs and its role in educating the whole student. The course addresses the changing nature of college student experience and the development of student support services in the US and internationally. Available fall 2020.
 - **Student Development Theory and Practice: Foundations for Student Success.** This course offers an overview of the most important student development theories and related research that gives insight into effectively working with students at various levels of growth. An investigation of these theories will provide an understanding of how the undergraduate experience affects student populations. This course will cover diverse aspects of college impact, including cognitive and moral development, attitudes and values, psychosocial change, educational attainment, and the economic, career, and quality of life outcomes after college. Available spring 2021.
 - **Transformational Leadership for the Helping Professions.** This course introduces tenets of leadership theories connecting them to effective practice, with an emphasis on transformational leadership. Topics include developing a shared vision, collaborating for success, effective communication and problem solving, and leading for organizational improvement within the context of student affairs and other helping professions. Available summer 2020.

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