

## Renaissance of Teaching and Learning



## Significant Student Learning:

Sharing Responsibility  
for Student Success at  
Western Carolina University

Committee on Student Learning at WCU

Booklet Nine



*The Renaissance of Teaching & Learning Booklet Series* is a publication of the Coulter Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning at Western Carolina University. The Series is intended to stimulate and support both scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching & learning by drawing contemplative attention to various aspects of the methods, goals and visions of teaching and creating learning opportunities with students.

Through their experience and wisdom about learning, the writers in the Series want to open a continuous dialogue among colleagues about the always ancient, always new profession of teaching. If the Series acts as a catalyst for a new renaissance of teaching & learning at WCU, it will be serving its purpose.

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*Renaissance of Teaching & Learning Booklet Series*  
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## Preface

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Western Carolina University's **Committee on Student Learning** was established in 2004 for the primary purpose of promoting the integrated use of university resources for the holistic development of students. The committee has been charged with coordinating programs and making recommendations to the university administration with a view to creating a “seamless” learning environment at WCU.

The concept of “seamlessness” is integral to the work of the Committee on Student Learning. As George Kuh (1996: 136) explained, “The word seamless suggests that what was once believed to be separate, distinct parts (e.g., in-class and out-of-class, academic and non-academic, curricular and co-curricular, or on-campus and off-campus experiences) are now of one piece, bound together so as to appear whole or continuous.”

Since the spring 2005 semester, the committee's goal has been to identify, plan, and promote opportunities that promote seamlessness and engender active, transformative learning through the curriculum, co-curricular programming, and community-based experiences. During the 2005-2006 academic year, designated the “Year of Significant Student Learning” at Western, the committee has been drawing attention to factors and features of significant student learning wherever it occurs – inside and outside the classroom, throughout and across the university experience. “Significant student learning” refers to the kind of learning that equips students to be lifelong learners and citizens who will lead productive lives.

It is clear to the committee that the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs Divisions, along with other administrative units of the university, should – and, in many cases, already do – share responsibility for student success. And yet, while there is evidence that these units have been contributing to the process at Western Carolina University, current collaborative efforts need to be enhanced and sustained.

The purpose of this booklet is to share some of the concrete outcomes of the committee's work in the hope that faculty, staff, and administration will benefit from both the lessons learned and the best-practice examples cited in relation to significant student learning at Western. Further, the committee hopes that the booklet will also serve the purpose of generating thoughtful discussion, recommendations, and follow-up action by faculty, staff, and students.

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## Acknowledgments

I acknowledge, with gratitude, the contributions made to this booklet by members of the Committee on Student Learning (see Appendix A). Among the contributions were summaries of special presentations provided by the coordinators (listed in Appendix B) and suggestions for Recommended Readings. Thanks especially to Dr. Anna McFadden for preparing the sections on Faculty Learning Communities and Learning Technologies; Dr. Dale Brotherton for contributing the section on Student Advising; and Dr. Mimi Fenton for her thorough review of the manuscript and her valuable suggestions.

The Committee on Student Learning was conceived by Dr. Robert Caruso, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. The committee recognizes and appreciates his vision and his sustained, unwavering support of our work. The Office of the Provost has also been very supportive, and in particular, we thank Dr. Kyle Carter, Provost, for his receptiveness to our ideas and recommendations.

Glenn A. Bowen

April 2006



## **Significant Student Learning: Sharing Responsibility for Student Success at Western Carolina University**

*The key to enhancing learning and personal development is not simply for faculty to teach more and better, but also to create conditions that motivate and inspire students to devote time and energy to educationally-purposeful activities, both in and outside the classroom.*

– American College Personnel Association (1996)

*What is common among high-performing schools is that a mix of administrators, faculty and staff members, and students work together to set direction and to create and maintain student success efforts.*

– J. Kinzie & G. D. Kuh (2004)

**H**igher education institutions are constantly seeking new approaches and strategies to fulfill their missions and achieve their goals. Teaching and learning remain the primary purpose of most higher education institutions. A growing number of colleges and universities emphasize their roles as research institutions while some refer to their public purposes largely in relation to citizen education. In these institutions, traditional instruction is teacher-centered and often consists of a lecture followed by a discussion or tutorial session. Learning, therefore, is often regarded as what students understand and what they remember.

A major challenge facing colleges and universities today is to take a new approach to teaching and learning. In particular, instructors are challenged to create or facilitate significant learning experiences for their students and to make learning student-centered and transformative.

Old concepts such as “learning by doing” (attributed to philosopher John Dewey) have reemerged to intermingle with new ones, including “active learning,” “integrated learning,” and “engaged learning.” A popular concept in the higher education community today is “transformative learning.” Both engaged learning and transformative learning stand

## Significant Learning

For the purpose of this discussion, significant student learning refers to engaging students in their own learning, equipping them to be lifelong learners, providing them with the knowledge, skills, and disposition to make their lives purposeful as members of society.

A strong advocate of learner-centered teaching, Maryellen Weimer (2002), has presented a clear, compelling argument for connecting teaching to the processes and objectives of learning, rather than to the task of delivering content. From Weimer's perspective, learner-centered teaching focuses attention on what the student is learning, how the student is learning, the conditions under which the student is learning, whether the student is retaining and applying the learning, and how current learning positions the student for future learning. Further, learner-centered teaching in college classrooms will enable students to take responsibility for their own learning.

Similarly, Fink (2003) has advocated a shift from a content-centered approach to a learning-centered approach that will make the learning experience powerful and significant for students. For Fink, significant student learning includes six major categories:

- Foundational knowledge – understanding and remembering information and ideas
- Application – engaging in thinking (creative, critical, and practical), developing skills, and managing projects
- Integration – connecting ideas, people, and realms of life
- Human dimension – learning about oneself and others
- Caring – developing new feelings, interests, and values
- Learning how to learn – becoming a better student, inquiring about a subject, and becoming self-directing learners

Each of these has special value in the learning process as students go beyond mere knowledge and understanding to outcomes that will remain meaningful and lasting.

Clearly, there is a paradigm shift from teaching to learning with the focus now on the student rather than the teacher. The new paradigm views the teacher as a designer and facilitator of learning and the student as an active constructor and transformer of knowledge.

In the next section, factors affecting student learning will be outlined. These factors should be considered as programs, courses, and syllabi are being designed or redesigned.

### **Factors Affecting Student Learning**

A Panel Discussion on “Factors Affecting Student Learning,” organized by the Committee on Student Learning (March 23, 2006), highlighted both supports for student learning and barriers to significant learning experiences for students. The panel of university faculty, staff, and students observed that learning occurs in various contexts, relationships, and interactions. They concluded that “positive learning experiences” are those that allow students to:

- practice interpersonal communication, teamwork, and related skills
- explore and interact with the university environment (social, cultural, and geographic)
- engage with the campus community through a variety of avenues, including student clubs and organizations and university-sponsored events
- participate in experiential learning activities and real-life situations
- experience a supportive and caring environment inside and outside the classroom

According to the panel, barriers that may impede student learning include:

- health-related issues, such as stress, poor nutrition, alcohol abuse, and depression
- “helicopter parents,” who hover over their children and thus impair students’ ability to disengage from home life
- unrealistic expectations about college work, including the amount of work required, the quality of work expected, and the independence that students must adopt in order to succeed academically
- poor study habits among students, lack of responsibility, and absence from class
- lack of preparation for dealing with “life issues” such as family crises that arise while the student is away at school

To facilitate student learning, educational practice should take advantage of the varied social contexts in which learning occurs. Holistic

learning should be encouraged by linking goals of the curriculum to those of the co-curriculum, and students should be encouraged to apply knowledge and skills learned in one context to other contexts and experiences.

### **Engaged Learning**

The “application” and “integration” categories of Fink’s (2003) taxonomy of significant student learning seem related to the concept of engaged learning. In recent years, educators have recognized the importance of engaged learning in classrooms, other campus settings, and in the wider community. Successful, engaged learners take responsibility for their own learning. Such learners are further described:

These students are self-regulated and able to define their own learning goals and evaluate their own achievement. They are also energized by their learning; their joy of learning leads to a lifelong passion for solving problems, understanding, and taking the next step in their thinking. These learners are strategic in that they know how to learn and are able to transfer knowledge to solve problems creatively. Engaged learning also involves being collaborative – that is, valuing and having the skills to work with others. (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, n.d.)

“Perspectives on Engaged Learning,” a Panel Presentation organized by the Committee on Student Learning (September 29, 2005) included an analysis of student engagement and evidence of such engagement at Western Carolina University. Panelists saw genuine engagement as multidisciplinary and collaborative, and they also argued that engagement should provide real-world experience for students.

Engagement should be grounded in appropriate theories. Alexander Astin’s (1984) theory of student involvement is particularly useful in explaining the need to involve students in both academic (intellectual) and social aspects of the collegiate experience in order to facilitate significant learning. This theory suggests that students benefit from interacting with faculty outside the classroom, spending extra time in different learning activities, and investing considerable energy in both social and intellectual activities. According to Astin, the most important application of his theory to teaching is that instructors should take the focus off the course content and their own technique and put the focus on the student. Instructors should be

aware of how motivated students are and how much time and energy they are devoting to the learning process.

Panelists noted that instructors who place the student at the center of the learning process and have them apply what they know are encouraging engaged learning in their classes. The most difficult part of engaged learning for instructors may be their becoming comfortable with sharing control of their classes with the students. As a panelist admitted, when students take charge of their learning as part of the process of engagement, it can be somewhat disconcerting. Nonetheless, instructors who practice engaged learning will see marked improvements in student performance.

In addition, panelists pointed to the knowledge-building benefits of engaged learning through cooperatives, service learning, undergraduate research, and learning communities. They provided the example of one of Dr. Scott Philyaw's Public History courses through which engaged learning was demonstrated. Students not only read their textbooks and discussed the content in class, but also produced a brochure that met a rigorous review process and was approved for use by the National Park Service. For students taking that course, learning was collaborative, engaging, and productive.

### **Transformative Learning**

Significant student learning may come in the guise of what is referred to as "transformative learning." The concept of transformative learning has gained currency in higher education, thanks to the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA). The NASPA/ACPA publication *Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience* (Keeling, 2004) has identified transformative learning as the key outcome of collaborative work on university and college campuses. The authors of this landmark publication have re-examined widely accepted ideas about conventional teaching and learning and have questioned whether current organizational patterns in higher education support student learning and development in today's environment. Moreover, the authors argue for the integration of all of higher education's resources in the education and preparation of the whole student.

In *Learning Reconsidered*, the authors define *learning* as “a comprehensive, holistic, transformative activity that integrates *academic learning* and *student development*, processes that have often been considered separate, and even independent of each other” (Keeling, 2004: 4, emphasis in original). The authors specifically advocate “holistic, transformative” education that places the student at the center of the learning experience.

Transformative education encompasses experiential and reflective learning. To be sure, transformative learning outcomes are the result of the knowledge, attitudes, and skills learned in the classroom, elsewhere on campus, and in off-campus activities. At Western, this is exemplified in service-learning courses and projects, living-learning programs, learning communities, internships, cooperative education, and undergraduate research. Transformative learning activities take place in all five colleges of the university and in the Division of Student Affairs. The Division of Enrollment Management (part of Academic Affairs) serves as an active, committed partner in efforts to promote and support this kind of learning.

Following a January 2006 review of *Learning Reconsidered*, the Committee on Student Learning endorsed and recommended a transformative learning approach to student development. The committee noted that truly transformative education repeatedly exposes students to multiple opportunities for intentional learning through the formal academic curriculum, student life, collaborative co-curricular programming, and community-based experiences. Furthermore, the committee drew attention to the urgent need for institutional commitment to strengthening the foundation that has already been laid for cross-campus collaboration to support transformative learning.

Determining intended learning outcomes stands as an important first step in facilitating the learning process. When students graduate from Western Carolina University, they are expected to demonstrate integrity as well as critical-thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills; proficient and responsible use of information and technology; appreciation for the arts, sciences, humanities, and technologies; intellectual competence and professional skills; and lifelong learning.

Regarding assessment, the Committee on Student Learning has

acknowledged that, given the many factors that contribute to student learning outcomes, faculty members and student affairs educators need to use innovative methods to achieve effective assessment. The committee has endorsed the statement in *Learning Reconsidered* that assessment methods should focus primarily on student *learning*, rather than on student *satisfaction*. Faculty and administrators should adhere to the highest standards of assessment and employ a variety of methods and tools for consistently and systematically assessing learning outcomes.

### **Alternative Learning Approaches**

A variety of teaching-and-learning approaches are available to educators. Faculty should facilitate significant learning for students by designing and managing courses that go beyond the lecture-and-discussion format, and that go beyond the walls of the classroom. Alternative approaches that may be used effectively include field education, problem-based learning (see, for example, Duch, Groh, & Allen, 2001; Wilkerson & Gijsselaers, 1996), cooperative learning (Millis & Cottell, 1997), service learning (Bowen, 2005; Jacoby, 1996), and internships.

Problem-based learning (PBL), for example, is becoming a popular teaching method in disciplines in which students must learn to apply knowledge, not merely acquire it. PBL demands that students acquire critical knowledge, problem-solving proficiency, self-directed learning strategies, and team participation skills. PBL can be applied in a wide range of disciplines, including medicine, business, education, engineering, mathematics, and the sciences.

### **Service Learning**

Service learning is a special form of experiential education that intertwines community service with classroom instruction. It has two complementary goals: service to the community and student learning (Bowen, 2005). Service learning fosters civic engagement and social responsibility while enriching and enhancing student learning within the active context of students' lives. As part of a transformative process, service learning meets civic and academic goals when structured reflection is an integral element of the process.

Jacoby (1996) has pointed out that service learning can strengthen the quality of undergraduate education while effectively addressing citizenship education and preparation of students for participation in a democracy. As students provide service to others and observe significant community problems or issues, they see the relevance of concepts, principles, and theories learned in the classroom to the real world.

Courses that include a service-learning component, whether as a requirement or as an option, may require students to demonstrate their learning by means of reflection papers, class presentations, journals, newspaper articles, and other assignments. Such assignments help students connect what they discuss in the classroom and what they do in the community, and contribute to the development of self-awareness and self-efficacy, critical-thinking and communication skills, and connectedness to the community.

The Service Learning Department at Western Carolina University has provided a 10-item list of learning outcomes for courses that have a service-learning component (Exhibit 1). Instructors are encouraged to include several of these outcomes as part of learning objectives listed in the syllabus.

*Exhibit 1*

Service Learning Outcomes

Awareness of community
Involvement with community
Commitment to service
Career exploration/development
Self-awareness
Understanding of course content
Sensitivity to diversity
Sense of ownership
Communication
Valuing of the pedagogy of multiple teachers

Source: *Service Learning Assessment Plan 2005-2006*, Western Carolina University

## **Learning Communities**

Learning communities take many forms on university and college campuses across the nation. At Western Carolina University, learning communities are an important part of the landscape as they help to create a milieu for engaged learning as a collaborative enterprise. Several learning community options are available to students and faculty at Western. The learning communities have been structured to create an atmosphere that actively engages students and faculty in the learning process, while fostering a sense of belonging and cooperation within the program and the university. The aim of the program is to create a community of learners/scholars in which students feel connected to and supported by the campus, and in which faculty collaborate to improve teaching and learning.

Western's learning communities for students encompass a number of linked courses (classes), groups, and organizations. These include Freshman Interest Groups, the Leadership Institute, Residential Learning Communities (including the new Civic Place), and Scholarly Interest Groups.

Students who participate in learning communities demonstrate practical competence. They are also more academically successful and better adjusted to college life (see the Learning Communities at Western web site). Reflecting on her experience, one student participant reported, "My learning community was a great experience that led into life-long friendships and greater opportunities!"

For faculty, the learning community experience can also be stimulating and rewarding. Milton Cox (2004) defines a faculty learning community (FLC) as a faculty and staff cross-disciplinary group of eight to twelve members who come together for a yearlong collaboration for the purpose of enhancing teaching and learning. Participants frequently choose a focus course or project to test innovations or to assess student learning. Some groups are cohort-based while others are topic-based. Through a learning community, teaching (often a private practice) becomes public. Cox maintains that FLCs increase interest and support and the likelihood that faculty will innovate and adopt new methods. An important question is: how do they affect students?

Project DEEP (Documenting Effective Educational Practices), a two-year study of 20 four-year colleges and universities with higher-than-predicted graduation rates and scores on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), revealed that one of the most important conditions on these campuses was an intentional focus on institutional improvement. George Kuh and colleagues (2005), in reporting the study results, described the work of Miami University's faculty learning communities, which has become a national model. Faculty at that university speak of continual conversations on "what needs to be fixed" and a campus culture focused on collaborations to identify those "fixes."

Participation in FLCs at Western Carolina University often begins with the Summer Institute for Teaching and Learning, a four-day faculty experience organized around focus teams related to teaching and learning and faculty interests. Faculty choose a course or focus topic, such as online teaching and learning, teaching first-year students, course design for significant student learning, active and effective lecturing, technology integration in the classroom, assessment of student learning, and creating a scholarship of teaching and learning project. The focus teams often continue and expand into FLCs in the new academic year (starting in the Fall semester), and they not only continue this work but often publish and make presentations at conferences. One participant noted, "I had been here nine years and had never discussed my teaching with a colleague. What happened in my classroom was private. Now I have friends across campus to support my risk-taking."

### **Learning Technologies**

How often does one hear a colleague say, "Students today are different." Are they? If so, how? And what are the implications for instruction and the use of instructional technology? A November 2005 Web cast, "Listening to What We're Seeing: Generational Styles and Learning Characteristics" (hosted at WCU by the Coulter Faculty Center and the Committee on Student Learning) examined these questions and provided some answers. Diana Oblinger, Vice President of EDUCAUSE, presented data from her research on the Net Generation (composed of persons born in or after 1982) as well as her synthesis of other research that can inform instructional

practice. Oblinger explained that the Net Generation was a product of an environment characterized by the use of cell phones, the World Wide Web, instant messaging, MP3s, and online communities.

This group, subject to heavy media exposure, experiences intense stimulation and gravitates toward group activity; and they are usually busy with extracurricular activities. Focused on grades and performance, eight out of ten say “it’s cool to be smart.” Identifying with their parents’ values, they feel close to their parents and are respectful of social conventions and institutions. This racially and ethnically diverse group is fascinated with new technologies.

As learners, they have no fear of anything digital, but this does not necessarily mean they are competent. However, they are connected, experiential learners who like the immediate and social aspects of learning. Their learning preferences include peer-to-peer learning, as opposed to authority-to-student learning. Images and moving around are appealing; and they relish visual and kinesthetic experiences. They enjoy engagement and experience, including the kind they get from service learning. Net Generation students believe they can make a difference in society.

As Oblinger noted in her Web cast presentation, the Net Generation is a self-publishing group who have contributed to the 14 million blogs in existence. They see blogs as a way to bypass traditional media outlets. Self-expression is important to this group. They enjoy the rapid capture and sharing of content via cell phones, digital cameras, and Webcams.

The Net Generation enjoys choosing what they want to watch, when they watch it, and how much to watch by fast-forwarding or skipping. Their technical savvy allows them a great deal of individualization – they personalize their Web sites and their cellular phone ring tones, and they can vote for their favorites of just about anything through different venues. In addition, they possess an amazing ability to multi-task while online – talking on the phone, listening to the radio, sending an instant message, or visiting a Web site. In Oblinger’s view, members of this generation are redefining culture and education. Net Generation members are saying that relationships and social interaction are important, self-expression matters, multiple media are critical, and there is meaning in networking.

What are the implications? The Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) has reported that “the landscape has changed and the maps have not been published yet.” For educators, this means that knowledge is growing rapidly and does not fit current learning models. In addition, learners will move into different careers over their lifetimes – careers that may still be undiscovered. Informal learning is replacing formal learning, and the capacity to know more is considered more important than what is currently known.

These observations suggest the value of online laboratories that allow students to work with real-world data from around the globe; 3D labs in which students conduct virtual experiments prior to the live lab experiences; collaborative projects through which students create their own learning virtually; and augmented reality whereby students may be based in a real place but have augmented information. Such innovations require a rethinking of traditional physical layout of classes in favor of round tables and laptops to facilitate collaboration.

Informal spaces are critical for learning. According to Oblinger, space should be social, interactive, flexible, multipurpose, reconfigurable, and open. The classroom should be seen as encompassing the lecture hall, informal meeting areas, virtual classrooms, cyber cafes, multiuse spaces, project rooms, and other venues.

There is an obvious disconnect between the Net Generation and faculty. Oblinger cites research indicating that while Net Generation students multitask, faculty prefer single or limited tasks. Students are picture-, sound-, and video-oriented while faculty are text-oriented. Faculty prefer to function in a linear, logical sequential environment while students prefer random access. Faculty are often characterized as independent and individualistic while the Net Generation is interactive and networked. Also, whereas students are comfortable engaging, faculty are more comfortable in disciplined environments. Finally, faculty tend to like deliberation while students are spontaneous. Indeed, there is a generation gap.

The Committee on Student Learning supports Oblinger’s recommendation that faculty treat students as “consumers with a choice,” as those who have a unique perspective on their learning environment. With Oblinger, the committee advocates a balance between action and reflection; visual and

text; social and individual; process and content; speed and deliberation; peer-to-peer and peer review. The committee also notes the need for the institution as a whole to integrate and align vision, service delivery, infrastructure, organization, and process so that learning technologies will serve the purposes of significant student learning.

### **Student Advising**

Advising students attending a four-year college or university has received considerable attention over the 15-year period since the *Liberal Learning and the Arts and Sciences* report by the Association of American Colleges (1990) suggested the student-advising system in most universities was of little help to today's college student. There have been many systemic problems, which include:

- students finding faculty unavailable outside the classroom or academic building for informal discussions
- students assuming an uninformed cafeteria approach to the selection of courses in a given semester
- students taking classes out of the sequence as prescribed by the major
- students being unable to articulate the connectivity or the building upon previous coursework within the major that cumulates with a capstone application course

These problems have revealed the need for increased attention to advising at Western Carolina University from both the Academic Affairs Division and Student Affairs. Their collaborative work has so far resulted in the creation of the Advising Center (located within the OneStop Student Service Center). The center serves to establish the first contact with incoming freshman, transfer, and readmitted students as a way of supporting them through the liberal studies maze and encouraging each student to declare a major.

Students attending Western are required to declare a major on or before completing 45 credit hours. Undeclared students are advised to seek career counseling and testing services through Career Services, the Advising Center, and Student Support Services. The ultimate goal of the Advising Center is to support students until they can be assigned to an academic department and a faculty member within a chosen major.

14 The following questions and concerns have been raised and need to be addressed:

- Do current advising techniques work the same for all students (i.e., traditional/non-traditional, upper/middle/lower economic class, different ethnic/cultural backgrounds)?
- Do advisors need to know anything about the student's personal life, preferences, future expectations, and the like before appropriate advising can occur? (Should advisors, for example, discuss with Resident Assistants a student's out-of-class life in an effort to understand the factors that might be contributing to poor academic performance?)
- Should advisors consider factors such as burnout, overload, and consequences of class failure when advising a student for a semester of coursework?
- Have students spent time exploring the role and meaning that they want work to play in their lives?
- How can advisors best encourage more students to become their own "personal advocate" in their university experience and to realize that participation in their life's journey has already begun?
- While faculty, advisors, and administrators readily assume responsibility for students' content knowledge, are they neglecting to have discussions with them about what it takes to "fit in" and prosper in their chosen profession?
- Is it necessary to prepare students for a "flat world" economic system that will change how work is done?

Surely, college is not an airplane in a holding pattern on the runway of life that will take off once graduation occurs. That much should be made clear to students early in the advising process.

### **Academic Affairs - Student Affairs Partnership**

A partnership or collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs is widely regarded as important for student learning and institutional effectiveness. Recently, the Joint Task Force on Student Learning (American Association for Higher Education, American College Personnel Association, and NASPA, 1998) made the case that only when everyone on campus – faculty in academic affairs, student affairs staff, and students – shares the responsibility for student learning will significant progress be made in improving it. The task force emphasized that collaborations between

academic affairs and student affairs staff have been especially effective in improving student learning.

However, for many years, the higher education community has paid a great deal of what amounts to lip service to partnership and collaboration across divisional lines, rather than making it a reality. That may change, however, as colleges and universities begin to pay attention to the results of Project DEEP, a research collaboration between NSEE and the American Association for Higher Education. In their assessment of the results, Kinzie and Kuh (2004: 3) noted: "What is common among high-performing schools is that a mix of administrators, faculty and staff members, and students work together to set direction and to create and maintain student success efforts."

The Committee on Student Learning has proposed that, in a concerted effort to "reconsider" learning, partnership or collaborative activities between academic affairs and students affairs should be encouraged, supported, and rewarded. Collaborative arrangements may be based on divisional events, faculty work (related to teaching, research, and service), service learning, cooperative education, committee membership, faculty and student learning communities, first-year experience programs, academic success initiatives, enrollment management, and student leadership programs. There is a growing list of partnership programs and collaborative activities at Western Carolina University (Exhibit 2).

*Exhibit 2*

Academic Affairs-Student Affairs Collaboration at WCU

Source: Compiled by the Committee on Student Learning,

Task Force on Alcohol and Drug Education
Venues Coordination Group
Service Learning Program, including the Service Learning Advisory Committee
Greek Life Advisory Committee
Residential Learning Communities
Residential Honors College
Theme Housing: Humanities House, Construction Management
Faculty Fellows – Service Learning, Student Judicial Affairs
Classes in Residence Halls
Faculty in Residence Program – Central Drive Hall
Committee on Student Learning

Integration of Learning Award
Special Initiatives (e.g., Year of Significant Student Learning, 2005-2006)
Joint Programming with Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (Divisional representation on Faculty Center Advisory Board and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Leadership Team)
Project C.A.R.E. - Minority Student Retention Program for New Students
Enrollment Management-Student Affairs Joint Staff Meetings and Workshops
Master's Degree Program in College Student Personnel
Liaisons to Academic Departments to Support Academic Advisement Model
Use of Liberal Studies/General Education Learning Outcomes in Action Plans and Assessment Activities
Lectures, Concerts, and Exhibitions (LCE) Committee
Volunteer Programs/Community Service Projects (e.g., Annual Tuckaseegee River Clean-up, Days of Service)
University Experience (USI) Courses
Student Leadership Programs
Independent Studies
Internships and Cooperative Education
Orientations for Faculty and Students
Admissions Open Houses and Information Sessions

Source: Compiled by the Committee on Student Learning,  
Western Carolina University, April 2006

### **Recommendations for Collaboration**

The Committee on Student Learning has recommended that current collaborative efforts be enhanced and sustained and that additional collaborative projects be pursued. Below is a list of recommended activities that should be beneficial not only to faculty and staff but to students as well.

- Faculty presenting programs of personal interest (“What you don’t know about faculty from the classroom”) in the residence halls or the University Center
- Music faculty sponsoring performances in the University Center
- Art faculty sponsoring art classes/workshops in the residence hall setting; art displays in the University Center and other campus locations
- English faculty sponsoring a monthly Book Club, open to the whole campus

- Theatre faculty presenting dramatic shorts or scenes from an upcoming play on the University Center Lawn
- Reflection papers, journals, photos, and other products from service-learning activities on display in the University Center and in various campus buildings
- Faculty presenting programs on “hot topics” during lunchtime in the cafeterias and food courts
- Faculty and staff caroling in the residence halls, with a closing celebration in Club Illusions
- College Bowl
- Special provisions (meal rates) for faculty and staff to dine with students in the public dining facilities

### **Campus-Community Partnerships**

Campus-community partnerships play a vital role in creating opportunities for civic engagement, social development, and significant student learning. Experiential education programs benefit from strong campus-community partnerships.

Western’s Faculty Learning Community on Service Learning has recommended “best practices” for building campus-community partnerships. In a presentation at the 2006 Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Faire, FLC representatives outlined these practices:

- Starting with a small project as the basis for a strong, lasting partnership
- Setting goals that are measurable and attainable
- Establishing roles for reciprocal cooperation
- Maintaining open communication
- Combining structure and flexibility
- Committing to continuous assessment
- Understanding the culture of each partner (agency)
- Knowing community issues
- Celebrating partnership achievements

Partnerships are built on mutual trust and respect. The university campus and the communities that surround it should maintain a mutually beneficial relationship. They should create opportunities for faculty, students, and community residents to learn from one another.

## Conclusion

Learning occurs in different settings, such as the classroom, laboratory, library, and community. A student's educational experience should include a wide array of classroom and out-of-classroom activities designed to make learning deep and enduring. Curricular and co-curricular activities should reflect coherence and be tied to specific student learning goals. Educators should view learning holistically; they should encourage students to use learning that occurs in one setting to reinforce the learning that occurs in another.

Administrators, faculty, staff, and students, as well as community partners, are – and should be – equal stakeholders in higher education. They all share responsibility for student learning and development. Faculty and student affairs professionals play pivotal roles in the process. We should continue working together to make seamless what may appear to be disjointed, unconnected activities on campus and in the wider community. We should forge a genuine partnership based on mutual respect, reciprocity, and commitment to student learning and development. When academic affairs and student affairs professionals collaborate effectively, we can build the structures and processes that will make learning significant and help students take charge of their lives.

It is important for faculty and student affairs administrators to focus on creating conditions that motivate and inspire students to learn, both inside and outside the classroom, on campus and in the community. In the final analysis, what is needed is an expressed institutional commitment to fostering, acknowledging, and supporting those who contribute to significant learning – those who truly share responsibility for student success.



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**Appendix A**  
**Committee on Student Learning: Members**

Dr. Glenn Bowen, Director of Service Learning: Co-Chair

Dr. Alan Altany, Director of the Coulter Faculty Center: Co-Chair, 2004-2005

Dr. Anna McFadden, Interim Director of the Coulter Faculty Center: Co-Chair, 2006

Dr. Mimi Fenton, Associate Professor of English: Lead Representative of Academic Affairs Division

Ms. Julie Walters-Steele, Director of Hinds University Center: Lead Representative of Student Affairs Division

Dr. Dale Brotherton, Associate Professor, Human Services

Dr. Christopher Cooper, Assistant Professor, Political Science & Public Affairs

Ms. Chesney Reich, Director of Catamount Academic Tutoring Center & Office of Professional Examinations

Ms. Karen White, Visiting Assistant Professor/Nutritionist, Health Services

Ms. Michaelle Finch, Associate Director for Residential Life

Ms. Heather Honeycutt, Student

Mr. Jeremy Sumrak, Student

**Appendix B**

**Committee on Student Learning: Programs and Events**

**Student Affairs Integration of Learning Award**

Spring 2005

Committee prepared criteria and coordinated selection process

**Audio Conference**, "Building Bridges between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs"

(National On-Campus Report and Academic Leader)

June 30, 2005

Presenters: Dr. Mitchel Livingston, Vice President for Student Affairs & Services and Professor of Educational Studies, University of Cincinnati; Dr. Lucy Croft, Director of Student Activities and Leadership Development, University of Cincinnati

Sponsor: Dr. Bill Haggard, Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs,  
WCU

Coordinators: Julie Walters-Steele, Michaelle Finch

### **Official Launch of Year of Significant Student Learning**

(At Welcome Lunch for Faculty by WCU Provost, Dr. Kyle Carter, and Dr. Glenn Bowen) August 22, 2005

#### **Newsletter Articles**

- "Feature: Committee on Student Learning" – *Buzzard's Roost Road Review*, Vol. 4, No. 1, September 2005
- "Panel Presentation to Kick off 'Significant Student Learning'" – *The Reporter*, September 26, 2005
- "The Year of Significant Student Learning" – *Family Electronic Newsletter*, Fall 2005
- "The Year of Significant Student Learning" – North Carolina State Report, *NASPA Region III Review*, Fall 2005

#### **Panel Presentation:** "Perspectives on Engaged Learning"

September 29, 2005

Panelists: Dr. Christopher Cooper (Political Science), Michael Despeaux (Career Services), Dr. Scott Philyaw (History)

#### **Round Table:** "Building Bridges between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs"

October 10, 2005

Facilitator: Dr. David Luginbuhl

Coordinators: Michaelle Finch, Dr. Glenn Bowen

#### **Web Cast:** "Listening to What We're Seeing: Generational Styles and Learning Characteristics" (Society for College and University Planning and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities)

November 17, 2005

Web Cast Moderator: George Mehaffy, Vice President for Academic Leadership & Change, American Association of State Colleges and Universities

Presenter: Diana G. Oblinger, Vice President, EDUCAUSE

Sponsor: Dr. Beth Tyson Lofquist, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, WCU

#### **Learning Reconsidered: Review and Recommendations**

Reviewed January 2006

Submitted February 2006 to Senior Administrators of the Office of the Provost and the Division of Student Affairs

Coordinators: Julie Walters-Steele, Dr. Glenn Bowen

**Panel Discussion: “Factors Affecting Student Learning”**

March 23, 2006

Panelists: Lisa Koralewicz (Counseling and Psychological Services), Cari Robertson (Wellness), Dr. Eleanor “Nory” Prochaska (Math Tutoring Center/USI Program), Brian Boyer (Residential Living) Josh Whitmore (Outdoor Programs), Shannon Rushing (student), Jamie Cline (student)

Coordinators: Chesney Reich, Karen White

**Student Learning Research Project**

Spring and Summer 2006 Pilot Study, using Focus Groups

Full study scheduled for Fall 2006

Coordinating Committee: Dr. David Luginbuhl, Dr. John Habel, Chesney Reich, Karen White, Dr. Christopher Cooper, Dr. Anna McFadden, Dr. Glenn Bowen

**Student Affairs Integration of Learning Award**

Spring 2006

Coordinators: Julie Walters-Steele, Dr. Glenn Bowen

**Booklet on Committee’s Work**

(Faculty Center’s *Renaissance of Teaching and Learning Booklet Series*)

Completed April 2006

**Coulter Faculty Center’s Summer Institute**

May 15 -18, 2006

Committee’s recommendation that “Service Learning” be a Focus Team topic was accepted

**2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Service Learning Symposium: “Promoting Significant Student Learning and Civic Engagement – Principles, Procedures, and Practices”**

June 8, 2006

Lead Presenter: Dr. Robert G. Bringle, Director, Center for Service and Learning, Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis

Coordinator: Dr. Glenn Bowen

**Special Report: “Building Bridges to Student Success”**

To be issued January 2007

