Trans*formational* Learning and Student Life

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Abstract

This article develops themes that were outlined in a keynote presentation at the *Seeking the Light, Sharing Our Gifts, Returning a New Way* symposium for campus ministers at Catholic colleges and universities, held in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on January 3-6, 2008. It proposes that collaboration among faculty, campus ministers, and student affairs professionals is essential to address students' cognitive, psychosocial, and spiritual development. The discussion demonstrates that such collaboration can and should be done within the Catholic mission of the institution. It argues that the traditional Catholic concept of "formation" is at the heart of the transformational learning called for by recent student affairs literature. Traditional formation requires a holistic approach, as do modern theories of learning and development. This article is grounded in classic and emerging student development literature and provides concrete examples.

Introduction

When *Ex corde Ecclesiae* was published in 1990, many student affairs professionals at Catholic colleges and universities were pleased.[1] While the document did not specifically mention a role for student affairs (which was not surprising because of the profession's American roots), it did include a vision of holistic education beyond the confines of the classroom. *Ex corde*'s discussion of pastoral ministry was based on a holistic vision of education that included the work of campus ministers but could also include work typically done by those in student affairs. Upon reading the document for the first time and participating in the discussions on campus, many student affairs professionals were pleased

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[1] Pope John Paul II, *Ex corde Ecclesiae: On Catholic Universities* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1990).

to have their work included in the discussion of Catholic identity: finally, student affairs was at the table.

During the late 1980s and 1990s there was an increased effort at Catholic colleges and universities to understand student life, to prepare student affairs professionals to work at Catholic institutions, and to discuss the issues they faced. Anticipating the publication of *Ex corde,* the board of directors of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU), at its June 1988 meeting convened a Student Life Task Force. This group then commissioned a study "to identify issues and provide data and opinions that would assist presidents in developing their own student life agendas." [2] ACCU devoted its 1989 annual meeting to discussion of student life issues, and encouraged member presidents to bring their senior student affairs officers to the meeting. The study was later published in the Winter, 1990 issue of *Current Issues in Catholic Higher Education.*[3] Discussion in the field continued with a panel on student affairs that was included in the August 1995 symposium on "Catholic Higher Education: Practice and Promise" held at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota. In preparation for that meeting, ACCU commissioned another study of student life; the results[4] of this study led to the founding of the Institute for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities in 1995, and subsequently to the founding of the Association for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities. A third study was conducted and published a decade later.[5]

The inclusion of student affairs in Catholic higher education discussion has brought attention and criticism. The values and behaviors of some students, particularly evident in residence halls, were not always consistent with the values and expectations of the Catholic Church, especially in the neuralgic area of sexuality and sexual identity. The three surveys[6] of senior student affairs officers at Catholic colleges and universities indicated that this group's most difficult issues related to

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[2] Mary L. Funke, "Preface," *Current Issues in Catholic Higher Education* 10, no.2 (1990): 5.

[3] Dorothy M. Riley, "ACCU Student Life Questionnaire: A Report," *Current Issues in Catholic Higher Education* 10, no. 2 (1990): 6-10.

[4] Sandra M. Estanek, "A Study of Student Affairs Practice at Catholic Colleges and Universities," *Current Issues in Catholic Higher Education* 16, no. 2 (1996): 63-72.

[5] Sandra M. Estanek, "Results of a Survey of Senior Student Affairs Officers at Catholic Colleges and Universities," *Current Issues in Catholic Higher Education* 24, no.2 (2005): 83-97.

[6] Riley, "ACCU Student Life Questionnaire: A Report," Estanek, "A Study of Student Affairs Practice at Catholic Colleges and Universities," and Estanek, "Results of a Survey of Senior Student Affairs Officers at Catholic Colleges and Universities."

the Catholic identity of the institution were students' attitudes and behaviors related to sexual identity.

The question facing student affairs professionals on campuses has been how to recognize the realities of student attitudes and behavior and how to develop an effective strategy for engaging students on these questions *from a Catholic perspective*. As John J. DeGioia wrote in 1990, "In the Catholic context we hold that education best takes place in a community in which there is both a shared set of moral commitments and a shared understanding of what happens in the undergraduate years."[7] Morey and Piderit[8] and others have documented the fact that many Catholic institutions include in their communities many students, faculty, and staff who are not Catholic and do not share that set of moral commitments. At the same time the value of a common institutional culture is articulated, institutions also embrace the value of the diversity of their students, faculty, and staff.[9] In developing and enforcing college policies regarding issues such as student behavior, student organizations, and campus speakers, student affairs professionals are often caught in this tension between common culture and diversity.

This situation is made more difficult by the fact that a majority of student affairs professionals are graduates of preparation programs at Research I universities and may not be familiar or in agreement with the Catholic perspective, even if they are Catholic. The National Study of New Professionals in Student Affairs, conducted in 2007, found that the majority of graduate programs in higher education and student affairs are housed in public universities with enrollments of over 10,000, and that "new professionals are socialized in these environments."[10] Estanek studied the philosophical differences between the Catholic tradition and the human development theories that are taught in graduate

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[7] John J. DeGioia, "The Responsibility of Community: Perceptions of Alcohol and Human Sexuality on Catholic Campuses." *Current Issues in Catholic Higher Education* 10, no. 2: 13-14.

[8] Melanie M. Morey and John J. Piderit, *Catholic Higher Education,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[9] Sandra M. Estanek, et al., "Assessing Catholic Identity: A Study of Mission Statements of Catholic Colleges and Universities," *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice* 26, no. 2 (2006): 199-217.

[10] Kristen A. Renn and Eric R. Jessup-Anger, "Preparing New Professionals: Lessons for Graduate Preparation Programs from the National Study of New Professionals in Student Affairs." *Journal of College Student Development* 49, no. 4 (2008): 319-335.

preparation.[11] Because of these experiential and philosophical differences, it is not surprising that Schaller and Boyle found that young professionals often have difficulty transitioning from working at public institutions to Catholic colleges and universities.[12] If they stay, however, the young professionals develop a greater appreciation of the mission of the institution and, often, of their own faith. Organizations such as the Association for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities (ASACCU) and the Jesuit Association of Student Personnel Administrators (JASPA) continually address this need for staff formation in their annual conferences.

This article will use themes emerging from student affairs literature to provide a starting place for collaboration between student affairs personnel, campus ministers, and faculty. Through this supportive network, an opportunity will be provided to create the common community called for by DeGioia.

A Student Affairs Perspective

The history of student affairs as a profession provides a foundation to present the importance of collaboration among student affairs personnel, campus ministers, and faculty. Two values are consistent in that history: (1) recognition of the centrality of mission, and (2) a holistic approach to the education of students.

The Centrality of Mission

Throughout student affairs' relatively short history as a separate profession—the first dean of men, Ephraim Gurney, was appointed at Harvard in 1870—its professional associations have produced several statements that establish the framework of its practice. While these statements apply equally to professionals at public and private institutions, they also affirm, by implication, that student affairs professionals who work at Catholic colleges and universities have an obligation to practice their profession *within the context of the mission of the institution*. The first document, the 1937 *Student Personnel Point of View*

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[11] Sandra M. Estanek, "Student Development and the Catholic University: Philosophical Reflections," in *Understanding Student Affairs in Catholic Colleges and Universities: A Comprehensive Resource,* Sandra M. Estanek, ed. (Chicago: Sheed & Ward, 2002).

[12] Molly A. Schaller and Kathleen M. Boyle, "Student Affairs Professionals at Catholic Colleges and Universities: Honoring Two Philosophies," *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice* 26, no. 2 (2006): 163-180.

stated, "…the personnel point of view is most likely to permeate an entire staff when it is the result of an indigenous development in the institution. Imposition of personnel theories and practices from above is likely to result in pseudo-personnel work…"[13] In 1949, although the academy was profoundly changed by World War II and the influx of students on the G.I. Bill, a new version of *The Student Personnel Point of View* still stated, "In light of such individual variations, each institution should define its educational purposes and then select its students in terms of these purposes."[14] In 1987, a new statement published to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the 1937 *Student Personnel Point of View* embraced diversity but still stated, "Student affairs in a college or university is influenced by the distinctive character of the institution, including its history, academic mission, traditions, and location."[15]

This founding idea, that the mission of the institution influences how student affairs professionals do their work, has been reaffirmed in more recent documents such as *The Student Learning Imperative* (1994)[16], *Learning Reconsidered* (2004)[17], and *Learning Reconsidered 2* (2006)[18], a document that will be discussed further in this article. *The Student Learning Imperative* states, "The student affairs division mission complements the institution's mission, with the enhancement of student learning and personal development being the primary goal of student affairs programs and services."[19] *Learning Reconsidered* makes the point in this way: "Every campus has a particular set of values and principles that derive coherently from its mission, and that it hopes its graduates will manifest through the rest of their lives. Faith based institutions

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[13] National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, *Points of View* (Washington, DC: Author, 1998), 43.

[14] Ibid., 19.

[15] Ibid., 11.

[16] American College Personnel Association, *The Student Learning Imperative: Implications for Student Affairs* (Washington, DC: Author, 1994).

[17] Richard P. Keeling, ed., *Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience* (Washington, DC: American College Student Personnel Association and National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 2004).

[18] Richard P. Keeling, ed., *Learning Reconsidered 2: A Practical Guide to Implementing a Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience* (Washington, DC: American College Personnel Association, Association of College and University Housing Officers—International, Association of College Unions—International, National Academic Advising Association, National Association for Campus Activities, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, and National Intramural—Recreational Sports Association, 2006), 12.

[19] American College Personnel Association, *The Student Learning Imperative: Implications for Student Affairs,* 3.

will have a different approach from secular institutions…But every campus should be ready to define and measure its desired student outcomes."[20] Finally, *Learning Reconsidered 2* affirms, "The mission of the institution greatly influences the types of programs and activities that count as learning. The mission will also help you understand what motivates the students and faculty as you design programs and leverage activities and events in ways that will support the learning outcomes of the campus and enhance students' experience."[21]

Student affairs professionals who work at Catholic colleges and universities published their own statement in 2007 after two years of collaboration and conversation. *The Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities* affirmed this history: "That student affairs professionals do their work within the context of the mission of the university is a concept that has been accepted from the beginnings of student affairs as an independent profession to the present."[22]

A Holistic Approach to Education

These same documents affirm a commitment to a holistic approach to education. The 1937 *Student Personnel Point of View* states, "This philosophy imposes upon educational institutions the obligation to consider the student as a whole…"[23] The 1949 document acknowledges, "The student personnel point of view encompasses the student as a whole. The concept of education is broadened to include attention to the student's well-rounded development—physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually—as well as intellectually."[24] This perspective is included in the later documents as well. *Learning Reconsidered 2* recognizes that our very understanding of learning itself needs to be holistic. There is not learning and development; that is, all learning is developmental and all development entails learning. Our bifurcation of these elements

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[20] Keeling, *Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience,* 17.

[21] Keeling, *Learning Reconsidered 2: A Practical Guide to Implementing a Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience*, 12.

[22] Sandra M. Estanek and Michael J. James, eds., *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities* (Chicago: Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, Association for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities, and Jesuit Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 2007): 6.

[23] *Points of View*, 39.

[24] *Points of View,* 17.

is false. According to the *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities*, "Student learning and development are complex, multifaceted functions at any institution and are a shared responsibility among many stakeholders."[25]

This history argues that student affairs professionals must work with members of the faculty and campus ministers to provide a holistic education grounded in the mission of the institution.

All Learning is Developmental

Learning that occurs in college and university classrooms is just the tip of the iceberg. Young adults are also developing psychosocially, cognitively, and spiritually as they compose their adult identity.

Psychosocial

Arthur Chickering's groundbreaking 1969 work, *Education and Identity,* provides the foundation for student affairs' understanding of the psychosocial development of students during the college years.[26] From the 1993 revised version, written with Linda Reisser, we know that students are:

- Wondering whether they will be successful and happy
- Becoming more aware of their feelings and how to express them appropriately
- Learning to live with others who are different from themselves
- Learning the difference between love and sex and developing the capacity for true intimacy
- Becoming comfortable with their own identity, which can include their sexual identity
- Asking who they will become as well as what they will do
- Developing integrity, which means developing congruence between their values and their behavior.[26a]

This research indicates that developing one's sexual identity, developing the capacity for intimacy, and differentiating between sex and love are perpetual issues young adults face during their college years.

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[25] Estanek and James, "Assessing Catholic Identity", 6.

[26] Arthur W. Chickering, *Education and Identity* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1969).

[26a] Arthur W. Chickering and Linda Reisser, *Education and Identity*, 2nd Edition (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993).

Thus it is not surprising that the surveys of senior student affairs officers at Catholic colleges and universities conducted in 1988, 1995, and 2004 also indicate that these are recurring issues. Institutions must continue to address these issues knowing that they will never go away.

Cognitive

William Perry's 1968 book, *Forms of Ethical and Intellectual Development in the College Years: A Schema,* provides the foundational understanding of the cognitive development of students that Chickering provides for psychosocial development.[27] From Perry, King, and Kitchener and others, we know that students not only know more by going to college, they also learn to think more clearly. Perry's seminal work posited that students often move from a *dualistic* position, where the authorities have all of the answers, to a *multiplistic* understanding, where all opinions are viewed as equally valid, to *relativism,* where they begin to see that opinions can and should be based upon evidence and analysis, to *commitment within relativism*, where they are able to commit to a set of beliefs knowing that others may come to different conclusions.[28] What is known from Perry and others is that, as young adults wrestle with family of origin values and begin to make them their own as adults, they will often do so by questioning, challenging, and perhaps even temporarily rejecting them. Faculty members, student affairs professionals, and campus ministers can walk with them through this journey, providing the mentoring community that DeGioia proposed.

Based on Perry's framework, King and Kitchener's 1994 research indicates that cognitive development occurs when students are faced with "ill-structured problems," that is, complex problems that do not have definite right or wrong answers.[29] King and Kitchener acknowledge that, "moral problems are one type of ill-structured problems."[30] Given this understanding, helping students to think about the moral issues they face in their lives will affect their cognitive development as well as their moral and spiritual development. According to Perry's schema, thinking that all moral decisions are equally valid (a mindset that often accompanies discussions of sexuality) is a symptom of unde-

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[27] William G. Perry, Jr., *Forms of Ethical and Intellectual Development in the College Years: A Schema* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1968).
[28] Ibid.
[29] Patricia M. King and Karen Strohm Kitchener, *Developing Reflective Judgment* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994).
[30] Ibid., 205.

veloped thinking at a multiplistic stage. Working with students to explore this thinking can be relevant to faculty, student affairs professionals, and campus ministers because of the cognitive, psychosocial, and spiritual dimensions of this issue. Moral issues can be addressed in a structured way in many classrooms, in one-on-one conversations, and in co-curricular programs. Consistent with the primacy of the college's mission, it is appropriate that Catholic perspectives be given "pride of place" in these discussions.

This does not mean that controversy, debate, and difficult issues should be avoided. King and Kitchener's research uncovered an oppositional element in many students' cognitive development. For students, the journey toward an adult acceptance of wisdom is often marked by a tendency to challenge the knowledge received from authoritative sources (e.g., parents, church, society). Again, our job is to walk with them, both challenging and supporting them, as Sanford wrote in 1962.[31] By including a Catholic perspective in all elements of the students' experience we facilitate their development by allowing them to engage new and sometimes uncomfortable ideas. We cannot and should not attempt to reduce their questions and confrontations during this important developmental time.

Spiritual

Research indicates that students as a whole have not rejected religion and religious values, as popular notions may have us believe. National studies such as the research conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA in 2003[32] and the National Study of Youth and Religion conducted by Smith and Denton in 2005[33] indicate that young people are interested in the spiritual dimension of their lives. The UCLA study also indicates that students expect their colleges and universities to provide opportunities for their emotional and spiritual development.[34] Contrary to a general perception that students are "spiritual but not religious," the Smith and Denton study indicated that the majority of students are conventionally religious; that is, they still identify with the religious tradition into which they were born. However,

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[31] Nevitt Sanford, *The American College Student* (New York: Wiley, 1962).

[32] Higher Education Research Institute, *The Spiritual Life of College Students* (Los Angeles: University of California at Los Angeles, 2003).

[33] Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2005).

[34] Jennifer A. Lindholm, "Spirituality in the Academy: Reintegrating Our Lives and the Lives of Our Students," *About Campus* 12, no. 4 (2007).

the study also indicates that this finding does not mean that students go to church every Sunday and follow all of the tenets of their faith. In fact, the Smith and Denton study seems to indicate that Catholic students come to college already relatively lax in the traditional practice of their religion, such as attending weekly Mass, although they still identify with the faith. This finding points to the importance of actively engaging students within the Catholic tradition at Catholic colleges and universities. Assisting students as they wrestle with the ill-structured problems of their life can help them develop an adult faith. Christie alluded to this struggle when she connected student development to conscience formation.[35]

What does this brief sketch of research into student development tell us? It affirms the commitment to a holistic education that is a hallmark of the student affairs profession. Research continues to demonstrate that students experience their education holistically. Their cognitive development (what they know and how they think) interacts with pondering the great questions of meaning and deciding how they interact with others. The research also shows that students are open to engagement with adult mentors. Students have indicated they are receptive to dialogue more than they are to rules. They are less open to being told what to do and how to think, but they seem to be better able to let adult teachers and mentors help them frame and deepen their experiences.

Transformational Learning

Learning Reconsidered 2 presents the case for "the integrated use of all of higher education's resources in the education and preparation of the whole student." [36] The document defines learning as "a complex, holistic, multicentric activity that occurs throughout and across the college experience."[37] It argues that "The critical assumption…is that the entire campus is a learning community." [38] The document calls not just for learning, but for transformational learning. Transformational learning

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[35] Dolores L. Christie, "Student Affairs and Conscience Formation," in *Understanding Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities,* Sandra M. Estanek, ed. (Chicago: Sheed & Ward, 2002) 75-96.

[36] Keeling, ed., *Learning Reconsidered 2,* 69.

[37] Ibid., 5.

[38] Ibid., 11.

is defined as "active, experiential learning followed by cognitive processing in emotionally safe environments."[39]

The idea of transformational learning connects contemporary learning theory with traditional Catholic pedagogy. The heart of the word "transformational" is "formation." The encyclopedic definition of the word "formation" includes elements of initiation, socialization, and instruction.[40] Traditional religious formation requires taking a holistic approach to the person. It is not difficult to see the potential connection to college life. Students experience initiation to the college through orientation activities; they are socialized into the campus ethos and culture through their many interactions; and they receive formal instruction in classes. While most Catholic institutions are too complex and diverse for a complete and uncritical adoption of a formation model, it is reasonable to expect that Catholic colleges and universities ask themselves how these elements—initiation, socialization, and instruction—interact to produce the outcomes stated in their mission statements: intellectual development, social responsibility, religious/spiritual development, service, and moral development.[41]

Trans*formation*al learning is grounded in the mission of the institution. This is specifically stated in *Learning Reconsidered 2*. It is impossible to achieve learning that is trans*formation*al unless faculty members, campus ministers, and student affairs professionals work together to provide the multidimensional experience that is a necessary precondition of learning. A common example of such learning is that which occurs in service learning experiences. Programs that connect hands-on service in the community, contextual reading that includes both Catholic and secular sources, and opportunities for reflection, especially in writing, are powerful trans*formation*al learning experiences. Expanding this context of trans*formation*al learning to experiences that unite the classrooms and the residence halls may give Catholic institutions a framework for engaging values and behaviors that has a chance to be successful. For example, students have responded to calls for free trade coffee on campus, even if it is more expensive, because they oppose the exploitation of workers. The idea of exploitation, of using another person for one's own benefit, can be expanded to help students

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[39] Ibid., 5.

[40] Patrick M. Devitt, "Religious Education," in *The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia,* ed. Michael Glazier and Monika K. Hellwig (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1994): 731-734.

[41] Estanek and James, "Assessing Catholic Identity."

discern, for example, the difference between casual sex and the true role of sexuality as an expression of permanent love for the other person. Estanek discusses this idea more fully as a response to the findings of her survey of senior student affairs professionals.[42]

Conclusion: A Call for Leadership

Despite the language of educating the whole student, the university is commonly divided into work silos that divide aspects of student learning into specific areas of responsibility. The good news is that although silo structures are intractable, they are permeable. Traditional understanding of leadership reinforces the silo approach; that is, that one is in a relationship to one's "superiors" and one's "subordinates" in one's "chain of command." Leadership is exercised up and down, but not sideways. These hierarchical structures exist, and we ignore them at our peril. However, newer conceptualizations of leadership exist that broaden one's understanding of the institutions at which we work and, thus, provide new opportunities.

Leadership is not only "top down;" it is pervasive throughout the organization.[43] Leadership is described as "pervasive" because this definition recognizes both the multi-directionality of leadership and its widespread presence in an organization. In this understanding of leadership, the emphasis is shifted from the idea of *a leader* as a person occupying a certain position to *leadership* as a set of competencies that can be exercised by all members of an organization. Depending on the specific situation, all members of the organization can exercise leadership. From this perspective, leadership is described as a web of complex relationships. While organizational silos and reporting channels still exist, all organizations, even the most hierarchical ones, are webs of relationships. This means that leadership is developing both transient

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[42] Estanek, "Results of a Survey of Senior Student Affairs Officers."

[43] Many contemporary authors write from this perspective. Some examples from business are Margaret J. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1999) and Danah Zohar, *Rewiring the Corporate Brain: Using the New Science to Rethink How We Structure and Lead Organizations* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1997). Examples from higher education include Kathleen A. Allen and Cynthia Cherry, *Systemic Leadership: Enriching the Meaning of Our Work* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America: 2000); Susan R. Komives, et al., *Exploring Leadership for College Students Who Want to Make a Difference*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007); and Patrick G. Love and Sandra M. Estanek, *Rethinking Student Affairs Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002).

and permanent partnerships with likeminded persons across silos for common purposes. Allen and Cherry asserted that success, as a leader, is dependent in part on "interrelational awareness," that is, understanding *and using* myriad connections both within and beyond one's own silo.[44]

If learning is understood as multi-centric, and leadership is also understood as multi-centric, then new possibilities and responsibilities for working together to create transformational learning opportunities emerge. Such learning incorporates cognitive, psychosocial, and spiritual dimensions.

From a traditional, silo-based point of view, any recommendations should be addressed to persons in positions of senior leadership. We should ask vice presidents of academic and student affairs to meet and discuss how they could develop systems to assist faculty and staff to work more collaboratively on such issues as student retention and the reorientation of student culture. We should ask them to make sure that collaborative efforts are part of the reward and evaluation structures of the institution. We should also ask them to include the senior campus ministry officer in their conversation, if that person does not report to either of them. To presidents, we should ask that they instruct their vice presidents to have such a meeting if they are not inclined on their own. We should ask that the topic of student learning be as much of a topic at cabinet discussions as are budget reports and the discussion of capital campaigns. We should look to the senior leadership of the institution to create an expectation of collaboration, and a focus on holistic student learning at their campuses.

These certainly can be effective ideas, but the new understanding of leadership empowers and challenges everyone in the institution to act with or without support "from above." From this multi-centric point of view, leadership in creating an expectation of collaboration and a focus on holistic student learning can come from many sources. According to the "butterfly effect" discussed by Danah Zohar, Margaret Wheatley, and others,[45] small events can have an unexpected and powerful impact far removed from the initial source. From this perspective, everyone has the opportunity—and responsibility—to be collaborative and to focus on student learning, to be involved in the trans*formation* of students. For example, it is common that hall directors, usually the most junior staff

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[44] Kathleen A. Allen and Cynthia Cherry, *Systemic Leadership*.
[45] See note 43.

in student affairs, are responsible for working with their undergraduate resident assistants to provide programming in the residence halls. Along with the fun community-building events, education programming is essential. This is a perfect opportunity to include individual campus ministers and faculty members in the discussion of programming along with resident assistants and students. It is also an opportunity to ask how the event connects to the mission of the institution and how it advances student learning goals.

A commonly heard complaint is that it is difficult to get "the faculty" involved in student life programming. "The faculty" is an abstraction; it is a collection of individual faculty members, some who will be disposed to collaboration and some who will not. Since leadership is based on relationships, from this point of view, it would be both possible and important for individual student affairs professionals to establish relationships with individual members of the faculty and campus ministers who are inclined toward collaboration, and *vice versa*. Building relationships, extending personal invitations based upon mutual interest and support, offering thank-you notes in writing (for tenure and annual evaluation files), and other small steps can often have as powerful "butterfly" effects as do mandates for collaboration coming from positional leaders.

A concrete example from my own institution will serve as a final illustration of collaboration to promote student learning that emerged from conversations. Like many institutions, Canisius College provides students with opportunities for service-learning. The college considers this an important element in realizing its mission. At first, responsibility for these opportunities resided in campus ministry. As the program expanded, a part-time director was appointed, whose only responsibility was to develop service opportunities that could be connected to the curriculum. As interest in service learning grew, the director's position became full-time. The director spent half of her time creating opportunities and half of her time working with faculty members to teach them how to incorporate service learning into their courses. To facilitate this, her reporting structure was changed from campus ministry to academic affairs. Student Affairs redirected one of its graduate assistantships to the Office of Service Learning. (These assistantships are held by master's students in the College Student Personnel Administration program.)

Research on service-learning has found that reflection is essential. Students learn the most from their direct service when they have a

structured opportunity to reflect upon their experience in light of what they are learning in the classroom. Reviewing reflection artifacts, such as journal entries or focus group discussions, also provides the institution with the data needed to assess the learning that actually happens in the experience. However, like many institutions, the college found providing these opportunities for structured reflection more difficult than providing the opportunities for service. Many faculty members who included a service experience in their course did not feel that they had the time, nor the expertise, to conduct such reflection sessions and to analyze the data from them.

Knowing this from conversations with the Director of Service Learning, the Dean of Students had an idea. She taught the student development theory course to master's students in the College Student Personnel Administration program. Those same students also learned both qualitative and quantitative research methods in their master's program. What if the graduate students in the theory class were trained to conduct reflection sessions on service learning experiences as part of their course requirements? By conducting those sessions, they would observe the development they were studying in the theory class, which would increase their own learning. They would also improve their research skills, which was another important learning outcome of the master's program. The undergraduate students in the reflection sessions would increase the learning that happened through their service. Analysis of the data gathered could be done by a master's student as his or her thesis. In this way, the institution would gather the data it needed to assess the learning that occurred through the service opportunities.

This idea required the assent of the Director of Service Learning, who would promote this opportunity with the faculty. It also required the agreement of the Director of the CSPA master's program, who agreed even though she would have to switch her teaching schedule to facilitate, and it required a master's student who was interested in doing a thesis on this topic. All of this was accomplished with a few conversations, and the program will commence in the 2009 fall semester. It was a collaborative effort, which happened informally through conversation among colleagues across institutional reporting channels. Ideas like these abound in any university, as do stories of this kind of collaboration. They are examples of the effects of "butterfly power," the results of the relationships and conversations that can happen every day to promote trans*formation*al, mission-related student learning.