



FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS



RESEARCH BULLETIN

No. 03-03

TOPIC: ROLE OF RESEARCH AND ASSESSMENT UNITS WITHIN UNIVERSITIES' STUDENT AFFAIRS

Purpose

To identify student affairs research units in other institutions of higher education in the United States.

Background

Student-related research has traditionally been a responsibility of institutional research units across campuses nationwide. However, within the past decade, the number of centers and institutes with the purpose to conduct student affairs research has increased. It is argued that the missions of institutional research units are usually quite broad; therefore, student affairs research is only a small component of their activities. It is important to have units with the focus of research pertaining to student affairs.

Methodology

Several steps were taken to survey other universities. Initially, staff collected information including research articles and student affairs research units' websites. After identifying potential universities, staff developed and distributed an introductory e-mail to these universities to ask them if they had a student affairs research unit and if so, the appropriate person to contact for each university.

After identifying the unit, the research staff designed and distributed a second email containing survey questions. The research staff accepted any additional means of contact including unscheduled telephone calls, follow-up e-mails, and so forth. Through this research, 40 universities were identified as having student affairs research units, most of which are located in their student affairs departments. The research staff received results from 20 universities, including one research unit not organizationally located in the university's Division of Student Affairs. Additionally, one other center is a consortium that serves the function of research support and service to all universities in that particular state.

Results

The following summary tables show our results:

Basic Demographic Information

	<i># Reported</i>
Universities with Units	40
Universities Who Completed Surveys	20*
Units that are Part of Student Affairs	18

*One university includes a student affairs research consortium that is housed in a university.

Most Common Activities Reported by Units

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Reported Participation</i>
Research/Assessment/Program Evaluation	20
Surveys	13
CIRP & Other Similar Surveys	10
Strategic Planning	7
Professional Development/Training/Workshops	6
Grant Writing	2
Focus Groups	2
Database Creation	2
Technology Management	2
Enrollment Management	2
Risk Management	1
Collaboration w/ Academic Units	1
Annual Reporting	0

Reported # of Staff and Years in Existence

	<i>Average #</i>	<i>Range</i>
Staff—FTE	2.275	1-9
Staff—PTE	1.6*	0-5*
Years in Existence	11.1	½-47

*Two universities were not included in this tally due to the fact that one employs 30 student workers and one reported “several” PTE.

Reported Accreditation Roles

<i>Role in Accreditation</i>	<i># of Centers Reporting</i>
No Role	6
Role that Includes Providing Data	7
Direct Role	7

Challenges

The most frequently reported challenges include lack of funding, lack of staff, making the best use of data, helping practitioners become better in assessing student learning

outcomes, prioritizing projects, attempting to educate staff about evaluation while planning the program, being recognized by other units, changes in administration, data accessibility, and working with the academic side of the university. Other challenges mentioned include loss of graduate assistants, policy preceding research, low campus morale, a decentralized institution, lack of national and/or regional support as well as contact with other student affairs researchers, and the establishment of a new office.

Other Interesting Information

The state of Oklahoma houses the Center for Student Affairs Research, a consortium that is located in the University of Oklahoma system. This Center provides research support and services to various student affairs units across the state of Oklahoma. Therefore, it is not necessary for the universities in Oklahoma to have their own research units due to the fact that the Center for Student Affairs Research serves the same purpose.

If you have any questions regarding this document, please contact Meredith Senholzi, Graduate Research Assistant, at 644-1180 or Kathryn Voigt, M.P.A., Associate Director, kvoigt@admin.fsu.edu (850) 644-1331