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FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING: NEW LENSES FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS¹

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As some of you know, I find it hard to resist a good metaphor, and your conference theme this year tempts me beyond prudent restraint. Thus I have entitled these remarks: "Focus on Student Learning: New Lenses for Student Affairs." With apologies to optometrists and ophthalmologists, I want to begin with some diagnoses of the vision problems of the major players on the higher education team and conclude with some prescriptions for new lenses for student affairs.

Student affairs professionals tend to focus on the world of higher education through bifocals. Early in the history of student affairs, most people came to the profession with a background in counseling; their focus was on the individual student which made them a bit near-sighted with respect to the campus environment. As the profession matured, far-sightedness came into vogue as student affairs professionals opted for professional competence in managing the campus environment. Today, most student affairs professionals use bifocals. One minute, they are counseling a student in their office, and the next they are off to a meeting of the campus long-range planning committee. With a frequent tilting of the head, near-object students can be kept in focus through raising the head and peering through the bottom of the lens, while lowering the head will bring the learning environment into focus.

Students have a somewhat different problem. They tend to suffer from astigmatism when they try to focus on student learning. They have distorted vision in which small things tend to get out of focus and appear huge and, at times, overwhelming, while big and important issues sometimes fade altogether from their field of vision. Students find it hard to keep a realistic focus on learning when their viewing lens is wavy, creating images that are often fragmented, uneven, and out of focus.

Faculty tend to suffer from tunnel vision. When they try to focus on student learning, they see their discipline clearly, but their peripheral vision is distinctly limited. They usually have excellent focus on student learning for the 50-minute class period in psychology, chemistry or whatever their

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teaching specialty, but they can't see the student's 24-hour day consisting of a hour of psych, an hour of chem 101, study in the library, hasty meals alone or with friends -- or perhaps preparing a meal for family --, distractions in personal relationships, health concerns, financial problems, insecurities, uncertainties, and all the rest of the learning that goes on, central in the lives of students but peripheral to the lives of discipline-oriented faculty.

Central administration usually over-compensates for the tunnel vision of faculty by excellent peripheral vision. They can see all sorts of things coming at them from the periphery--legislators and reduced budgets coming from one angle, alumni and the football team from another, assessment, accountability, and accreditation from yet another. It is hard for them to look straight ahead to focus on student learning when so many critical things are going on in the periphery.

I don't see many people on campus these days wearing rose-colored glasses, nor do I see many who are blind to the criticisms coming from legislators, the media, and the general public.

These are not easy times for higher education, and it is clearly not the time to come up with expensive prescriptions for lenses that are stylish and look good, but don't do much to improve vision. What we need are sturdy, flexible frames that bend, but don't break, under pressure and that hold in place lenses that bring into clear focus the total learning experiences of students.

What would such a prescription look like? Let us start by trying to get an accurate picture of student learning. What would it look like if we had 20-20 vision? Fortunately for us, there are plenty of people working hard to get good, clear pictures of what students are learning in college. Their work is called assessment, and it's on everyone's agenda these days. True, some are using cheap and barely adequate cameras as assessment devices, taking snapshots of student learning here and there, but storing them haphazardly in boxes and on shelves, pulling them out for occasional accreditation visits, but never getting them organized to present a coherent portrait. Others are using good precision-made cameras as assessment tools, but they are taking largely graduation pictures in the senior year. A few are experimenting with videos that capture learning in process. Still others are putting together portfolios, showing students in a variety of learning situations. So what we have at this point is variety -- some stills, some close-ups, some panoramic views, some before and after pictures, some in-progress videos.

For my first picture this evening, I'd like to present a close up of student learning taken more than 30 years ago. My interest here is in the sharp and sensitive focus on students and their growth over their college years. Like Ansel Adams' image of Half-dome in the winter, Roy Heath's longitudinal portrait of the growth of college students is sensitively and sharply focused.

Roy Heath was a counselor at Princeton, and his book, entitled The Reasonable Adventurer (Heath, 1964), is a report of a one-man project -- no fancy technology, no team of assessment experts, no complex methodologies. What Ansel Adams was to photography, Roy Heath was to the assessment of student learning. Both were more artists than scientists; both had good equipment which they used with unusual sensitivity to capture a scene with exceptional clarity. Both had patience and an ability to capture the moment. So looking through the lens of Roy Heath, what do we see? For one thing we see a group of students who moved markedly, during their years at Princeton, in the direction of openness and spontaneity combined with good judgment. This is the student that Dr. Heath came to call the "Reasonable Adventurer." The Reasonable Adventurer is willing to take chances and to open himself up to new experiences, but he is not desperately driven to take chances or to avoid them, as are the Plungers and the Non-committers, two other types of students identified in the study. Heath provides this portrait of the Reasonable Adventurer:

I have tried to picture the Reasonable Adventurer as a fully functioning human being, one who is open to new experiences in a changing world. He is seeking the fulfillment of his individuality from a base of world relatedness. While this level of functioning is best calculated to bring deep satisfaction it would be wrong to assume that the Reasonable Adventurer exists in a state of undiluted happiness. His happiness is geared to his sympathies and his compassion is broad. His deep awareness that he lives in a troubled world from which he cannot escape is certainly conducive to sobriety and, at times, anguish. [The Reasonable Adventurer] is no superman. In fact, he may be no more than average in mental endowment. What he has he uses well. For this reason he is more fortunate than others. He knows what it means to be alive." (p. 35-36).

That description was written 30 years ago at an elite institution for white males. Princeton, at that time, according to Heath, was "unashamedly devoted to the liberal arts." (p.2). "The end of a liberal education," said John Witherspoon, an early president of Princeton, "is to set all human powers in motion" Is that goal too ambitious for us today? Can we hope to even come close to the ideal of setting "all human powers in motion?"

Perhaps not, but the sad fact is that we have lost this picture. It lies buried beneath the rubble of a badly fragmented curriculum, rampant vocationalism, and institutional priorities for "productivity." Roy Heath turned his camera on student learning. He had the luxury of spending full-time in conversation with a selected sample of 36 students. He asked them to come in once a week to reflect on their learning. In no way did this

modest intervention in the lives of students at even so privileged a college as Princeton produce all Reasonable Adventurers. But it is impressive that students in the experiment, who seemed to do nothing much more than reflect on their learning to a good listener who took a personal interest in their college experience, did better in almost every respect than other students. They won an impressive array of academic and non-academic honors, and whether they became Reasonable Adventurers or one of the other three types identified by Heath, they did seem to benefit from what researchers sometimes dismiss as "the Hawthorne effect." The Hawthorne effect, you will remember, presumably contaminates research because it shows that paying unusual attention to people in the experiment causes them to perform far better than they would under ordinary conditions.

In the hindsight of our current research, it's hard to say whether the students in Heath's experimental group showed exceptional achievement because someone listened and paid attention to them or because they took an hour a week to reflect on their experiences and to articulate what that week of education had meant to them.

Since Heath's day, research has demonstrated convincingly that students who get **involved** with faculty and others outside of class invest more time and effort in their study, show greater growth and achievement, and are better satisfied with their educational experiences than students who are not involved with others in the learning community. Thus, the superior achievement of Heath's experimental group could be due, in part at least, to their regular involvement with a representative of the college who listened and who cared.

We also know, from research on cognition, however, that students who **reflect** on their learning are better learners than those who do not. Some students regard learning as something "out there," -- subject matter to be added to the inert piles of information stored in their heads. Others see learning as a **process** that interacts with what the student already knows to transform their understanding. These students are aware of themselves as learners; they actively watch themselves in the process of learning. Thus, they are able to exert more control over their learning. They develop learning strategies that constantly monitor the effectiveness of their learning (Weinstein & Meyer, 1991).

This description of learning as a **process**, to be planned and monitored by the learner, involves "metacognition," a term used by cognitive psychologists to describe the so-called "executive function" of the mind in controlling and directing learning. I believe that we need some comparable concept to aid us in thinking about the student's control over the quality of the total college learning experience. How can students continually monitor the effectiveness of their college experience while it is in process? How can they watch themselves in the process of getting a college education? How

can they develop effective strategies to exert more control over the quality of their education?

I would like to offer a prescription for a new lens to bring student learning into sharper focus. I believe it is time to repeat Heath's experiment today in institutions less residential and elite than Princeton, with students far more diverse than the young white males of Princeton in the 1950s, and with researchers who are less expensive than Heath. While it is painfully apparent that few institutions today have the luxury of adding a full-time research counselor to the staff, it is quite possible to describe a win-win project that offers multiple advantages for the participants.

Heath's research design is simple, and it capitalizes on the strengths of student affairs professionals. It consists of selecting a group of students and asking them to come in to reflect for an hour with a good listener on the meaning of their education. Heath, apparently, served as a mirror for the reflections of students. In his forward to the book, David Riesman observes that "Dr. Heath was a good listener -- indeed judging from interview transcripts appended to the book, almost too good, for in these at any rate, he seems hardly to have challenged the students in any dialectical way but to have been accepting and non-threatening throughout." (p. viii). In all fairness to Heath, let us remember that he practiced his profession in the era of non-directive counseling. In any case, my hypothesis is that for students, the practice of reflecting on what they are getting out of a college education and the challenge of articulating it to someone else is salutary in itself. If the listener is also intellectually challenging, wise, and compassionate, the benefits could be enormous.

It's reasonably clear, it seems to me, that to repeat Heath's experiment, we don't need either a highly trained research staff or highly trained counselors. What we need is the leisure of time and the availability of wise and intelligent listeners. Who has time these days to listen to students reflect on what they are getting out of their expensive educations? And where would we find wise and intelligent listeners? I'll tell you one group that has all of these qualifications. Retired professors.

Many campuses today have an unusually large cohort of "early retirees" among the faculty. As colleges and universities seek to reduce their expenses, many are offering attractive incentives for high-salaried professors to retire. At Berkeley, for instance, we have lost more than 350 faculty members in three years of VERIP, which stands for Voluntary Early Retirement Incentive Program. The program offers many faculty members in their 50s and early 60s a chance to retire with very favorable financial considerations. Most will probably continue their research and writing; some will be lost to Berkeley, but fortunately, not to higher education, as they accept professorial appointments elsewhere; some are being recalled to the campus part time for modest teaching loads. Many are searching for

interesting and useful ways to fill their time, and they are also searching for ways to keep ties to the institution where they have spent their lives. Even if there is no special incentive for faculty retirement on your campus, remember that this is the normal retirement period for the huge cohort of faculty who came into higher education during the explosive expansion of higher education in the 1960s and 70s.

I suspect there is a sizable group of former faculty members on almost any campus who would welcome the opportunity to talk with undergraduates about their college learning experiences. There are probably some who would, as did Heath upon occasion, invite students to their homes for an evening of conversation. The benefits of raising consciousness through group conversations are incalculable, given what we know about the power of peer learning. Whatever the merits -- and occasional demerits -- of peer learning in student housing units, peer learning in the living rooms of retired professors is a very attractive option.

Although I have suggested retired professors as a possible solution to the labor shortage in launching this type of labor-intensive research project, there is no reason why active professors might not be involved if they are interested and available; local alumni offer another option; retired staff of the university still another.

These rough outlines of a concrete prescription enabling student affairs professionals to get a clear focus on student learning offer a triple-win opportunity -- a winner for students if Heath's findings are confirmed with a more diverse, and frequently commuting, population; a winner for retirees if it is true that they can serve as interested and valuable mentors in talking with students about their learning experiences; a winner for student affairs professionals if they are serious about their obligations to understand and improve the quality of student learning on their campuses.

Since prescriptions generally offer rather precise formulae, let me be a bit more detailed about this prescription and especially the reason for it.

I have proposed a continuing project that puts students and emeritus professors in close touch with one another in a relaxed, non-threatening environment conducive to conversation and reflection about the purposes and outcomes of a college education.

Monthly meetings of the interviewers, convened by Student Affairs, would offer an opportunity to engage faculty, who have spent their lives in education, in conversation with one another and with student affairs professionals about the responses of students to the learning opportunities offered on the campus.

The purpose of such a project is not to engage in research on how students grow and change as a result of their college experience. Since Heath's day, there have been literally thousands of research studies of the effects of college on students -- enough to face Pascarella and Terenzini with

the daunting task of reviewing 2600 of them and drawing a nice clear picture for us to look at. But, I suspect that looking at that picture, good as it is, hasn't clarified a vision about **your** role in the education of students on **your** campus.

Ironically, we have ignored one of the clearest findings of the research, and that is that "active involvement" is a critical condition for learning. It is as critical for faculty and administrators as it is for students. I contend that if you are to develop a vision of your profession, you will have to become actively involved in the knowledge base of that profession -- not only through reading about it, but through involving yourself in it -- talking about and thinking about information about student learning from your own campus.

I am not suggesting, I hasten to make clear, adding to your already heavy workloads by engaging in the type of research that makes new demands on you, but rather I urge your leadership in the kind of inquiry that is consistent with the practice of your profession. Perhaps I should call it "professional inquiry" -- PI.

PI, I warn you, requires a heady paradigm shift, not one that everyone will find it easy to make. PI differs from research on student learning in the following ways:

- The first priority of traditional research is to advance knowledge about human learning. In contrast, the first priority of PI is to educate -- to conduct the kind of inquiry that improves education for students on your campus. Whereas, traditional research abides by the rule, "Do no harm to research subjects," PI vows to "Do good, if you can."
- The second purpose of PI is to apply the results of the inquiry to a particular campus. Whereas traditional research seeks knowledge about student learning generally across a range of campuses, PI seeks to learn how current practices on a given campus are affecting learning.
- A third purpose of PI is to provide continuous feedback to offices of Student Affairs. Whereas traditional research follows a pre-determined linear time line, completing the project and publishing the results, PI provides a continuous flow of data to monitor the quality of learning on campus. Improvements need not await a final report; they can be made as the need arises.

Let me very briefly, illustrate how these principles of PI come together in my prescription for a modified Heath proposal.

- First, this PI capitalizes on the wisdom and judgment of interviewers. Whereas traditional research would "train" interviewers in common procedures, PI encourages interviewers to use their experience and judgment. Indeed, this may be the place to modify Heath's original experiment by adopting David Riesman's suggestion that interviewers challenge students in a dialectical way to reflect upon their learning. No one

could play that role better than professors who have spent their lives with a profound respect for learning and scholarship and a deep understanding of what it involves. Perhaps we would see more students become Reasonable Adventurers if they were challenged and encouraged to think more deeply about the quality of the education they are getting.

Next, the original Heath experiment could be modified to PI form by periodic meetings of the faculty interviewers throughout the year. These could be stimulating and informative, as ex-professors exchange notes and views on their observations. Such conversations would, I believe, provide useful and timely feedback to offices of student affairs about how the campus could improve the educational experiences of students. Is there a pattern reported by the interviewers of student satisfaction or dissatisfaction? If so, how can student affairs address the issues raised? Are students and emeritus professors able to offer helpful insights into how learning could be more productive for students? What are students actually learning in class and out? What is the overall learning experience of minorities, of part-time commuting students, of women? Are there growth-enhancing experiences associated with special-interest groups organized around themes of feminism or ethnic studies? How do students relate to faculty members these days? What do they learn from them in class and out? What do students understand about themselves and the world around them from required courses in general or liberal education? Are we even close to using education "to set all human powers in motion?"

The questions about student learning are virtually endless. And they are not answered by massive surveys and computerized print-outs. As useful as those are for some purposes, they don't do much to deepen our understanding of the college learning experience as seen through the eyes of students. Three things have come together at this time to suggest that this prescription will bring student learning into clearer focus:

1. We have, at this time in the history of higher education, an unusually well-qualified, hopefully volunteer research force of emeritus professors.

2. There is a rise in the power and respectability of qualitative inquiry, and it capitalizes on the special talents and strengths of student affairs professionals.

3. There is an urgent need to improve the productivity of student learning. By that I mean that we need to help students get maximum productivity from their expensive college educations.

Admittedly, this prescription for new lenses requires some fittings and some changed perceptions. Turfs and specialties that have separated and divided campuses and people for years, will have to be replaced by faith and confidence in one's colleagues. Specifically, student affairs professionals will have to be convinced that discipline-oriented faculty, not trained as

counselors, will do no harm and a great deal of good in their role as listeners, confidants and mentors. And, faculty and assessment specialists will have to be convinced that student affairs professionals, not trained as researchers, are quite capable of conducting good and valuable inquiry into student learning.

The final step after prescription for new lenses is selecting a frame. It seems to me that this prescription is framed very nicely, even attractively, by "The Student Learning Imperative," the document issued by the ACPA Student Learning Project and to be found in your conference registration packet. The Student Learning Imperative calls for student affairs professionals to be "more intentional" about creating conditions that enhance student learning and personal development. It recognizes that learning and personal development are "inextricably intertwined" and that "each affects the other in myriad ways." Asking students to reflect on their education-in-process inevitably integrates cognitive learning and personal development. The new framework proposed by the Student Learning Project for student affairs accommodates the new lenses well.

Now I would like to turn to another prescription. It is sometimes charged that student affairs professionals are not seeing their role as **educators** very clearly. It may have to do with their bifocals, but it's also possible that cataracts are clouding the vision of student affairs professionals as educators. The problem is this: When the adviser to the Student Council looks at the work of that body, he or she all too often sees an arm of the administration -- for example, the Council needs to work on a new constitution or a new regulation because it is needed in order to administer student affairs more efficiently. A different perspective -- one more prevalent in the literature than in the practice of student affairs, I'm afraid -- reveals that the fundamental purpose of the student council is student learning. There is an assumption, warranted it seems, that involvement in student activities is a good learning experience for students. Research is quite convincing in showing that much of the learning impact of college is determined by the extent and content of students' interactions with the major agents of socialization on campus; faculty members, student activities, and peers (Terenzini & Pascarella, 1994).

The problem is that most of this research is descriptive and relational, rather than causal (Light, Singer, & Willett, 1990). We know that participation **does** result in learning, and we know that students who **are** involved get more out of college than those who are not. What we don't know from the current research is what **causes** these favorable results or how to extend and improve them. Thus my second prescription for new lenses for student affairs professionals is going to involve research and assessment of those learning activities for which student affairs professionals are directly responsible. Once again, I refer to the "Student Learning

Imperative." It calls for student affairs professionals to be more **intentional** in promoting learning.

Some of you may know that I have been deeply involved, for the past seven years, in something called Classroom Assessment and Classroom Research. Succinctly stated, the purpose of Classroom Assessment is to tell college teachers how well they are teaching and students how well they are learning **during** the semester while there is still time to make corrections. The best known example of Classroom Assessment is the Minute Paper (Angelo & Cross, 1993). It works like this: Shortly before the end of the class period, the teacher asks students to write their answers to these two questions: 1) What is the most important thing you learned today? and 2) What questions remain for you as we complete this class session?

The Minute Paper is a teaching technique as well as an assessment device. Pedagogically, we know that little is learned without the student's active involvement in making ideas and information their own. Some students just never stop to reflect, to put it all together, and draw some synthesis about what they have learned from a given class session. Class ends; they close their notebooks, assuming that whatever they have written will be useful for the exam when they get around to thinking about it, and are off to the next class. Other students just can't seem to distinguish between central and peripheral ideas, and they come up with a trivial sentence or two about whatever was said just prior to the request for the Minute Paper.

The Minute Paper forces every student in the class to **reflect** on what they have learned, to synthesize and articulate it in a few brief sentences, to commit that learning to writing, and to think actively about what they did not understand. If students are told that the Minute Paper is going to be requested at the end of a given class session, they tend to ask themselves along the way what they are learning, and they tend to be more involved and more active in sorting out the major message. Thus, even if the instructor failed to learn something important about students responses to the teaching of that class session, the Minute Paper would still be a worthwhile pedagogical technique. But teachers do seem to learn something important.

Dick Light, Director of the Harvard Assessment Seminars, in describing the use of the Minute Paper at Harvard writes, "This extraordinarily simple idea is catching on throughout Harvard. Some experienced professors comment that it is the best example of high payoff for a tiny investment they have ever seen." (Light, 1990, p. 36)

In my experience, college and university professors have been exceptionally creative and inventive in adapting the Minute Paper to their own uses, and student affairs professionals could certainly do likewise. For example, I talked recently with a writing teacher who modified the Minute Paper to get some idea of what students were learning from the small-group

work sessions that she used to engage students in critiquing one another's papers. She asked students to answer these two questions when they had finished their group-work session: 1) What specific suggestions did members of your group offer to you that are likely to help you improve your draft essay? and 2) What suggestions did you offer to others that are likely to help them improve their draft essays?

The good news is that she found that most students mentioned things they had learned from others that they thought would improve their papers. The bad news is that only 3 out of 24 students could think of something they had offered that might have been helpful to the other students in their group! What became clear to this teacher was that, for all our talk about the advantages of collaborative learning, students don't automatically know how to reap the benefits of peer cooperation.

At this point, the teacher had several different options about the level of her involvement in teaching students how to make the small group sessions more productive. She might let the Classroom Assessment Technique (CAT) do the pedagogical work of reminding students that they are expected to contribute as well as to benefit from the work of the group sessions. For students, just having to write out the benefits of the group sessions is a gentle reminder of the two-sided obligation of collaborative learning. At a somewhat higher level of involvement, the teacher might spend a little time in class discussion, eliciting suggestions from students about how the group work might be made more productive. Or she might decide to get more heavily involved yet by devising some learning exercises that teach students to critique other's papers helpfully.

The translation to student affairs is fairly obvious. Student affairs educators working with small-group learning out of class are just as responsible for assessing the effectiveness of the learning as teachers using small-group learning in class. Moreover, as educators, all of us have an obligation to make student learning as productive as possible. We may need to teach students how to maximize their learning opportunities.

My prescription for new assessment lenses for student affairs professionals would involve the modification of Classroom Assessment for out-of-class learning. For example, I wonder what responses would be forthcoming if, at the conclusion of a spirited debate in student council, students were asked to write what they learned about themselves, cooperation, or leadership from the activities of the evening. Do they learn things about themselves and their effectiveness in group activities? And what might a student affairs professional learn from the responses of students? If students learn some Machiavellian tricks for gaining personal power, is that what we as educators have in mind? If they learn that men dominate the discussion, how can we use that insight to improve learning opportunities for women in student government? While it is apparently true

that students learn a great deal from simply interacting with each other without our intervention, I suggest that we have an obligation as educators to know what we are accomplishing and how we can do it better. That is the purpose of Classroom Assessment in or out of the classroom.

Last spring, Tom Angelo and I completed a Handbook on Classroom Assessment. It consists of 50 CATs (CATs) that can be used by any college teacher -- or any student affairs professional -- without any special training in educational research or assessment (Angelo & Cross, 1993). The point of Classroom Assessment is to get the assessment as close as possible to the scene of the action -- to the places where teaching and learning are taking place.

Let me give a few other examples from the Handbook to illustrate their adaptation for use in student affairs. A CAT that asks students to reflect on their learning is called the **Focused Autobiographical Sketch**. In this CAT, students are directed to write a one or two page autobiographical sketch focused on a single successful experience in their experiential learning. Underprepared students and adults returning to school seem to find this CAT especially helpful -- perhaps because it helps them to build self-confidence through reflecting on the use of skills that they weren't sure they possessed. The sketch was used this way in a course on leadership. In this class, the instructor's goals were to help her students become more explicitly and critically aware of their preconceptions about leadership. She gave the following assignment:

Write one or two pages -- not more-- relating and discussing a recent experience in which you exercised leadership in a public context and learned something significant about leadership from your success. Focus not only on what you learned but also on how and why you learned about leadership from that particular experience (Angelo and Cross, 1993, p. 282)

She then asked students to meet in small groups to recount their stories briefly and then to extract any common, general principles for learning leadership skills. For her use, in an academic classroom setting, these principles were then used to relate student experiences to the scholarly literature on leadership.

Another example of a CAT useful in Student Affairs is called "Directed Paraphrasing. In many fields, particularly in the professions and the service sector, success depends on one's ability to translate highly specialized information into language that clients or customers will understand. Directed Paraphrasing is designed to assess and help develop that valuable skill. In this CAT, students are directed to paraphrase part of a

lesson for a specific audience and purpose, using their own words. In a course on criminal justice, for example, the assignment was as follows:

Imagine that you are the city's deputy police commissioner in charge of community relations and public affairs. For a two-minute presentation at a meeting of police officers' union, paraphrase the arguments in favor of creating a civilian review board. Then, for an equally short statement at the next public meeting of the city council, paraphrase the arguments against creating a civilian review board (Angelo and Cross, 1993, p. 233)

One of the big advantages of student activities over classrooms is that students frequently get this sort of experiential education in a very realistic setting. Students don't have to artificially create a situation where different perspectives are argued; they are in that realistic situation in many governing activities, and they must articulate their point of view, and, hopefully, learn to listen to others who feel differently.

Many people who come from counseling and groupwork backgrounds know a number of techniques for developing interpersonal skills -- role playing, role reversal, summarizing the previous speaker's point before making your own, etc. The problem is, I think, that frequently these pedagogical techniques are not used to enrich the natural, almost accidental learning that occurs in student activities, but rather are pulled out and set aside in special classes on gender sensitivity, conflict resolution, and the like. The proliferation of courses on cultural awareness is one example of how academics typically approach learning problems. They teach **about** them. And there is nothing wrong with that. Learning **about** something, however, is an academic response. Learning to **do** something or to **be** something is a very special domain for student affairs educators, and it is in serious danger of being neglected on college campuses today, unless we change our prescriptions to focus on student learning as something far broader than classroom learning.

In conclusion, my prescription for new lenses for Student Affairs calls for a clear focus on student learning in all its multifaceted dimensions. Instead of bifocals, however, which give a clear close-up of students or a distance view of the learning environment -- depending on which lens you are looking through -- I think your 1994 convention theme has got it right. The focus is on student learning.

Student learning, after all, is the goal of **all** education, and it is through that focus that we must ultimately judge our effectiveness as educators.

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