

## **EFFECTIVE PRACTICE: COLLABORATION BETWEEN ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS**

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### **Issue Being Addressed:**

Collaboration on ideas and activities between two different offices can be difficult. All involved should have an equal voice and determine what is best for the students being served.

### **Actions to Consider:**

How would an institution benefit by building a bridge between Academic and Student Affairs? The entire institution must work together to educate the whole student. Student learning can occur anywhere--in the classroom, on the sports field, in the residence halls, at the library, at community service sites and through work experience. Combining academic service learning with student affairs creates an environment that will support student initiatives and leadership, and provides students with the skills and knowledge necessary to be well-rounded individuals.

### **Context and Setting:**

The Madonna University Director of Service Learning works with faculty to assist in creating academic service learning projects, developing community partnerships, and also works with faculty to write grants. He serves as a resource to the institution relevant to community in-needs.

The Madonna University Coordinator of Student Activities/Wellness recruits for and coordinates a variety of civic engagement, community service and health promotion projects, including Habitat for Humanity, food banks and soup kitchens, Christmas for Kids, alternative spring break programs, student government and student leadership activities.

### **Overview:**

Madonna University has begun the process of bringing two offices more closely together. The first step in building the bridge was to call a meeting with the Director of Service Learning, Coordinator of Student Activities/Wellness, Vice President of Student Affairs and Vice President of Academic Affairs. Their presence insured that all involved would be held accountable for their commitment. An agenda was created for the meeting so the important topics would be discussed and all present at the meeting would have the opportunity to reflect and think about the items in advance. Remember the main purpose for bringing the two offices together: provide the best opportunities for the students, inside and outside of the classroom. At the meeting, it is important to discuss ways the offices can work together, partnerships that exist within the offices, and ways they can help one another.

It is recommended to communicate via these open meetings once a month. Each meeting will allow time for office updates and brainstorming about points of collaboration.

### **Key Components:**

- Coordinate a meeting schedule and set tentative agendas. If you do not have a person in the middle make sure to alternate who is in charge of the meetings. You want to make sure that one office isn't overpowering the other.

- At the first meeting discuss the following questions: What issues are the two offices trying to address? How is this issue unique to each office and the institution as a whole? What type of collaboration would best address this problem? What factors are in place on your campus that would assist with a successful collaboration? What factors may exist that would make collaboration a challenge? What are the anticipated outcomes of this collaboration?
- Build lasting partnerships. (i.e. if there is an academic service learning class that meets one semester out of the year, the two offices can work together to ensure the institution's commitment to the community partner during the other semester.)
- Define the terms used at the institution to describe various initiatives. Consider how students will understand these terms and how they connect to the institution's mission.
- Be open to new ideas from a different division of the institution. Remember, it takes a whole university to make the experience best for the student.
- It takes time to change: You don't have to do it all right away. Take small steps to work toward the main goal: to provide the best opportunities for students, inside and outside of the classroom.
- Establish and maintain excellent communication with all those that are involved and also follow an agreed-upon process for the communication outside of the meetings. (Open communication will lead to strong collaboration).