Educational Symposium for Research and Innovations: February 25, 2006
The George Washington University Graduate School of Education and Human Development

Title of Presentation: Student Leadership Development Programming: Theory, an Institutional Context, a Plan for the Future, and Implications for Practice

Presentation Format (check only one)
- Scholarly paper
- Symposium
- Marketplace of Ideas

Research findings
Research orientation
Poster Fair/Research orientation

Research proposal
Practice/innovation orientation
Poster Fair/Practice orientation

Poster Fair/Research orientation
Demonstration/Research orientation

Demonstration/Practice orientation

Issue/problem to be addressed for the assembled presentations: XYZ University seeks to develop programming to assist the development of its student leaders. Although XYZ University has a number of student leadership development activities and programs already in place, the student affairs division wishes to coordinate these better, organize them into a coherent sequence, and situate these within the recent research on student leadership development.

Overview of relevant theory or scholarship: There is a growing body of research on the leadership development of student leadership (Komives et al 1998). In their mission statements many colleges and universities claim the development of leadership skills and abilities as an important aspect of the educational experience (Cress et al 2001). Yet, few institutions have deliberate, planned strategies and programming for the development of their campus leaders, let alone for all of their students (Kuh, 1995). Research has established a relationship between leadership development, campus involvement, and student retention (for example, Lamport, 1993; Velasquez, 1998). In particular, research shows benefits to leadership development training for students involved in athletics and Greek organizations (Cornelius, 1995; Pascarella et al, 2001; Pike, 2000) and for women (Person & Cochran, 1997; Ramano, 1996). Thus, it behooves colleges and universities to undertake organized, comprehensive, and co-curriculum education for leadership development of at least student leaders, if not for all students.

Individual contributions: There will be 3 sections to this symposium.
Presenter A: This section of the symposium will present an overview of the literature on student leadership development. Themes emerging from the literature relating to student leaders and the specific developmental needs of student leaders, particularly in relationship to student development theories, will be highlighted.
Presenter B: This section will include an overview of the undergraduate student body of XYZ University, with emphasis on the range of student activities and the demographics of participation in these activities. This section will conclude with a summary of leadership development activities presently available at XYZ University and a critique of the strengths and weaknesses of these activities.
Presenter C: This section will present a plan currently under consideration at XYZ University for expansion of the student leadership development activities. XYZ University proposes a three-pronged approach of classroom studies, experiential programming (such as outdoors activities), and reflective follow-up for students during their leadership periods in student organizations.
Presenter D: An overview of challenges arising from the plan, implications for practice, and “best practices” for sharing with other institutions.

Practice-based solutions and implications: The XYZ University plan builds on themes in the research that call for coherence and sequential educational and developmental experiences with regards to student leadership development (Kuh, 2001). It is particularly difficult to organize such a scheme at a large, urban university with dozens of student organizations and hundreds of student leaders. The solutions for providing such services in a large university involve a modularized curriculum offered at many times and places. Implications for student affairs divisions are multiple in that such a plan requires financial support and augmentation of student organizations staff to service expanded programming.