Co-Curricular Learning Outcomes
What Do Our Students Learn and How Do We Know?

Introduction

Student affairs work significantly enhances the student experience through a multitude of programs and services. We also have the opportunity to provide experiences to students that will enhance their outside the classroom learning. As a division, however, there are key questions to consider…

- What do students learn as a result of their experiences with the departments in the Division of Student Affairs?
- How do we know what students are learning?
- How do we structure a learning environment that will enhance the overall student experience?
- How do we better prepare students to describe out-of-the-class learning in more compelling ways?

The idea of learning outcomes is not new, although more attention has been paid to the formal articulation and measurement of student learning outcomes in the past decade. In student affairs we typically use program outcomes as a measure of success. The more compelling questions of what students are learning and how we measure such learning may be less familiar.

Learning Domains

Over the years there have been several frameworks to understand student learning outcomes most prominently ACPA, NASPA, et al. Learning Reconsidered, AAC&U’s Essential Learning Outcomes, and the Council for the Advancement of Standards. Initially, the Division of Student Affairs adopted Learning Reconsidered as the preferred framework which was used for about 10 years. After recently evaluating the utility of this framework, we decided to develop an abbreviated model that provides “learning domains” to guide our work in Maryland’s Division of Student Affairs. These five learning domains are defined broadly enough to encompass much of the learning that may occur outside of the classroom.

The five learning domains are:

- Cultivate Personal and Interpersonal Skills
- Enhance Cognitive Skills
- Develop Civic and Social Responsibility
- Improve Life Skills
- Technical Skills

These five learning domains are described below and some examples of the types of learning are included to illuminate the domain.
Personal & Interpersonal Skills

Students who participate in programs and/or services within the Division of Student Affairs will develop personal and interpersonal skills which will allow them to increase self-awareness and improve their interactions with others in terms of cooperation and appreciation of differences. Examples of learning within this domain include:

- Self-awareness & realistic self-appraisal
- Collaboration – working in groups
- Appreciating the value of others (e.g., diverse opinions, social identities)
- Personal responsibility
- Resolution of differences with civility

Civic & Social Responsibility

Students who participate in programs and/or services within the Division of Student Affairs will demonstrate knowledge and behaviors related to both civic and social responsibility. Examples of learning within this domain include:

- Civic engagement with civility, citizenship, and service-learning
- Ethical reasoning – personal code of ethics
- Appreciation for the natural world and stewardship behaviors
- Active engagement in concern for others – eschewing bystander behavior
- Confidence to appropriately challenge the negative behaviors of others
- Display of integrity between beliefs and behavior
- Understanding the interrelatedness of cultures – maintain a global perspective

Last updated: May 2018
Life Skills

Students who participate in programs and/or services within the Division of Student Affairs will gain skills that assist them in managing their lives successfully both personally and professionally. Examples of learning within this domain include:

- Ability to manage one’s affairs including practical skills of daily living
- Setting personal and professional goals; establishing a plan for achievement
- Ability to manage time effectively
- Plan for financial stability
- Demonstrate career readiness
- Development of personal accountability

Cognitive Skills

Students who participate in programs and/or services within the Division of Student Affairs will enhance their ability to reason, value diverse ideas and opinions, and apply their learning to life situations and problems. Examples of learning within this domain include:

- Decision-making, both independent and in groups
- Critical thinking
- Appreciation for complexity
- Ability to acquire and apply knowledge
- Problem-solving through knowledge application
- Conflict resolution through thoughtful dialogue

Technical Skills

Some students who participate in programs and/or services within the Division of Student Affairs will learn specific technical, job-related, or program/service specific skills. Examples of learning within this domain include:

- Basic office support skills (transferring phone calls, using the copier)
- Web-page design
- Budget creation
- Outdoor recreation safety, such as choosing an appropriate campsite or ensuring safe rock-wall climbing
- Data analysis
- Graphic design, photography, and/or videography and editing
- Safe operation of busses