

# STUDENT AFFAIRS LEADER

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## Students and Service: Who Participates and Why

Why do students participate in service, and what do they get out of it? Who is more likely to participate and reap larger benefits? Ron Chesbrough, vice president for student affairs at Hastings College and a member of *Student Affairs Leader's* advisory board, set out to find answers to these questions with a mixed-methods study. He recently participated in an email interview about his findings.

**SAL:** *What prompted you to do this research?*

**Chesbrough:** I have long been interested in how and why students become involved in service during college, and about the impacts service experiences have on their learning and development. My first job in higher education more than 20 years ago was as a service learning program director.

Prior research has shown that service involvement during the college years contributes positively to student growth and development in myriad ways, from enhancement of self-esteem to the development of a sense of civic responsibility. My research focused on how and why students become involved in service and on how they describe their learning from it.

**SAL:** *What did your study entail, and how was it structured?*

**Chesbrough:** This was an exploratory

mixed-methods study conducted in a single setting, Hastings College, a four-year residential liberal arts college in the Midwest. Research began with qualitative

“Educators should recognize that men and women tend to think about and become involved in service for different reasons. We need to be conscious of how we market service opportunities to be sure to reach out to men.”

focus groups in fall 2008 and concluded with a survey of 1,000 students about their motivations for involvement in service, their specific choices of service projects, and their self-reported learning from service. The research was done as a dissertation study to be defended this month.

**SAL:** *Did you find any surprising or predictable trends among students in the study?*

**Chesbrough:** There were a number of very interesting findings. I looked at how students described their experiences from

three different perspectives: by gender, by year in school, and by amount of service performed. Distinct patterns of response emerged in all three areas.

Not surprisingly, amount of service performed, as measured by total hours of service in the last year, yielded a vast number of statistically significant measures of service and how students described their learning from service. Students with more hours of service reported being more likely to become involved in ongoing rather than one-time service projects. They were also more likely to report intrinsic motivators toward service, such as a desire to address a social need or to right a social wrong, rather than extrinsic motivators, such as meeting a class or student organization requirement.

On nearly every measure of learning and growth, students with more hours of service reported statistically significant differences. These included such measures as sense of purpose, self-confidence, and

*continued on page 4*

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*CHRONICALLY ILL* from page 5

own approach to this.

At the postsecondary level, it's up to [chronically ill students] to identify themselves [to their institutions]. But it's up to us to accommodate them. So life will be easier if we educate students about self-identification.

As an example, I was lecturing in Chicago and was interviewed by a reporter who was returning to school as a graduate student. And he had been diagnosed as a diabetic, which was altering his life in a big way—insulin injections, what he needed to eat, how he needed to rest—and was really impacting

his work. And I asked him, “Do you consider yourself as having a disability?” He said, “No.” I asked, “Would you avail yourself of services from the disability office?” He said, “Why would I do that?”

But what happens when he starts missing class and they just think he's not pulling his weight? So it behooves the disability office to expand thinking on this—how to educate incoming students.

*Information on the November 23 seminar “Chronic Illness: 5 Things to Know, 5 Things to Do” is available at [www.magnapubs.com/calendar/378.html](http://www.magnapubs.com/calendar/378.html).*

*PERSPECTIVES* from page 6

students to greet the faculty member at the door or parking lot, or walk them from the faculty member's office. Residence halls are a maze to the unfamiliar. Welcome the faculty member by helping him or her negotiate that unfamiliar environment.

**Myth 5: Student affairs educators work harder and are more dedicated than faculty members.**

A wonderful aspect of higher education work is the presence of so many dedicated administrators and faculty. No one corners the market on dedication or time commitment. The primary difference between faculty and administrators is visibility and priorities.

Faculty work is largely performed behind the scenes: in faculty offices, through email, and in home offices where grading and class preparation occur. In contrast, student affairs educators' work is very visible: at student meetings, in campus offices, and during campus events.

Student affairs educators, by nature or

nurture, tend to be an extroverted group that prioritizes face-to-face and group interactions. Faculty, by nature or nurture, tend to be an introverted group that prioritizes the contemplative work of reading, writing, and individual student contact. Both have their place in university life. Neither should compete with the other.

**Suggestion:** Believe in the value of both student affairs and faculty activities and work life. Adopt an attitude of collaboration that precludes comparison or competition. Both groups perform vastly different activities on campus but are ones upon which the institution depends greatly. Faculty need not be or act like student affairs educators anymore than student affairs educators need be or act like faculty. Both roles have tremendous value.

*Kathleen Manning, PhD, is a professor in the Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration program at the University of Vermont. As a contributing editor of Student Affairs Leader, she shares her perspectives every month on this page.*

**Student cleanliness and residence**

**hall rooms:** Although colleges are paying a lot of attention to the spread of H1N1, many residence hall rooms harbor other potentially dangerous pathogens, such as E. coli and drug-resistant staphylococcus, according to a recent study. These bacterial contaminations occur in places that get touched frequently but that most students don't clean, such as light switches, television remotes, and dorm refrigerator door handles (which harbored twice as many bacteria as the handles of shared toilets, the study found). Of the refrigerator interiors examined, nearly a third harbored "fecal indicators." The study was conducted by the Simmons College Center for Hygiene and Health in Home and Community—and sponsored by an educational grant from Lysol.

**Recent student-related policy changes:**

- Tufts University's residence life policies now directly prohibit residents from engaging in sexual activity while a roommate is present. The student newspaper reported that the university's residence life office received a handful of complaints before enacting the policy change. It also reported that several student government members complained that the university did not discuss the policy addition with students before creating it.
- Harvard University's medical school retracted a policy requiring students to coordinate interaction with news media through the dean of students and public affairs offices. Students opposing the policy said it would hamper their ability to speak out on current medical issues, such as health care reform and conflicts of interest.
- The Community College of Allegheny College has ended a policy requiring

prior written approval of materials that students wish to distribute on campus but that are not related to a sponsored college group or event. The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education joined the fight against the policy after a student was threatened with punishment after trying to organize a campus gun rights group.

**Online magazine for college**

**women:** Three Harvard University students have launched *Her Campus*, an online magazine for female college students (<http://hercampus.com>). Sections include "Style," "Health," "Love," "Career," and "Dormlife."

**Incoming students learn CPR:** For the second consecutive year, Emory University offered CPR training to its entire incoming class during orientation. Emory's Emergency Medical Services trained more than 700 first-year students

(about two-thirds of the class) last year. The hour-long training includes hands-on CPR practice and basic automated external defibrillator usage.

**Division III graduation rates:**

Colleges are typically concerned about the academic success of their student-athletes, but at Division III schools, athletes perform as well or better than nonathletes. According to 2008 NCAA data, the freshman cohort graduation rate for the 2001–2002 class was 62 percent for all students, but 70 percent for student-athletes. The four-class average stood at 63 percent for all students and 65 percent for student-athletes. The highest 2001–2002 cohort athlete graduation rates came from men's basketball (83 percent), men's cross-country/track (83 percent), women's cross-country/track (80 percent), and other women's sports (83 percent). ●

**Must Officials Report Undocumented Students?**

If a college official learns that a student is undocumented, is he or she required to report it? No, said Sandra K. Schuster, JD, a partner with the National Center for Higher Education Risk Management, during a September 9 online seminar about enrolling undocumented students.

Although the federal Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) requires institutions to submit information about international students who hold visas, it creates no duty to report students who are living in the U.S. without legal documentation, Schuster said. (However, SEVIS-certified institutions must not knowingly recruit undocumented students.)

If a campus becomes aware of an undocumented student's immigration status once the student is enrolled, an advisor should speak with the student about any licensure requirements, background checks, or internships in the student's field of study that might be compromised by his or her immigration status, Schuster said.

Although SEVIS requires international students to waive their Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) rights, FERPA does protect information about undocumented students' enrollment status, Schuster said. But if a school official becomes aware that a student is working illegally on campus (say, through an I-9 form), the official has a duty to report that employment-related violation. ●

*STUDENTS AND SERVICE*  
from page 1

independence and autonomy of thought. This supports prior research that indicates that involvement in service, particularly in structured service learning formats, leads to student growth and development.

Gender also provided some interesting outcomes. Men were much more likely to become involved in service via externally motivating factors: as part of a team or club, as a course requirement, or as a means to learn more about a field. Women, in contrast, were more likely to report involvement due to intrinsically motivating factors, such as a desire to help or a drive to address a social injustice.

Men frequently talked about service in the language of duty, while women often used the language of caring and nurturing. As we know, men are less likely than women to become engaged in service at all ages and stages of their lives. When asked why men are less likely to serve, both men and women cited “didn’t know about opportunities” and “no one asked” as the top two reasons for this dynamic. Men in the sample also tended to gravitate toward one-time projects versus ongoing commitments and to engage in service that was more physical in nature and less relational.

Year in school also provided some interesting differences. First-year students were more likely to cite external motivators for their involvement, regardless of their levels of service during high school. Upper classmen were much more likely to describe the types of internal motivators cited by women in the sample. When describing learning, upper classmen were more able to describe learning impacts in terms of their personal growth, ethical development, and cognitive learning than were students

earlier in their college careers.

**SAL:** *What are the implications of some of these findings for student affairs practitioners and other educators?*

**Chesbrough:** Several key implications emerged. This study showed that students who become involved in service early in their college careers tend to participate more actively than their peers throughout their college years. The implication is that we need to involve students early and often and provide multiple opportunities for involvement in service particularly for first-year students.

This study also affirmed previous research showing that learning from service is maximized by including a reflection component. We should provide opportunities for those involved in service to process their learning in a structured and timely manner. A great deal of research and writing has been done regarding ways to help students do this. These can be found at nearly every website or in any written resource devoted to service learning as pedagogy.

With regard to gender, educators should recognize that men and women tend to think about and become involved in service for different reasons. We need to be conscious of how we “market” service opportunities to our students and be sure to include men in our outreach for service initiatives. One service learning director reported, for instance, replacing the word “service” with the word “work” in her marketing efforts and in enrolling more men.

**SAL:** *How do we acknowledge and use the data regarding the general differences between men and women without imposing or reinforcing gender stereotypes?*

**Chesbrough:** I wish I had a great

answer to that. What I can say is, my emphasis was not to prove that there are differences between men and women in regard to service, but to say that if there happen to be differences—generally, not universally speaking—then how can we understand those differences to begin to cater to or teach better to a wider variety of students?

It is well-documented that men at all levels, including college, are less involved in service than women are. And we know that the research says that exposure to service during college tends to bring positive results in terms of student development. Then it seems like a reasonable thing to ask, “Well, why is that? Is there something we could change about what we’re doing that could involve more men?”

If we do understand a little better how men and women address, approach, and learn from service, then the practical implication is that we can design and market service opportunities to men and women in different ways.

We are living in a time when service and the values of serving are central to a conversation about civic responsibility and engagement. From the White House to the Carnegie Classifications system, there is a renewed recognition of the importance of service, and a reinvigorated commitment to encouraging and recognizing service as an important part of our mission in higher education.

It’s my hope that this study provides some new understanding and insights into how and why college students choose their service involvements, and how and what they learn from their experiences. I’m grateful to the participants in the study for the light that they have shed on these and other questions.

Ron Chesbrough can be reached at rchesbrough@hastings.edu. ●

## Preparing to Serve Chronically Ill Students

When not working with clients, chronic illness authority Patricia Fennell travels and speaks with various groups, including colleges and universities, on how to best respond to the needs of people with chronic illnesses. A growing number of North Americans, including college students, are living with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, lupus, the lingering effects of cancer treatment, and mental illness. Although these illnesses and conditions can be no less disabling than a visible, static disability, such as a mobility impairment requiring the use of a wheelchair, they are often invisible and dynamic, meaning that their symptoms tend to wax and wane.

These characteristics make serving students with such illnesses different from serving students with “traditional” disabilities, says Fennell. This means that colleges and universities will need to create new policies and procedures to accommodate them, as is required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The first step is often recognizing that chronic illnesses are indeed disabilities to which colleges and universities must respond. Fennell recently spoke with *Student Affairs Leader* about taking that first step. In the November 23 online seminar “Chronic Illness: 5 Things to Know, 5 Things to Do,” Fennell will also discuss how to improve campus services for chronically ill students and ensure campus ADA compliance.

**SAL:** *In your experience, what services aren't being offered to chronically ill college students but should be?*

**Fennell:** I recently presented at a conference that was dedicated to universities and their disability offices. It was very informative for me because there was confusion and some discomfort [among the conference participants]

about the idea that chronic illness is in fact disabling. Many of these administrators could not conceptualize chronic illness as a disability in and of itself. They were still in a framework of thinking of disability as something that's visible. There's also the idea colloquially that sickness is something people always recover from.

**The first step is often recognizing that chronic illnesses are indeed disabilities to which colleges and universities must respond.**

So that may be a roundabout way of saying that on the whole, colleges and universities need to look at how they're conceptualizing disability beyond “traditional” disabilities. I don't know that we're far enough along in the process of educating campuses about chronic illness that they're even asking the questions about whether or not they're providing services for these students.

**SAL:** *Is the traditional range of health and disability services usually adequate to serve chronically ill students?*

**Fennell:** Chronically ill folks tend to have symptoms that ebb and flow, so colleges and universities will need to create policies about accommodations—for test taking, for class attendance—that might not apply to someone who uses a wheelchair.

An example is that folks with chronic illnesses are much more susceptible to viral exposures, so when they get sick, their recovery time can be much longer than other students'. They may be immune-suppressed or they may have an

upregulated immune disease like lupus, so [after a viral exposure,] their body goes into overdrive attacking itself. In other words, when they get exposed to the regular stuff, they can flare [into symptoms of their chronic illness], so they could need more time to recover than another student; whereas, if someone has a hearing impairment, that doesn't change. It's static. It's not dynamic.

**SAL:** *How receptive have the campuses you've worked with been to the idea of helping students with chronic illness by creating policies and accommodations, for example?*

**Fennell:** I think most people are concerned because they're reading the statistics about the upswing in the occurrences of asthma, multiple sclerosis, diabetes, and other chronic illnesses in youthful populations.

I think there's also concern about how to blend serving different populations [of disabled students]. As we know, not all Hispanic students' needs are met with one policy because the students are from all over the world. And the same thing is true with disabled students. Hearing-impaired people do not have the same needs as people who have had juvenile cancer, been hammered by chemo, and are somewhat recovered but have a level of fatigue that will accompany them for the rest of their lives.

**SAL:** *What legal issues do campuses need to keep in mind as they begin to work with chronically ill students?*

**Fennell:** That could easily be its own workshop, but the basics are, “This is the ADA, and this is the law. You have to do it.” The bottom line is that every campus is going to have to develop its

*continued on page 2*

## *perspectives*

# Fostering Faculty Participation in Programming

*Kathleen Manning*

I'm in a unique position to consider ways to increase faculty participation in on-campus programming. A faculty member for the past 21 years, I was, before then, a student affairs administrator. My career started in student activities and residence life.

From my vantage point on both sides of faculty involvement, I'd like to debunk some myths I've witnessed about faculty involvement. My goal is to decrease the chasm between student affairs educators' expectations of faculty and faculty expectations of themselves in regard to programming. Letting go of these myths may help student affairs educators increase faculty participation while understanding the time pressures faculty members live with on a daily basis.

### **Myth 1: Campus community involvement is part of a faculty member's job.**

Faculty life is dictated by involvement in three areas: teaching, research, and service. Depending on institutional priorities, research often comes first, with teaching a close second. Service is always a distant third. Regardless of the institutional emphasis, juggling all three areas effectively is very difficult. Teaching, if you do it well, is a full-time job irrespective of research or service commitments.

While many of us wish it were not the case, student affairs programming falls within service, the lowest-valued area within the triumvirate. Student affairs programming competes with professional and disciplinary commitments, campus committees, and administrative work within a faculty member's department.

**Suggestion:** The good news is that faculty are often willing to devote time to student affairs activities. Junior faculty are often enthusiastic, willing to be

involved, and appealing to student affairs educators. However, senior faculty often have more flexibility and availability. They possess a wealth of knowledge and the flexibility to pick and choose their commitments. After years of service on university committees, senior faculty are often willing to work with students through student affairs collaborations.

**Despite my familiarity with residence life, I share many faculty members' discomfort with entering residence halls without an invitation or specific reason.**

### **Myth 2: Faculty are not interested in student affairs programming.**

This is a case of the spirit being willing but the body weak. A professor's work is endless. There is always another book to read, paper to grade, student to meet, and research project to undertake. Weekday committee meetings, classes, advising meetings, and research conferences mean that weekend quiet time is needed to grade papers, read assignments, and prepare for the next class.

**Suggestion:** Map out clear, straightforward ways for faculty to be involved. Most faculty can squeeze in a presentation on a familiar topic, an occasional dinner meeting with students, or a time-limited reception. Commitments with extensive planning time, consultations, and involved commitments, however, usually are not compatible with a faculty member's schedule.

### **Myth 3: Because faculty are not involved in student affairs-sponsored**

### **programming, they don't care about students.**

The majority of faculty joined the professorship because they love their disciplines and their students. Most faculty love to teach, and all love to talk about their lives' work. Many involve their students in program-oriented activities (e.g., field trips, speakers, films). These activities, largely invisible to student affairs staff, consume significant faculty time and energy. Involvement in any student affairs programming is in addition to faculty members' involvement in their discipline-centered activities.

**Suggestion:** Collaborate rather than compete with discipline-focused activities. I'm not suggesting that student affairs educators take responsibility for the logistical side of discipline-centered programming. I'm suggesting a close collaboration with the educational efforts of faculty.

### **Myth 4: Faculty should feel free to visit the residence or dining halls.**

Despite my familiarity with residence life, I share many faculty members' discomfort with entering residence halls without an invitation or specific reason. The relationship between students and faculty is marked by a vast difference in power. Although this power difference is also present in student/student affairs relationships, student/faculty relationships are further complicated by grading, graduate school recommendations, and academic culture, which make the student/faculty relationship formal, even stilted. That complicates matters when you attempt to enter a student's "home."

**Suggestion:** Welcome faculty into residence halls by inviting them to specific functions. In fact, ask students to invite and host them. Instruct the

*continued on page 2*