

# CACUSS Student Affairs and Services Competency Model

*English*

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## Author Statement and Introduction

We are pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the professional growth of Student Affairs and Services (SAS) in Canada through the development of this document. We were hired as consultants to complete both a Competency Model for Student Affairs in Canada as well as a Professional Development Plan for CACUSS. In addition to our consultant role, we are all active members of CACUSS and practicing Student Affairs professionals. Therefore, we have a vested interest in the development of a quality model and plan that can advance the professionalization of our field in Canada. Our hope is that this Competency Model will serve all SAS professionals in Canada at both an individual and institutional level. As well, we believe this model, along with the complementary Professional Development Plan, will contribute to both the growth of CACUSS as a professional organization and the stated organizational goal to be a “leader in the development and advancement of the SAS profession in Canada.”

To begin, we would like to define the scope of this document by sharing the definitions of the terms ‘competency’ and ‘competency model’. The Human Resources Professional Association of Canada (2014, p. 4) defines these terms as follows:

- A **competency** is a cluster of related knowledge, skills, abilities, and characteristics that are related to the performance of a significant aspect of the practice of a profession.
- A **competency model** is a collection of competencies that are relevant to the performance in a particular job, job family, or functional area.

Within this Competency Model, we have included *attitudes* and *dispositions* within our definition of a competency, as these play an important role in our work and are often informed by values that are held across the field.

Throughout the consultation process, we had the opportunity to speak to many SAS professionals across Canada, working in a range of roles and institutions. Through these individual and group conversations, as well as from reviewing writing, research and reflections from our colleagues across Canada, the US and the world, we believe we were able to identify the competencies that professionals identify as being core to our work, across all areas of SAS.

In addition, colleagues shared the values that inform their work and what makes student affairs and services unique in Canada. Thus, we have included sections that explore the Canadian context and the values that we hold as professionals. We believe this work builds upon existing competency frameworks, such as those done by our sister organizations (ACPA/NASPA, ACUHO-I) and adds an important layer to consider as Canadian professionals. While Canadian SAS professionals could choose to adopt the full ACPA/NASPA framework, we believe (and were told by our colleagues), that there are some unique aspects to the Canadian context that warrant a distinctive and separate set of competencies. At the same time, many of the ACPA/NASPA competencies are applicable to our context and have been adapted/adopted for the Canadian context within this draft model<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>This list of competencies was developed by NASPA and ACPA Joint Task Force on Professional Competencies in 2010 and Revised in 2015. The consultants see the content as the same in Canadian student affairs and services, and rather than rewriting them, have included the originals here with minor modifications for a Canadian context.

Within this document, we have chosen to use the term *Student Affairs and Services* or *SAS* as an encompassing description of the wide range of approaches taken at colleges and universities toward student services, student affairs, student development and student/campus life. With the professionalization of our field, we believe that *Student Affairs* is a more appropriate descriptor for our work. *Student Affairs* has a connotation that recognizes the breadth and depth of our work as educators, partners for student success, and student development experts. However, we recognize that *Student Services* is part of our organization's acronym and is commonly used as a descriptor for our units on campuses. Therefore, *Student Affairs and Services*, at this point in time, seems to be an appropriate term so that all of the professionals engaging in this work in Canada can see themselves reflected within the model. As our profession grows and changes, we may find that the terminology changes as well.

Finally, we would like to address the application and uses of this Competency Model and the potential for using this document to inform professional development activities for individuals, institutions and CACUSS and other professional organizations within Canada (e.g., OACUHO, RLPA, and AACUSS). Given the size of CACUSS as an organization and the relative smaller number of professionals in our country (as compared to the United States), we recognize that CACUSS is an organization that benefits from the full participation of its members and the contributions we can make as individuals and institutions. We would encourage all of our colleagues to take an active role in using this Competency Model: contributing to its development as a living document, sharing tools and strategies for employing the model, and developing professional development opportunities that advance the competencies within our field. This work can be done individually, by volunteering for and taking on leadership roles within CACUSS and by choosing to engage in research to advance our field in Canada. It can also be done by divisions of SAS at the institutional level, by adopting or adapting this Competency Model and sharing tools and approaches to professional development with others through the Communique or at the annual conference. It can also be done by Communities of Practice within CACUSS and sister organizations in Canada, by considering how the competencies apply within specific expertise areas and using the Competency Model to shape professional development opportunities such as webinars, regional gatherings and institutes. The professionalization of our field in Canada can only be advanced by the collective actions of those within the field.

It has been our privilege to engage in this work and we hope that this Competency Model will not only reflect the high level of professional standards within our field, but also advance the work we do to contribute to student success and learning across Canada.

Sincerely,

Patty Hambler, Dr. Tracey Mason-Innes, Darran Fernandez and Corinna Fitzgerald

## Acknowledgements

We would like to recognize the contributions of many colleagues who contributed to the development of this draft. Kathryn Verkerk did amazing work as our graduate assistant, providing support with literature reviews, drafting documents and helping us stay organized. Jennifer Hamilton, as always, was a key support for the project overall and for our consultations with the Board and members. We would also like to acknowledge the Board for their leadership in supporting this project, and all of the SAS colleagues across Canada who contributed their ideas and feedback along the way.

## About CACUSS

CACUSS is a professional bilingual association representing and serving those individuals who work in Canadian post-secondary institutions in SAS.

While it has existed in its present form since 1971, the origins of this association derive from the University Advisory Services (1946) and, more recently, the University Counselling and Placement Association (UCPA) and the Canadian Association of University Student Personnel Services (CAUSPS).

Since 1973, CACUSS has provided professional development services and programs for members in all the Canadian provinces. Cross-divisional interest groups called Communities of Practice and Networks were formed by members in 2015 based on their professional needs, focusing on areas such as student health and wellness, first-year students, new professionals, and leadership education.

CACUSS has been working towards professionalization for many years. This work has included moving from a solely volunteer-run board, toward a sustainable model of governance, conducting research and holding conversations about the development of a competency model and professional development plan for those working in the Canadian student affairs field<sup>2</sup>.

## Student Affairs and Services Profession in Canada

The role of a SAS professional varies by campus, institution and province/territory. Despite these differences, at the core of this work are professionals who support student growth and development throughout their pursuit of post-secondary studies. Student affairs work is informed by the scholarship of student development, learning theory, and a range of discipline specific expertise. A growing number of student affairs professionals in Canada choose to pursue Master's and Doctoral programs to prepare for and enhance their career development and contribute to a growing body of research. Student affairs professionals choose to study and research within the fields of Education, Business, Leadership, Social Sciences, Philosophy, and a wide range of other disciplines that enhance their work as educators, innovators, service providers, and university administrators. Student affairs professionals build, grow, maintain and assess programs, service models and approaches that support student success from orientation through to graduation. The functions of a SAS professional are varied and can include Aboriginal student success, academic advising, academic success, campus life, career development, counselling, disability services, international student success, faith and spirituality, financial advising, health care, health promotion and education, leadership development, recreation, recruitment and

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<sup>2</sup> About CACUSS; Organizational website: <http://www.cacuss.ca/about.htm> Retrieved: March 28, 2016.

transition, registrarial services, strategic enrollment management, student housing, and a wide range of other roles that support student success and learning.

## Overview of the Competency Model

Each competency is divided into three levels – core, intermediate and advanced. Each represents the progressive levels of skills, knowledge and attitudes required across all areas of SAS in Canada.

Each level builds on the one prior, and professionals who identify to be at an intermediate or advanced level are expected to be proficient in the skills, knowledge and attitudes of the competency below their current level. Each competency reflects more than just a list of skills, knowledge and attitudes, but rather an overall spirit for the overarching competency and how it can build and grow the field.

Based on years of experience or position, professionals will need to have varied levels of expertise in competencies. A professional can hold expertise at an intermediate or advanced level in some competencies while still holding space at a core level in other competencies.

Professionals at all levels can engage with the competencies as a starting point for their professional growth and development. The competencies, on their own, cannot be the sole support of staff transitioning between roles and elements of the profession. A coordinated professional development framework and plan using the competencies together can build the profession and the professional.

## Competencies within Expertise Areas

The competency model addresses the skills, knowledge and attitudes required across all areas of SAS in Canada. These competencies extend across all expertise areas; however, they do not address the specific competencies required within an area of expertise. Some expertise areas and Communities of Practice have existing defined competencies or have developed or adopted a set of competencies from another professional organization. Communities within CACUSS are encouraged to consider how this Competency Model can be applied within specific expertise areas. Where competencies do not exist to address skills, knowledge and attitudes required within an expertise area, CoPs within CACUSS are encouraged to develop their own set of complementary competencies that address the area of expertise represented by their student service area.

## Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAO) and Executive Leadership<sup>3</sup>

This competency model does not directly address the skills and experience required for SSAO or Vice President Students (or similar) roles. These positions require mastery of the competencies within the advanced level, in addition to more advanced leadership competencies and considerable experience within a post-secondary environment, in some cases including academic experience. As is the case with specific expertise areas or specializations within SAS (e.g., Residence Life, Counselling, Disability Services, etc.), those in SSAO roles will have a unique and specific set of competencies required for these

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<sup>3</sup> Currently, within CACUSS, there is an ongoing discussion and emerging research about the role and professional development needs of Senior Student Affairs Officers.

roles (Browne et al., 2015). These would include, but not be limited to advanced expertise in leadership, administration and post-secondary acumen.

<b>CACUSS Student Affairs and Services (SAS) Competency Model</b>	
<b>Values</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● SAS Professionals as educators</li> <li>● Student-centered and holistic<sup>4</sup> approach</li> <li>● Professional and ethical practice</li> </ul>
<b>Levels</b>	Core, Intermediate, Advanced
<b>Canadian Student Affairs and Services Competencies*</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Communication</li> <li>2. Emotional and interpersonal Intelligence</li> <li>3. Intercultural</li> <li>4. Indigenous cultural awareness</li> <li>5. Post-secondary acumen</li> <li>6. Equity, diversity and inclusion*</li> <li>7. Leadership, management and administration*</li> <li>8. Strategic planning, research and assessment*</li> <li>9. Student advising, support and advocacy*</li> <li>10. Student learning and development*</li> <li>11. Technology and digital engagement*</li> </ol>
<b>SSAO</b>	Proficient in all competency areas and advanced expertise in leadership, administration and post-secondary acumen.
<b>Expertise Areas</b>	As above; additional competencies as defined by Communities of professionals within CACUSS.

\* Competencies six to eleven were Adapted/Adopted from ACPA/NASPA Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators with approved consent for adoption.

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<sup>4</sup> A holistic approach to student development and services recognizes and values all aspects of a student's life including physical, intellectual, financial, spiritual, emotional, personal and social.

## Values

The approach to SAS work in Canada is grounded in shared values resulting in preferred attitudes that influence our approach to work in the field<sup>5</sup>:

- **SAS professionals as educators:** SAS is a professional practice that, with academic leaders and faculty members, builds an institution's academic mission and contributes to a student's academic and personal success, from recruitment through to graduation. SAS professionals hold a unique expertise in student development, and are able to contribute to the enhancement of the overall post-secondary experience, as well as to institutional goals including academic excellence and student retention. First and foremost, SAS professionals are educators, contributing to learning, success and development in all areas of student life.
- **Student-centered and holistic approach:** SAS professionals approach their work with the developmental and learning needs of students at the centre of decisions, programs and services. Students are partners in identifying personal pathways for success; student leaders are partners in identifying and addressing issues and concerns that affect the student experience. A holistic approach to student development and services recognizes and values all aspects of a student's life including the intellectual, personal, spiritual, physical, social, emotional, and financial. In addition, intersecting personal identities are recognized and appreciated with any and all students. The adoption of a student-centred and holistic approach allows students to receive the support and services required for their unique educational and personal journey in post-secondary studies.
- **Professional and ethical practice<sup>6</sup>:** SAS, as a profession, is deserving of the highest standards of ethical practice. SAS professionals hold the privilege and responsibility of advising, mentoring, and supporting post-secondary students in their journey toward successful completion of their degree(s) or program(s). They also hold the responsibility to advocate for students within and beyond the institution to ensure their student development needs are addressed in a way that allows them to thrive during their pursuit of personal success and learning. This value calls upon SAS professionals to continually develop and maintain integrity in one's life and work, including: thoughtful development, articulation, critique, and adherence to a holistic and comprehensive standard of ethics and commitment to one's own wellness, growth and lifelong learning.

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<sup>5</sup> Nona Robinson's (2011) Doctoral thesis, *Values of Canadian Student Affairs Practitioners*, is an in-depth treatment on this topic. In our consultations with key informants and others, these three values stood out and were described time and again as core to our work in Student Affairs and Services. Some of these, especially "student-centredness" and "valuing the student voice", are in alignment with Robinson's findings and have been highlighted here, albeit in a different manner, and are based on the findings from the consultations and informed by Robinson's work.

<sup>6</sup> Within specific areas of expertise and student service, such as with counsellors, physicians and immigration advisors, additional codes of ethics will apply to the Student Affairs and Services role.

# Canadian Student Affairs and Services (SAS) Competencies<sup>7</sup>

## Communication

The Communication competency area addresses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to foster open communication, communicate effectively, produce informative, well-organized and well-written communications as needed, internally and externally, in one-on-one and group settings.

### Core

- Articulate key messages effectively and professionally in one-on-one and group settings.
- Employ active listening techniques including paraphrasing for clarity and asking open-ended questions.
- Write concise and clear communications, including but not limited to emails, reports and proposals.
- Choose and utilize appropriate technology to enhance communications.
- Exhibit effective public speaking skills, including presenting information to a large group of students or peers.

### Intermediate

- Effectively present an argument or position in one-on-one and group settings in a forthright manner, with clarity and appropriate evidence.
- Employ advanced active listening techniques including effective use of empathy statements.
- Write and edit well-organized proposals and comprehensive strategic reports.
- Leverage appropriate technology and expertise of others to strategically enhance communications.
- Present information and persuasive arguments to large groups of students, peers and senior leaders.
- Speak confidently to media, following institutional guidelines and policies, with the ability to stay on point with key messages.

### Advanced

- Adjust oral and written communication styles to effectively communicate messages to all audiences, including supervisees, students, peer professionals, senior leaders, and faculty members.

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<sup>7</sup> ACPA-College Student Educators International and NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education have granted permission to CACUSS for the use of these competencies, originally developed by their Joint Task Force for Professional Competencies. The Joint Task Force did not review or endorse the adaptations to the original ACPA/NASPA Competencies for a Canadian context.

- Proactively and strategically communicate information to advance unit or institutional goals.
- Develop or oversee development of effective communications plans for a wide range of audiences and stakeholders.
- Manage media inquiries and take a proactive approach to coordinating a response to events of interest to the broader public, including collaborating with institutional public relations professionals to develop key messages and press releases.

## Emotional and interpersonal intelligence<sup>8</sup>

The emotional intelligence and interpersonal competency area refers to the ability to perceive, control and evaluate emotions in oneself; effectively respond to emotions in others; and evaluate and develop effective and productive working relationships with colleagues and students.

### *Core*

- Perceive, evaluate and control emotions in oneself (emotional awareness), recognizing how feelings affect performance.
- Demonstrate empathy: perceive, evaluate and effectively respond to emotions in others; show sensitivity and understand others' perspectives.
- Aware of personal strengths and weaknesses.
- Aware of personal well-being and ability to take care of oneself. Ability to recognize personal limitations and set appropriate boundaries.
- Open to candid feedback, new perspectives, continuous learning, and self-development.
- Able to show a sense of humour about themselves.
- Contribute to a positive team culture within one's unit, including working collaboratively with others and paying attention to how the team supports its members.
- Respect and relate well to people from varied backgrounds.
- Help others show respect for and listen to the input of others.
- Give credit where due in team/group projects by acknowledging and rewarding colleagues' and students' strengths, accomplishments and development.

### *Intermediate*

- Establish the cultural foundations for a high performing organization.
- Communicate clear organizational values and build commitment, engagement and trust.
- Exercise official authority when necessary, but rely on personal authority and interpersonal skills, whenever possible, to ensure a positive working and learning environment.
- Coach, teach, counsel, and motivate employees towards greater mutual respect and understanding.
- Ensure that others understand the power of open communication to enhance workplace relationships and have the skills to be effective members of a learning organization.
- Develop collaborative relationships with other units and student leaders at the institution, to further the work and goals within one's own division/unit.

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<sup>8</sup> Adapted from and informed by the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations (1998) and the National Conservation Training Center (2016).

*Advanced*

- Embody and set the standards for a culture that is open, respectful, secure, confident, empathetic, tolerant, self-aware, supportive, compassionate, engaged, trusting and trustworthy.
- Develop and articulate goals which unite people in the pursuit of objectives worthy of their best efforts.
- Inspire and hold others accountable to act at the highest level of honesty and integrity.

## Intercultural Fluency

As Canadian campuses become increasingly diverse, with a focus on internationalization and increasing access for Aboriginal students, the intercultural competency addresses the self-awareness, knowledge, skills and attitudes essential for effective communication, relationship building, educating, advising, supervising and community building within a diverse post-secondary setting. In this context, interculturalism is defined as “the existence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions through dialogue and mutual respect” (UNESCO, 2006, p. 17).

### Core<sup>9</sup>

- Recognize how one is part of a global community.
- Identify own cultural rules and biases.
- Recognize new perspectives about own cultural rules and biases (e.g. not looking for sameness; comfortable with the complexities that new perspectives offer.)
- Demonstrate adequate understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, religion, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices.
- Recognize intellectual and emotional dimensions of more than one worldview.
- Recognize and participate in cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication and negotiate a shared understanding based on those differences.
- Ask questions about other cultures and seek out answers to these questions.
- Initiate and develop positive interactions with culturally different others.

### Intermediate

- Articulate insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g. seeking complexity; aware of how one’s experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description.)
- Demonstrate sophisticated understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, spirituality, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices.
- Interpret intercultural experience from the perspectives of own and more than one worldview and demonstrates ability to act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group.
- Articulate a complex understanding of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication (e.g., demonstrate understanding of the degree to which people use physical

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<sup>9</sup> Core and Intermediate levels excerpted with permission from *Assessing Outcomes and Improving Achievement: Tips and tools for Using Rubrics*, edited by Terrel L. Rhodes. Copyright 2010 by the Association of American Colleges and Universities.

contact while communicating in different cultures or use direct/indirect and explicit/implicit meanings) and skillfully negotiate a shared understanding based on those differences.

- Ask complex questions about other cultures, seek out and articulate answers to these questions that reflect multiple cultural perspectives.
- Apply knowledge and understanding of interculturalism in everyday practice and interactions.

#### *Advanced*

- Create policies, programs and processes that address needs of culturally diverse students.
- Develop and enhance strategies, tools, and approaches that will contribute to building positive relationships with culturally diverse students, parents, faculty members, staff, and communities.
- Increase the institution's engagement with intercultural education.
- Consider opportunities for respectfully integrating diverse worldviews within a broader understanding of social sustainability and the work of SAS.
- Lead the inclusion of diverse cultures and knowledge as a visual and valued aspect of post-secondary life, governance and decision-making.

## Indigenous cultural awareness

The Indigenous cultural awareness competency refers to knowledge, enhanced self-awareness, and skills that enable Student Affairs professionals to work respectfully and effectively with Indigenous students<sup>10</sup>.

### Core

- Examine one's own cultural assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes with respect to Indigenous people.
- Use appropriate language when referring to First Nations, Inuit and Metis students and understands the implications of language choice (e.g., Aboriginal vs. Indigenous).
- Appreciate the diversity that exists across and within First Nations, Inuit and Metis communities, as well as urban and international Indigenous peoples.
- Able to describe key aspects of colonial history such as residential schools and timelines of key historical events in history including the work and recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.
- Effectively integrate strategies for communication and relationship building skills with Indigenous students and colleagues.
- Work effectively and respectfully with Indigenous students to identify needs and advocate for appropriate supports.
- Understand the institutional priorities for Indigenous student recruitment and retention and contribute to these goals.

### Intermediate

- Actively promote, support and implement the institution's strategic priorities regarding Indigenous students and relationships with Indigenous communities.
- Examine social disparities, inequities, and stereotyping with relation to the consequences and legacies of colonization.
- Examine systemic issues within the postsecondary context and develop programs and services that address them.
- Integrate knowledge and awareness of Indigenous histories and contemporary issues into reflective practice.
- Implement the recommendations within the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report within the context of one's work. (See Report sections *Professional Development and Training for Public Servants* and *Education for Reconciliation*.)
- Include Indigenous cultural awareness within staff professional development opportunities.

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<sup>10</sup> Informed by *San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Training*, Provincial Health Services Authority in BC.  
D. Fernandez, C. Fitzgerald, P. Hambler and T. Mason-Innes

*Advanced*

- Create policies, programs and processes that address needs and barriers of Indigenous students.
- Develop and enhance strategies, tools, and approaches that will contribute to building positive relationships with Indigenous students, parents, faculty members, staff, and communities.
- Increase the institution's engagement with Indigenous communities.
- Consider opportunities for respectfully integrating Indigenous perspectives and worldviews within a broader understanding of social sustainability and the work of SAS.
- Lead the inclusion of Indigenous cultures and knowledges as a visual and valued aspect of post-secondary life, governance and decision-making.

## Post-secondary acumen

The post-secondary acumen competency area focuses on the understanding of the institutions' unique organizational and governance structures, and its intersections with government, community and industry at all levels, which includes law, policy, and history. This competency area includes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions relating to policy development processes used in various contexts, the application of legal constructs, compliance/policy issues, and the understanding of the history of, and contemporary issues within, post-secondary education within the Canadian context.

### Core

- Understand and support the broad responsibility of the institution for enhancing the collegiate experience for all students.
- Understand relevant legal issues and legislation (i.e. privacy laws, etc.) and how changes can impact day-to-day.
- Articulate values, historical context, and current issues of one's profession.
- Identify that there is a relationship between the federal and provincial / territorial governments and their institution.
- Identify the governing body (ies) of the institution.
- Explain the concepts of risk management and identify when to consult with a supervisor or third party when matters may have legal ramifications.
- Describe policy development in one's own unit and at all institutional and governmental levels.
- Understand the importance of aligning SAS work with the academic mission of the institution.

### Intermediate

- Articulate and act consistently with a sound educational philosophy consistent with the institution's mission.
- Articulate and identify qualities of the relationship between the federal and provincial / territorial governments and one's institution.
- Identify community and industry partnerships of the institution.
- Identify the governing body (ies) of the institution and articulate the relationship between the body (ies) and their own unit/work.
- Appropriately consult and represent the student and staff voice in policy and practice development within the unit or institution, and identify how to contribute to policy development provincially / territorially, and federally.
- Identify current legal trends and understand their short and long term impacts for current situation.

- Consult and partner with faculty members to develop and enhance programs, services and supports for students.

*Advanced*

- Explain and teach others about institution.
- Articulate and identify qualities of the relationship between the federal and provincial / territorial governments and their institution, and have consciousness on how to advocate for development of the relationship.
- Articulate and work with the governing body (ies) of the institution to advance one's work and that of the institution.
- Develop institutional policies and practices that align with federal and provincial / territorial laws.
- Articulate how a change in process intersects with the law, and governmental and/or institutional policies.
- Collaborate and consult with senior academic leaders to enhance programs, services and supports for students.

## Equity, diversity and inclusion<sup>11</sup>

Equity, diversity and inclusion is defined as both a process and a goal that includes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to create learning environments that foster equitable participation of all groups and seeks to address issues of accessibility, equity and inclusion, oppression, privilege, and power. This competency involves student affairs educators who have a sense of their own agency and social responsibility that includes others, their community, and the larger global context.

### Core

- Identify systems of socialization that influence one's multiple identities and sociopolitical perspectives and how they impact one's lived experiences.
- Understand how one is affected by and participates in maintaining systems of oppression, privilege, and power.
- Understand issues related to access and disability legislation.
- Understand principles of universal design.
- Engage in critical reflection in order to identify one's own prejudices and biases.
- Participate in activities that assess and complicate one's understanding of inclusion, anti-oppression, privilege, and power.
- Recognize the systemic nature of power that exists in post-secondary institutions.
- Integrate knowledge of access, equity, inclusion, anti-oppression, privilege, and power into one's practice.
- Connect and build meaningful relationships with others while recognizing the multiple, intersecting cultures, identities, perspectives, and developmental differences people hold.
- Articulate a foundational understanding of inclusion within the context of post-secondary education.
- Advocate on issues that impact people based on local, national, and global interconnections.
- Use inclusive, respectful language in all communication.

### Intermediate

- Design programs and events that are accessible, inclusive, promote social consciousness and challenge current institutional, national, global, and socio-political systems of oppression.
- Advocate for principles of universal design.
- Effectively facilitate dialogue about issues of social justice, inclusion, power, privilege, and oppression in one's practice.

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<sup>11</sup> Adapted from Social Justice and Inclusion in the ACPA/NASPA Professional Competency areas for Student Affairs Educators

- Engage in hiring and promotion practices that are non-discriminatory and work toward building inclusive teams.
- Identify systemic barriers to social justice and inclusion and assess one's own department's role in addressing such barriers.
- Advocate for the development of a more inclusive and socially conscious department institution, and profession.
- Provide opportunities to reflect and evaluate on one's participation in systems of oppression, privilege, and power without shaming others.
- Provide opportunities for inclusive and social justice educational professional development.
- Effectively address bias incidents impacting campus communities.
- Implement appropriate measures to assess the campus climate for students, staff, and faculty.

#### *Advanced*

- Ensure institutional policies, practices, facilities, structures, systems, and technologies respect and represent the needs of all people.
- Assess the effectiveness of the institution in removing barriers to addressing issues of equity and inclusion.
- Take responsibility for the institution's role in perpetuating discrimination or oppression.
- Advocate for social justice values in institutional mission, goals, and programs.
- Create ongoing strategic plans for the continued development of inclusive initiatives and practices throughout the institution.
- Link individual and departmental performance indicators with demonstrated commitment to equity social justice and inclusion.
- Provide consultation to other units, divisions, or institutions on strategies to dismantle systems of oppression, privilege, and power on campus.
- Foster and promote an institutional culture that supports the free and open expression of ideas, identities, and beliefs, and where individuals have the capacity to negotiate different standpoints.
- Demonstrate institutional effectiveness in addressing critical incidents of discrimination that impact the institution.
- Ensure campus resources are distributed equitably and adequately meet the needs of all campus communities.

## Leadership, management and administration<sup>12</sup>

The Leadership, management and administration competency area addresses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of a leader, with or without positional authority in addition to the management and administration knowledge, skills and dispositions required to work effectively within post-secondary institutions. Leadership involves both the individual role of a leader and the leadership process of individuals working together to envision, plan, and affect change in organizations and respond to broad-based constituencies and issues. This can include working with students, student affairs colleagues, faculty, and community members.

### *Core*

- Make decisions based on sound evidence and theory.
- Effectively manage student volunteers and student staff including providing formative and summative feedback.
- Effectively manage budgets and engage in financial stewardship.
- Articulate the vision and mission of the primary work unit, the division, and the institution.
- Identify and understand individual-level constructs of “leader” and “leadership.”
- Explain the values and processes that lead to organizational improvement.
- Explain the advantages and disadvantages of different types of decision-making processes (e.g. consensus, majority vote, and decision by authority).
- Identify institutional traditions, mores, and organizational structures (e.g., hierarchy, networks, governing groups, and technological resources, nature of power, policies, goals, agendas and resource allocation processes) and how they influence others to act in the organization.
- Identify one’s own strengths and challenges as a leader and seek opportunities to develop leadership skills.
- Identify basic fundamentals of teamwork and teambuilding in one’s work setting and communities of practice.
- Describe and apply the basic principles of community building.
- Describe how one’s personal values, beliefs, histories, and perspectives inform one’s view of oneself as an effective leader with and without roles of authority.
- Build mutually supportive relationships with colleagues and students across similarities and differences

### *Intermediate*

- Actively seek information needed to make effective decisions.

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<sup>12</sup> Adapted from Organizational and Human Resources in the ACPA/NASPA Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators

- Effectively manage professional staff including utilizing appropriate performance management strategies and supervision skills.
- Provide opportunities for supervised staff to give feedback on one's leadership and management style, and adjust approaches as warranted.
- Understand campus cultures (e.g. academic, student, professorial, administrative) and apply that understanding to one's work.
- Recognize and understand the importance of employee well-being in job satisfaction and performance, and a leader's role and responsibility in creating supportive environments and a positive organizational culture.
- Use appropriate technology to support leadership processes (e.g. seeking input or feedback, sharing decisions, posting data that supports decisions, use group support website tools).
- Think critically, creatively, and find innovative approaches for solutions that do not currently exist or are not apparent.
- Identify and consult with key stakeholders and individuals with differing perspectives to make informed decisions.
- Articulate the logic and impact of decisions on groups of people, institutional structures (e.g. divisions, departments), and implications for practice.
- Exhibit informed confidence in the capacity of individuals to organize and take action to transform their communities and world.
- Within the scope of one's position and expertise, lead others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organization
- Use collaborative conflict resolution techniques to address conflict in positive, respectful and collaborative ways.

#### *Advanced*

- Seek out and develop new and emerging constructs of "leader" and "leadership."
- Create a culture that advocates the appropriate and effective use of feedback systems for improving individual leader and team leadership performance.
- Establish and sustain systems of mentoring to ensure individuals receive the training and support needed.
- Develop and promote a shared vision that drives unit, divisional, and institutional short- term and long-term planning and the ongoing organizing of work.
- Implement divisional strategies that account for ongoing changes in the cultural landscape, political landscape, global perspectives, technology, and sustainability issues.

- Promote, facilitate, and assess the effectiveness of collaborative initiatives and team building efforts, using technology as appropriate to support such work.
- Embrace responsibility for unit and divisional decisions.
- Is visionary; sets direction in a way that broadly inspires trust and confidence.

## Strategic planning, research, and assessment<sup>13</sup>

The strategic planning, research and assessment competency area focuses on the ability to design, conduct, critique, and use various research and assessment methodologies and the results obtained from them, to utilize processes and their results to inform practice, and to shape the political and ethical climate surrounding strategic planning processes and uses in post-secondary education.

### Core

- Ensure a proactive approach to program planning, project coordination and programming, which includes opportunities for continuous assessment and development.
- Able to conduct basic research and program assessment.
- Differentiate between assessment, program review, evaluation, planning, and research as well as the methods appropriate to each.
- Assess the legitimacy, trustworthiness, and/or validity of studies of various methods and methodological designs (e.g. qualitative vs. quantitative, theoretical perspective, epistemological approach).
- Consider rudimentary strengths and limitations of various methodological research approaches in the application of findings to practice in diverse institutional settings and with diverse student populations.
- Explain the necessity to follow institutional and divisional procedures and policies (e.g., ethics approval, informed consent) with regard to ethical assessment, evaluation, and other research activities.
- Ensure all communications of assessment and research results are accurate, responsible, and effective.
- Identify the political and educational sensitivity of raw and partially processed data and results, handling them with appropriate confidentiality and deference to organizational hierarchies.

### Intermediate

- Employ project management techniques to ensure effective planning and execution of a project.
- Design program and learning outcomes that are appropriately clear, specific, and measureable, that are informed by theoretical frameworks and that align with organizational outcomes, goals, and values.
- Explain to students and colleagues the relationship of assessment and research processes to learning outcomes and goals.
- Select research and assessment methods, methodologies, designs, and tools that fit with research and evaluation questions and with assessment and review purposes.

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<sup>13</sup> Adapted from Assessment, Evaluation, and Research in the ACPA/NASPA Professional Competencies for Student Affairs Educators

- Facilitate appropriate data collection for system/department-wide assessment and evaluation efforts using current technology and methods.
- Effectively articulate, interpret, and apply results of research and assessment reports and studies, including professional literature.
- Design ongoing and periodic data collection efforts such that they are sustainable, rigorous, as unobtrusive as possible, and technologically current.
- Effectively manage, align, and guide the utilization of assessment reports and studies.
- Educate stakeholders in the institution about the relationship of departmental assessment processes to learning outcomes and goals at the student, department, division, an institutional level.
- Discern and discuss the appropriate design(s) to use in assessment and research efforts based on critical questions, necessary data, and intended audience(s).
- Use culturally relevant and culturally appropriate terminology and methods to conduct and report assessment and research findings.
- Actively contribute to the development of a culture of evidence at the department level wherein assessment, program review, evaluation, and research are central to the department's work and ensure that training and skill development in these areas is valued, budgeted for, and fully embedded in day-to-day procedures.
- Apply the concepts and procedures of qualitative research, evaluation, and assessment including creating appropriate sampling designs and interview protocols with consultation, participating in analysis teams, contributing to audit trails, participating in peer debrief, and using other techniques to ensure trustworthiness of qualitative designs.

#### *Advanced*

- Participate in the design and analysis of quantitative and qualitative research studies including understanding statistical reporting that may include complex statistical methods such as multivariate techniques, and articulating the limitations of findings imposed by the differences in practical and statistical significance, validity, and reliability.
- Demonstrate a working knowledge of additional methodological approaches to assessment (e.g. mixed methods, historical or literary analysis, or comparative study) including elements of design, data collection, analysis, and reporting as well as strategies for ensuring the quality.
- Communicate and display data through a variety of means (publications, reports, presentations, social media, etc.) in a manner that is accurate; transparent regarding the strengths, limitations, and context of the data; and sensitive to political coalitions and realities associated with data as a scarce resource.
- Manage and/or adhere to the implementation of institutional and professional standards for ethical assessment and research activities.

- Utilize formal student learning and development theories as well as scholarly literature to inform the content and design of individual and program level outcomes as well as assessment tools such as rubrics.
- Prioritize program and learning outcomes with organization goals and values.
- Lead the design and writing of varied and diverse communications (e.g. reports, publications, presentations, social media, etc.) of assessment, program review, evaluation, and other research activities that include translation of data analyses into goals and action.
- Lead the strategic use and prioritization of budgetary and personnel resources to support high-quality program evaluation, assessment efforts, research, and planning.
- Lead, supervise, and/or collaborate with others to design and analyze assessment, program review, evaluation, and research activities that span multiple methodological approaches (qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods, among others) including writing and disseminating results in a manner that critically considers the strengths and limitations of implications for practice, policy, theory, and/or future study in a sophisticated way.
- Anticipate and proactively address challenges related to individual and institutional politics, competing constituencies and interests, and divergent values especially as related to communications, reporting, and utilization of data to inform practice.
- Create a culture of evidence in which the institution, division, or unit expects assessment to be central to professional practice and ensures that training/skill development happens across the organization.
- Ensure institutional, divisional, or unit compliance with professional standards concerning ethical assessment and research activities.
- Facilitate the prioritization of decisions and resources to implement those decisions that are informed by assessment and research activities.

## Student advising, support and advocacy<sup>14</sup>

Student advising, support and advocacy competency area addresses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to providing advising and support to individuals and groups through direction, feedback, critique, referral, and guidance. Through developing advising and supporting strategies that take into account self-knowledge and the needs of others, we play critical roles in advancing the holistic well-being of ourselves, our students, and our colleagues.

### Core

- Exhibit culturally inclusive active listening skills (e.g., appropriately establishing interpersonal contact, paraphrasing, perception checking, summarizing, questioning, encouraging, avoid interrupting, clarifying).
- Establish rapport with students, groups, colleagues, and others that acknowledges differences in lived experiences.
- Recognize the importance of students' physical, emotional, spiritual, and social well-being in learning, development and success.
- Support students to build skills related to social connection, resilience, coping, personal capacity for health, and other dimensions of well-being.
- Be aware of stigma associated with mental health issues and help-seeking behaviour, and help normalize for students.
- Recognize the strengths and limitations of one's own worldview on communication with others.
- Facilitate reflection to make meaning from experiences with students, groups, colleagues, and others.
- Conscientiously use appropriate nonverbal communication.
- Facilitate individual and group problem-solving, decision-making and goal-setting.
- Appropriately challenge and support students and colleagues.
- Know and use referral sources (e.g., other offices, outside agencies, knowledge sources), and exhibit referral skills in seeking expert assistance.
- Identify when and with whom to implement appropriate crisis management and intervention responses, including awareness of campus resources and processes
- Maintain an appropriate degree of confidentiality that follows applicable legal and licensing requirements, facilitates the development of trusting relationships, and recognizes when confidentiality should be broken to protect the student or others.

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<sup>14</sup> Adapted from Advising and Supporting in the ACPA/NASPA Professional Competencies for Student Affairs Educators

- Maintain appropriate boundaries for one’s professional role when supporting and/or advising a student.
- Seek opportunities to expand one’s own knowledge and skills in helping students with specific concerns (e.g., relationship issues, navigating systems of oppression, or suicidality) as well as interfacing with specific populations within the college student environment (e.g., student veterans, low-income students, etc.).
- Utilize virtual resources and technology to meet the advising and supporting needs of students.
- Know and follow applicable laws, policies, and professional ethical guidelines relevant to advising and supporting students’ development.

### *Intermediate*

- Perceive and analyze unspoken dynamics in a group setting.
- Facilitate or coach group decision-making, goal-setting, and process.
- Assess the developmental needs of students and organizational needs of student groups.
- Strategically and simultaneously pursue multiple objectives in conversations with students.
- Identify patterns of behavior that may signal mental health or other wellness concerns.
- Manage interpersonal conflict between/among individuals and groups.
- Mediate differences between/among individuals or groups.
- Mentor students and staff.
- Demonstrate culturally-inclusive advising, supporting, coaching, and counseling strategies.
- Initiate and exercise appropriate institutional crisis intervention responses and processes.
- Consider ways to enhance students’ emotional, physical, spiritual and social well-being (e.g., embedding into existing or new programs, policies and activities, developing specific initiatives).
- Utilize communication and learning technology (e.g., websites, social networking, video clips, podcasts) to address students’ holistic wellness issues.
- Provide advocacy services to survivors of violence.
- Develop and distribute accurate and helpful mental health information for students, faculty, and staff.
- Develop avenues for student involvement in the promotion of students’ physical, spiritual, social, and emotional health (e.g., creating student advisory councils, peer education programs, advising student mental health organizations).
- Consult with mental health professionals as appropriate.

- Provide and arrange for the necessary training and development for staff to enhance their advising and helping skills.
- Develop virtual programs and initiatives to meet the needs of students with limited access to campus services (i.e. commuter, graduate, evening, distance, online, among others).

#### *Advanced*

- Engage in research and publication of holistic student wellness issues.
- Assess responses to advising and supporting interventions, including traditional campus-based as well as virtual interventions.
- Coordinate and lead response processes as they relate to crisis interventions.
- Collaborate with other campus departments and organizations as well as surrounding community agencies and other post-secondary institutions to address students' holistic wellness needs in a comprehensive, collaborative way.
- Provide mental health consultation to faculty, staff, and campus behavioral assessment teams.
- Provide effective post-traumatic response to campus events/situations, collaborating with other appropriate campus departments.
- Develop liaisons with community providers and support systems to ensure seamless and coordinated holistic care (e.g., with hospitalizations, transfer of care, public benefits, support groups, family/parent/guardians, etc.).
- Design or modify services and programs to support well-being and a positive organizational culture and ethic of care, considering students holistically.

## Student learning and development<sup>15</sup>

The student learning and development competency area addresses the concepts and principles of student development and learning theory. This includes the ability to apply theory to improve and inform student services/ affairs practice, as well as understanding teaching and training theory and practice.

### *Core*

- Articulate theories and models that describe the development of post-secondary students and the conditions and practices that facilitate holistic development (e.g. learning, leadership, psychosocial and identity development, cognitive-structural, typological, environmental, and moral).
- Articulate how identities (race, ethnicity, nationality, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, dis/ability, and religious belief) can influence development during the post-secondary years.
- Identify the strengths and limitations in applying existing theories and models to varying student demographic groups.
- Articulate one's own developmental journey in relation to formal theories.
- Identify one's own informal theories of student development ('theories in use') and how they can be informed by formal theories to enhance work with students.
- Identify dominant perspectives present in some models of student learning and development.
- Construct learning outcomes for both daily practice as well as teaching and training activities.
- Assess teaching, learning, and training and incorporate the results into practice.
- Assess learning outcomes from programs and services and use theory to improve practice.

### *Intermediate*

- Design programs and services to promote student learning and development that are based on current research and data on student learning and development theories.
- Utilize theory-to-practice models to inform individual or unit practice.
- Justify using learning theory to create learning opportunities.
- Identify and take advantage of opportunities for curriculum and program development to encourage continual learning and developmental growth.
- Construct effective programs, lesson plans, and syllabi.
- Create and assess learning outcomes to evaluate progress toward fulfilling the mission of the department, the division, and the institution.

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<sup>15</sup> Adapted from Student Learning and Development in the ACPA/NASPA Professional Competencies for Student Affairs Educators

- Teach, train, and practice in such a way that utilizes the assessment of learning outcomes to inform future practice.
- Critique the dominant group perspective present in some models of student learning and development and modify for use in practice.

#### *Advanced*

- Utilize theory to inform divisional and institutional policy and practice.
- Translate theory to diverse audiences (e.g. colleagues, faculty, students, parents, policymakers) and use it effectively to enhance understanding of the work of student affairs.
- Analyze and critique prevailing theory for improved unit, division, or campus practice.
- Contribute to the development of theories.
- Identify staff members' level of competency regarding the ability to apply learning and development theory to practice, and create professional development opportunities utilizing various learning concepts.
- Evaluate and assess the effectiveness of learning and teaching opportunities at the divisional level and communicate their effectiveness to the larger campus community as well as explain opportunities for collaboration and integrated learning opportunities.
- Build and support inclusive, socially-just, and welcoming campus communities that promote deep learning and foster student success.
- Communicate the learning orientation of student services/affairs to the campus community.
- Provide alternative models that explore student learning and development from an inclusive paradigm.

## Technology and Digital Engagement<sup>16</sup>

The technology and digital engagement competency area focuses on the use of digital tools, resources, and technologies for the advancement of student learning, development, and success as well as the improved performance of SAS professionals. Included within this area the generation of digital literacy and digital citizenship within communities of students, student affairs professionals, faculty members, and colleges and universities.

### *Core*

- Demonstrate adaptability in the face of fast-paced technological change.
- Remain current on student and educator adoption patterns of new technologies and familiarize oneself with the purpose and functionality of those technologies.
- Troubleshoot basic software, hardware, and connectivity problems and refer more complex problems to an appropriate information technology administrator.
- Draw upon research, trend data, and environmental scanning to assess the technological readiness and needs of students, colleagues, and other educational stakeholders when infusing technology into educational programs and interventions.
- Critically assess the accuracy and quality of information gathered via technology and accurately cite electronic sources of information respecting copyright law and fair use.
- Model and promote the legal, ethical, and transparent collection, use, and securing of electronic data (i.e., Freedom of Information and Privacy legislations).
- Ensure compliance with accessible technology laws and policies.
- Demonstrate awareness of one's personal digital identity and engage students in learning activities related to responsible digital communications and virtual community engagement as related to their digital reputation and identity.
- Model and promote equitable and inclusive practices by ensuring all participants in educational endeavors can access and utilize the necessary tools for success.
- Appropriately utilize social media and other digital communication and collaboration tools to market and promote advising, programming, and other learning-focused interventions and to engage students in these activities.
- Engage in personal and professional digital learning communities and personal learning networks at the local, national, and/or global level.
- Design, implement, and assess technologically-rich learning experiences for students and other stakeholders that model effective use of visual and interactive media.
- Ensure that one's educational work with and service to students is inclusive of students participating in online and hybrid format courses and programs.
- Incorporate commonly utilized technological tools and platforms including social media and other digital communication and collaboration tools into one's work.

### *Intermediate*

- Model and promote adaptability among students, colleagues, and educational stakeholders in the face of fast-paced technological change and demonstrate openness to the introduction of new digital tools by others.

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<sup>16</sup> Adapted from Technology in the ACPA/NASPA Professional Competencies for Student Affairs Educators  
D. Fernandez, C. Fitzgerald, P. Hambler and T. Mason-Innes

- Anticipate potential problems with software, hardware, and connectivity and prepare multiple strategies to troubleshoot these problems and/or prepare alternative means of achieving learning and productivity outcomes.
- Facilitate educational interventions that are based upon research, trend data, and needs assessments of participants and that increase the technological competencies and digital literacy of those participants.
- Utilize multiple strategies for accessing and assessing information, critically considering the sources of information as well as the purposes or agendas that led to the dissemination of the data as presented.
- Teach and facilitate the legal and ethical use of digital information in a manner that complies with law and policy and that addresses the larger values and principles underlying these laws and policies.
- Draw upon universal design principles to model and promote compliance with accessibility law and policies among students, colleagues, and educational partners.
- Proactively cultivate a digital identity, presence, and reputation for one's self and by students that models appropriate online behavior and positive engagement with others in virtual communities.
- Demonstrate a willingness and capacity to generate, critically examine, and change technology-related policies and practices that privilege one group of students or educational stakeholders over another.
- Design and assess outcomes that utilize social media and other digital communication and collaboration tools for promoting learning-focused interventions and engaging students in these activities.
- Utilize local, national, and global digital professional learning communities and personal learning networks to enhance intra- and inter-institutional collaboration and ongoing professional development in educational, customer service, marketing, and community engagement efforts that reflect the mission and values of the organization.
- Generate a wide and varied array of digital strategies for enhancing educational interventions with multimedia, interactive tools, and creativity-enhancing technologies.
- Initiate the development of holistic educational interventions designed for students participating in courses and other educational experiences delivered via hybrid and online formats.

#### *Advanced*

- Anticipate technological change and allocate personal, departmental, and/or institutional resources to foster in others dispositions of adaptability, flexibility, and openness to technological innovation.
- Provide leadership for the proactive creation, use, and empirical evaluation of technological tools and digital spaces for students including those drawing on social media and other digital communication and collaboration tools.
- Develop contingency plans for the continual operation of basic college and university functions in the event of software, hardware, or connectivity failures as a result of routine issues or in response to crises and emergencies.

- Contribute to the generation of research, trend analyses, and needs assessments related to digital technologies that inform efforts to meet the technological needs of students, colleagues, and educational stakeholders.
- Support, promote, and/or lead efforts to create a culture in which information is both valued and systematically scrutinized prior to its use to inform educational practice.
- Provide leadership that demands digital information and technologies be used in a manner that is ethical and in full compliance with national and provincial laws as well as with institutional policies.
- Lead and demonstrate a commitment to universal design principles in technological implementations that ensures the frictionless use and application of technology by all.
- Provide leadership and ongoing training to colleagues and students for the cultivation of a genuine digital identity, presence, and reputation that models appropriate online behavior and enables open access and engagement with virtual communities as appropriate.
- Engage in systematic practices aimed at ensuring students and professionals across all demographics have access to technological resources and are educated in their intelligent use and implementation for solving problems and enhancing learning.
- Provide leadership for the seamless integration of social media and other digital communications with broader educational, customer service, marketing, and community engagement efforts that communicate and develop dialogue and community around shared common institutional values.
- Contribute to, partner with, and/or provide leadership for local, provincial, national, and global digital professional learning communities and personal learning networks in promoting the use of technology for educational purposes.
- Provide training and instruction for the use, adoption, and evaluation of digital strategies for enhancing educational interventions with multimedia, interactive tools, and creativity enhancing technologies by students, colleagues, and other educational stakeholders.
- Collaborate with and support faculty by developing holistic educational and co-curricular opportunities for students in online and hybrid programs promoting the relevance and vision of what student affairs practice in new educational delivery formats.
- Provide leadership in the development of new means of leveraging technology for assessing, certifying, and credentialing the holistic learning and development of students through co-curricular learning endeavors.

## Appendix 1: Background and Context

### Historical research and discussions (2003-2012)

#### Focus on the organization

Key articles published in *Communiqué* (Robinson, 2003; Seifert & Billing, 2010; Fisher, 2011) introduced the CACUSS membership to current and critical issues within the field, while research (Pardo, 2012; Seifert, 2014; Massey & Massey, 2015) supported and influenced the next steps for the creation of a competency model. Similarly, other post-secondary groups and organizations have discussed the development of a uniquely Canadian set of competencies for the student affairs profession (OACUHO; Ryerson, CBIE). Initially, research and articles in this area focused on the challenges CACUSS, as an organization, should address in order to develop a competency and professional development framework. Robinson (2003) evaluated how a professional development model should be created in Canada, despite the lack of critical mass of student affairs professionals in Canada and limited academic research at the time. Robinson argued a framework could be modelled after US associations, like the US based National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and American College Personnel Association (ACPA), however, she argued the model must be based on Canada's distinct strengths, context and culture.

Continuing to identify the unique strengths of the Canadian system of higher education, Fisher (2011) summarized the work undertaken by student affairs leaders as part of *The CACUSS Identity Project*. Fisher characterized the Canadian system as mostly public, shaped by a vast geography, with limited institutional differentiation, and considerable institutional autonomy. Identified as contemporary issues within the Canadian context were Aboriginal education; access, diversity and inclusion; globalization of higher education; student engagement; and accountability.

Fisher (2011) described emerging trends within the field, specifically strategic enrolment management; student mental health and wellbeing; integration; the built environment; support for distance learners; and Information Technology. This paper brought to the light the challenges facing the professionalization of Canadian student affairs; however, she emphasized that CACUSS should focus on "professional preparation and competency, rather than on a strict adherence to standards of practice." (p. 18). The CACUSS Identity Project influenced the next steps in creating a competency framework and professional development

#### Moving towards professionalization

The first, and most comprehensive, Canadian volume discussing the student affairs profession, within a student success framework, was published by Drs Donna Hardy-Cox and Carney Strange (2010). This publication was seen as a turning point, by many, in the creation and dissemination of Canadian-specific knowledge about the SAS profession. The edited book featured a variety of articles written by Canadian SAS professionals from various disciplines. Each article within the volume highlighted the historical context of each area as it related to student success and how that work was approached differently in the Canadian context. (Hardy-Cox & Strange, 2010). The authors concluded their work by outlining some of the principles and strategies for good practice in student affairs. These approaches to attaining competence in one's work outlined the how student affairs staff become skillful at their work and reinforced the need for a framework of training and developing practitioners within Canada (Hardy-Cox & Strange, 2010).

Patricia Pardo, presented a paper to CACUSS in 2012 in consideration of the development of a professional development model for student affairs professionals. She addressed the work conducted by Fisher (2011) but proposed how a national association, like CACUSS, could deliver professional development that benefit both the organization and its membership. She proposed that CACUSS consider adopting the 10 ACPA/NASPA (2015) competencies (after adjusting them to ensure a Canadian focus), then create a Professional Development Certificate based on said competencies (p. 6). Pardo recommended that the “Annual Conference, should remain the cornerstone of a CACUSS PD (sic) program” and a model could be based on “where ACPA and NASPA are heading” (p.11).

Seifert (2014) commented on the role CACUSS plays in the professional development: of its members: “in the absence of graduate preparation programs to cultivate a SAS staff member’s professional identity...CACUSS has taken the lead in providing professional development and education” (p. 296). Seifert suggested CACUSS should build upon its capacity to educate and provide professional development to its members, and to ground their educational endeavours (i.e. workshops, annual conference, media outlets, and sponsored projects) in the mission statement and guiding principles of the organization.

### Recent developments: 2015 Needs Assessment

In 2015, CACUSS administered a survey to new and existing CACUSS members, and conducted focus groups across the country. A report compiled by Massey & Massey (2015) summarized the findings and made recommendations. The assessment gleaned valuable information on the membership’s demographic profile, professional development needs, use of publications and resources, and level of engagement with CACUSS. Participants indicated strong satisfaction with the opportunity CACUSS provides to network outside their specific discipline and with other Canadian student affairs professionals. Other findings included: members’ desire for intentional regional content (i.e. conferences, workshops, webinars), opportunities for senior leadership engagement (i.e. both for themselves and those they lead), and more sophisticated modes of communication (i.e. relevant website, interactive emails, stronger social media presence).

In order for CACUSS to move forward successfully in developing a competency framework and professional development plan, Massey and Massey (2015) ended their report with the following recommendations:

1. Create clear pathways for engagement
2. Establish a clear role of senior student affairs officers
3. Expand regional emphasis through
  - a. Structure of the organization
  - b. Professional development
  - c. Communication networks and structures
4. Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to engage the Francophone community
5. Establish a set of competencies and best practices for Canadian student affairs
6. Develop a comprehensive professional development plan that intentionally addresses regional needs and level/years of experience. (p. 78 )

## Appendix 2: 2016 Competencies and Professional Development Project

To address the latter two recommendations put forth by Massey and Massey (2015), CACUSS put forward a request for proposals (RFP) in September 2015. The competencies framework and professional development plan set out to accomplish three core goals:

- Guide Canadian student affairs/services staff and institutions in understanding the current relevant knowledge, skills, and competencies to be successful in their roles
- Provide CACUSS with a foundation on which to build professional development products and services such as learning institutes, monographs, conference learning outcomes, which will support the work of our members and advance the student affairs profession in Canada
- Produce a series of recommendations for next steps and future work for the association

### Research Informing the Competency Model

There has been much work already done by CACUSS and other student affairs associations (i.e., ACPA/NASPA, ACUHO-I, AACRAO) related to competencies within the SAS profession. In the process of research, the consulting team noted that these other frameworks are not fully contextualized in the Canadian post-secondary landscape, so it was important to use these frameworks to inform but not necessarily fully shape the final product.

In addition to a literature review of recent and foundational research on the topics of professional development, continuing professional education, adult education and learning, and related topics, a scan of current graduate school programs and certificates in SAS offered in Canada was completed. A content analysis of course descriptions and requirements was conducted based on information available online through school websites. As well, a bank of over 200 student affairs positions posted to the CACUSS website in 2015 were analyzed for common qualifications across levels of seniority.

### Consultations

Beginning in January, the consultants sought input from SAS professionals across Canada, both members and non-members. They conducted two in-person focus groups, a webinar for CACUSS members, a webinar with AACUSS members, 21 key informant interviews, an engagement event at the 2016 ACPA Convention, consultations with the Assembly of Communities of Practice, and meetings with the CACUSS board of directors. In addition, a comprehensive blog provided members and non-members the opportunity to follow the discussion, contribute ideas and provide feedback throughout the project: <https://cdncompetencyandpd.wordpress.com/>.

### Uniquely Canadian

Throughout the consultation process, when asked about what makes the Canadian student affairs profession unique, there were a variety of things that were mentioned. Many informants spoke to the differences between Canadian and American student affairs specifically, while others focused on the unique aspects of the Canadian context. Many noted provincial diversity, language differences, Aboriginal student success, and the differences between colleges and universities. They cited the lack of Canadian academic research, lack of a shared vocabulary and the need to articulate a broader set of

skills due to the broader field of student affairs in Canada (as compared to other countries). For instance, some institutions include athletics, strategic enrolment management, and alumni relations into the student affairs portfolio while others do not.

While similarities exist with American SAS, the fact that Canadian context is unique came up time and time again in focus groups and discussions with key informants. As a result of the limited Canadian research in post-secondary SAS, exactly how the Canadian context is different can be difficult to clearly articulate. This lack of research, and in the absence of a specialized competency framework, could be seen as a lack of professionalization in Canadian SAS, according to some of our participant interviews.

Many informants saw the values of multiculturalism, and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as strong influencers of a Canadian identity. These policies have led to legislation at provincial levels to reinforce or support these values – Ontarians with the Disabilities Act; provincial Human Rights Codes as examples. These values, and specifically, the values of access and inclusion were often identified by key informants as important and unique to the Canadian landscape and as such should be reflected in the competencies and values of the profession. Moreover, the Canadian student demographic is changing in higher education, which impacts the competencies we need. Our students define our work.

Canada's diversity and geographic vastness can make it difficult to meet the needs of the profession on a large scale, which many noted was a unique challenge of the profession and to CACUSS. Each area of student affairs has distinctive characteristics, skills, and best practices associated with it. Each province and territory has a unique funding model and approach to post-secondary education. Colleges and Universities also have different mandates, structures, and areas of expertise. Each institution also has individual priorities, its own climate, culture, and mores, which influence approaches and sometimes ability to deliver SAS on their campuses. The digital world and global society has also opened and expanded the borders of college and university campuses to, sometimes, indefinable parameters.

As professionals, Canadian practitioners are often more likely to be generalists or to move from one area of the field to another. This, perhaps, can impact the skills required for professionals in that they need to be transferrable and broadly applicable. In addition, this could be seen as a particular challenge for those delivering or providing professional development opportunities for sub-sections of the profession.

In recent years, there have been more professionals choosing to do research within Canadian SAS, and there are new graduate programs being created. This could influence the view of the profession in Canada as well as the opportunities available for skill development by professionals. Many informants saw this as a unique opportunity for CACUSS to influence, and where appropriate, provide opportunities to shape professional learning, and in turn the profession itself.

Given our unique history and in recognition of the territorial and traditional lands where most, if not all of our institutions reside, many key informants felt that specific recognition be given to indigenous knowledge and cultural competence. As Canada as a whole moves forward to address the outcomes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, CACUSS and the consultants are committed to incorporating the recommendations into the daily work of the profession. For Canadians, this is a unique opportunity and should be a commitment of all educators.

Based on the input received from Canadian professionals and the resulting themes that emerged, the Competency Model reflects both the similarities and differences that exist when comparing Canadian SAS and the profession in other regions of the world.

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