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“Don’t Let Your Schooling Interfere with Your Education”:
A Comprehensive Look at Co-Curricular Involvement and Advising

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the
Department of Educational Foundations and Policy Studies West Chester University
West Chester, Pennsylvania

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science

Higher Education Policy and Student Affairs

By MaryClare Rae, May 2022

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my parents, for supporting me as I went back to school. I would also like to dedicate this to my nieces and nephews so they know they can do anything they put their minds to.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks of gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Matthew Kruger-Ross, for his support and assistance through this process. I would also like to thank the faculty of the Higher Education Policy and Student Affairs Program of West Chester University and my fellow members of Cohort Four.

Abstract

In this thesis, I explore the need for continued student engagement. I am proposing an office or department responsible for advising students in their co-curricular endeavors and assisting them in translating transferrable skills. I plan to launch this program with a marketing campaign to inform students of the benefits of co-curricular engagement, followed by a survey to gauge interests, a meeting with an advisor to review results, and an exit ticket that students can take with them, detailing the conversation they had with their advisor. These advisors will be available to meet with students at any time in their college career, including near graduation to help students market their transferable skills on their resumes. The goal of the co-curricular advising program is to increase student engagement with the university which, in turn, will increase retention and graduation rates.

Keywords: Engagement, Sense of Belonging, Advising, Student Success

Table of Contents

List of Tables	vii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
My Background	2
Background of Concern	4
My Proposed Intervention.....	5
Conclusion	6
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework	7
Philosophy of Higher Education.....	7
Critical Action Research.....	9
Conclusion	11
Chapter 3: Literature Review	12
Historical Background	12
Student Organizations.....	12
Sports in Higher Education.....	13
‘College Life’	14
Keeping Track of Student Life: The Co-Curricular Transcript	15
Connections to Student Affairs.....	21
Sense of Belonging	21
Retention.....	22

Rethinking Co-Curricular Engagement Post-Covid-19 Pandemic	23
Advising & Best Practices for Student Engagement	24
Rethinking Advising	24
Brief History of Advising	25
Best Practices for Student Engagement	26
The Competencies Provided by the National Association for Campus Activities (NACA)	27
Conclusion	29
Chapter 4: Program Intervention	30
Introduction to the Concern	30
Introducing the Program	31
Theory to Practice	32
Professional Competencies	33
Programmatic Intervention Proposal	35
External Resources.....	37
Conclusion	38
Chapter 5: Implementation and Evaluation	40
Introduction.....	40
Program Implementation	40
Funding	42
Leadership Theories.....	43

Assessment.....	45
Looking Ahead.....	46
Conclusion	47
References.....	49
Appendices.....	56
Appendix A: Questionnaire Questions	56
Appendix B: Marketing Posters.....	57
Appendix C: Exit Ticket	60
Appendix D: Job Description.....	61

List of Tables

Table 4. 1 Goals of the Program	32
Table 4. 2 Proposed Program Timeline	35
Table 5. 1 Budget for Co-Curricular Advising.....	43

Chapter One: Introduction

Dr. Jackie Hodes, the director of the Higher Education Policy & Student Affairs program at West Chester University of Pennsylvania, is known for asking the question: “If you had a magic wand and a million dollars, how would you fix higher education? When this question was first posed to me during my graduate school interview, I was totally lost. Magic and money are tools anyone in the world would love to wield, especially those looking to fix a problem. I, however, was stuck on the notion that the power granted by magic and money needed to be reserved for the largest of problems with the system. Who am I to decide what big issues necessitate magic and money? The answer is this: I am a student and an educator with valid views on higher education who must, therefore, look to my own experiences to answer Dr. Hodes’ question.

With the validation of my experiences in mind, I began to reflect on my own journey in higher education. To me, the answer to Dr. Hodes’ original question became obvious. Universities spend a tremendous amount of time and money on first-year students (Schneider, 2010). This population is taken through every process the university introduces, including how to get involved in student organizations. After the first year, however, students are no longer catered to as they are at the start of their journey. Students worry about their involvement taking away from their studies in terms of time management. If they miss the window of opportunity during the first year, students feel less inclined to get involved (Chan, 2016). Students, especially second-, third-, and fourth-year students, are left to fend for themselves in an important area of their university experience, co-curricular involvement. We, as educators, can improve sense of belonging, academic performance, and retention rates by ensuring students feel connected to campus beyond their classes. In the following chapter, I discuss my background and the thematic

concern inspired by my undergraduate and professional experiences. I then overview a programmatic intervention designed to combat the lack of student co-curricular engagement.

My Background

Before continuing, I provide insight into my previous experiences with education. I have always been an excellent student, including participating in numerous co-curricular activities that keep me busy. From a young age, I was always occupied with sports, clubs, volunteer opportunities, and more. Some of these organizations include theater, choir, volunteering, and participating in honors programs such as the National Honors Society. The first instance of diverting from my typically busy schedule was when I began my undergraduate studies at Susquehanna University.

There are no glaring mistakes in my college experience when I picture the beautiful campus of Susquehanna University. I had an amazing time during my undergraduate experiences. While interviewing with Dr. Hodes before beginning my graduate career, I was asked to reflect on things I wished could have been different for my personal experience. It was then I realized that in high school, I was a member of 16 clubs and organizations, including two musicals and competition choir, each year. Yet in my undergraduate time, I participated in almost nothing. As a high school student, I was a student ambassador, an orientation leader, a peer tutor, and a member of photography club, community service corps, movie club, and more. Why had I not immediately jumped into student leadership and involvement? I then remembered how consumed I had been by my adjustment to college. I had decided to settle my footing in a new environment before attempting to join any organizations. The involvement fair came and went during both Fall and Spring semesters of my freshman year, and I still felt like I was not steady enough in my personal life and education to commit to anything else.

When I returned to Susquehanna the Fall of my second year, I was not met with a plethora of information about involvement as I had been the year before. Everyone I knew had their circle of friends and their extracurricular activities, and I felt inserting myself into those spaces would be awkward and uncomfortable. I accompanied a friend to lunch one day and passed through an involvement fair I did not know was happening. One of her friends stopped her and demanded she sign up for Fall recruitment for Sigma Kappa Sorority. As if I were a second thought, she invited me to sign up as well and that is how I ended up at what I thought was a noncommittal sorority open house. I had previously attended an event used to introduce students to fraternity and sorority life without participating in actual recruitment. I thought this informal coffee and conversations event was like the open house from the year before, but I was mistaken. Four days and countless events, dinners, mocktail parties and fundraisers later, I accepted a bid to join Sigma Kappa Sorority and fill a space in my life where my numerous clubs and organizations from high school had once been. Over the next two and a half years, I dedicated every spare minute to Sigma Kappa, volunteering and spearheading many committees to fuel my need to be involved.

I am aware, looking back, that I stumbled upon my success in Sigma Kappa on my own. That is why my response to Dr. Hodes' question became to extend university engagement efforts beyond first-year students to include co-curricular advising for sophomores and beyond. I was the type of student that engagement offices dream of and yet, I almost missed my proverbial engagement window, or the ideal period that students are expected to become involved, because the university had been so focused on targeting only first-year students. If only there had been someone whose sole responsibility was to ensure that each student found the co-curricular activity that best complemented their education.

Background of Concern

Through my initial research into student involvement and professional support of students looking for experiential learning opportunities, I discovered the difference between the term co-curricular and extra-curricular (Haber-Curran, 2019). Extra-curricular implies that involvement outside of the classroom is something extra, something not necessary but secondary in the university experience (Milner, Cousins, & McGowan, 2016). Co-curricular, however, implies that involvement is complementary to education (Chan, 2016). Research shows that involvement outside of the classroom not only improves grades but improves retention and graduation rates (Bakoban & Aljarallah, 2015). “Extra-curricular activities reduce stress, improve physical health, increase affinity with the institution, allow (students) to contribute positively to the campus and the wider community, and provide new opportunities and challenges to explore” (Buckley & Lee, 2018, p. 41). For this reason, co-curricular is the ideal label for involvement outside of academics that benefits the university experience.

Throughout the university there should be a more comprehensive approach to extending engagement efforts beyond first year students. Research shows that co-curricular engagement benefits students and retention. Thus, ensuring students can get involved outside of the classroom should be a priority of each university (Hawkins, 2015). However, universities offer hundreds of opportunities for students to get involved, from student government and campus employment to intramural sports and language and culture clubs. It is not hard to believe that, in the face of so many options, students can choose not to get involved at all. There is a solution for this challenge. I believe there should be an office or department responsible for connecting each student to campus activities based on their interests, career goals, availability, and desired level of participation.

My Proposed Intervention

Involvement in co-curricular activities should be as personalized as choosing a major, where students have academic advisors to guide them. My programmatic intervention follows the same concept as academic advising, offering advising and personalized engagement opportunities to guarantee that students are getting the most out of their college experience, improving their academic performance and ensuring retention. For my programmatic intervention, I have students complete a digital questionnaire about their interests mid-way through their first year or just before second year. Once the students return to campus they would meet with a co-curricular advisor. This professional, graduate student, or student staff member would review the questionnaire with each participant and introduce them to the clubs and organizations that they might be interested in.

The idea of this program is to first, check in with students who did not get involved during their first semester and then, offer them another chance to participate. Second, the questionnaire would act similarly to the roommate matching system, matching students with clubs and organizations they might be interested in. Third, an advisor would be present to guide students toward organizations they might enjoy while ensuring they don't take on too much responsibility, leaving room for their studies. These advisors would also have tips on how to balance academics with co-curricular activities and assist students with other tasks such as marketing their involvement on their resume. Advisors would be available for meetings throughout a student's college career allowing students to schedule appointments when they feel comfortable.

Conclusion

In the eyes of the typical university student and institution superiors, involvement outside of the classroom is seen as an extra benefit to the education offered by the university. Co-curricular activities are auxiliary to education, creating ideal circumstances for students to succeed during their college careers and beyond. Facets of education this important to success, should be treated as such and given the attention and resources to facilitate said success. To correct the lack of student co-curricular engagement, a position focused solely on the supplementary involvement of students outside the classroom needs to be created and sustained.

In the following chapters evidence supporting the framework for a department and program to encourage co-curricular engagement will be provided and examined thoroughly. My personal motivations and theories on education will be explained, leading to the inspiration for the thematic concern and programmatic intervention. Research explaining the importance of involvement and best practices in advising will be complemented by detailed outlines of the program timeline and budget. Relevant literature and leadership theories are used to fortify reasoning for the importance of co-curricular advising for student involvement and engagement.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I provide an overview of my beliefs about higher education and student affairs. Then, I briefly summarize critical action research before reviewing the literature concerning my topic, the subject of the following chapter. I turn now to my philosophy of education.

Philosophy of Higher Education

The aim of higher education as an institution should be to provide opportunities for students to learn in both traditional and nontraditional spaces. Involvement in activities that complement student interests, especially when that interest translates into academic focus, create opportunities for students to cultivate transferrable skills such as time management, prioritization, communication, and others (Chaffin et al., 2019). Growth gained within co-curricular spheres that can then be used in other aspects of student life are known as transferrable skills. Research shows that students who spend time cultivating transferable skills become more successful, well-rounded individuals (Buckley & Lee, 2018). In this context, student success can be defined as academic growth, student sense of belonging, retention, and participation in leadership opportunities across campus.

When a student comes away from an experience with more knowledge than they had before, the experience is educative. Whether knowledge comes from traditional academic spaces or informal activities outside of the classroom, higher education students need multifaceted learning opportunities. Haber-Curran (2019) argues for the importance of nontraditional learning, or learning that takes place outside of the classroom, saying, “[...] out-of-class involvement should be tied to student learning, and specifically applied learning, whereby students can transfer the learning and growth gained in co-curricular contexts into other domains and settings

in their lives” (p. 34). In other words, students use the skills gained from co-curricular engagement, not only in academics but in all aspects of their lives.

Traditionally and in recent decades, the aim of higher education has been employability, or where students come to undergraduate institutions to further their job prospects (Cousins et al., 2016). Allowing universities to prioritize employability creates a capitalistic version of higher education, interpolating students to measure their success by their ability to make money (Buckley & Lee, 2018). If a student studies business with only an interest in money making, they may be less likely to enjoy their career as opposed to someone who studies business because they are interested in the intricacies of our economy. A student avoiding co-curricular involvement for fear of negative impact on their studies is a student the university has not adequately supported in their pursuit of knowledge. Instead, the institution is pushing them to fit into a model of education as a medium for productivity rather than a university as a place for sharing knowledge. Students are no longer studying what interests them, they are choosing paths that will lead to careers post-graduation (Seemiller, 2018).

Higher education needs a remodel to recenter priorities from employability to learning. The purpose of higher education should be to provide an opportunity for learning, both academically and practically. Academic learning refers to learning that occurs within the classroom such as lectures, projects, papers, etc. Practical learning, however, refers to those instances where a student learns through experiences. A student who develops time management skills through navigating a busy schedule is gaining practical experience that will transfer to other aspects of their lives. This practical learning will improve upon student success and retention by allowing students opportunities to explore educative experiences (Dugan et al.,

2019). If the university returns to a place where knowledge is shared as the most important goal, students will experience a space for academic and co-curricular exploration.

Universities are currently viewed as vehicles for students to get from point A, childhood, to point B, the real world, using education to prepare them for a career. Instead, universities should be institutions of learning for the sake of knowledge, with careers in fields of interest as the next step in a journey toward understanding one's desired passions. Skills developed through hands on learning outside of the classroom are equally as important to an education as knowledge gained from textbooks (Gopalan & Brady, 2019; Kilgo, 2016). The same can be said for educative experiences that fuel a student's passion which are just as important as lectures about the theories behind them.

It is the responsibility of higher education professionals to create and maintain spaces and opportunities for students to learn and participate in educative experiences. Student affairs practitioners can facilitate or hinder co-curricular learning by encouraging and communicating with students. Student affairs professionals are conscientious participants in the educative experiences of students and can often be catalysts for changes our students need. In the following section, I outline a method for mitigating change in a university setting. Critical action research is a tool for higher education professionals to identify, examine, and reform issues students face in their college careers.

Critical Action Research

Higher education and student affairs thrive off qualitative research as well as quantitative research. Qualitative research can be described as “social research in which the researcher relies on textual data rather than numerical data, analyzes those data in their textual form, and aims to understand the meaning of human action” (Carter & Little, 2007, p. 1316). Qualitative research

methods build the foundation for systematic changes necessary in higher education to accommodate the changing social atmosphere created by an ever-evolving society. Change based on community inspired examination, critical action research, is beneficial to the community participating. Critical action research utilizes a blend of methods from quantitative to qualitative to solve a meaningful problem in a specific context. For example, a researcher inserting themselves into the community in which they are studying, utilizing feedback gained through participation in the community will produce results more beneficial to the community (McNiff, 2016). This thesis utilizes critical action research methods, which regularly draw on qualitative research for inspiration and guidance.

Qualitative research requires a discussion about the relationship between epistemology, methodology, and method in the scope of a study. Epistemology, or the study of the nature of knowledge and justification, is how researchers' beliefs are formed, guiding the baseline for the study. The methodology, the analysis of the assumptions, principles, and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry, provides justification for the methods of the research. The methods, or the procedures, tools, and techniques, are the way researchers accomplish their data collection. For example, a research study may utilize interviews to collect data from their audience (McNiff, 2016).

In this work, I suggest using a questionnaire to gather participant information that will be utilized during advising sessions. Each of these components of the research planning process are necessary and complement the others during the study, creating a frame for the study. Different methods or analysis methods may affect the outcomes and interpretation of data in an action research project. Ultimately, "Good action research should be able to explain itself by presenting and arguing for an internally consistent set of elements: research epistemology, methodology,

and method (Carter & Little, 2007, p. 1323).” Utilizing action research in creating or assessing the co-curricular advising department will benefit not only the advising program but also the students being advised through the program.

Theory is also a factor in the outcome of action research, although educational theories do not always fit in the constructs of everyday life. The theory behind the practice of action research is grounded in the foundations of research practice. The place of theory in typical research is to drive the process of inquiry while the place of theory in action research is to make sense of more complex phenomena so it is more useful to the community seeking the results of the research. Lewin says, “the best way to understand something is to try and change it” (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p. 19). Change is the penultimate goal in an action research project, although it is often brought about by implementing programs and reforming policies rather than large systematic changes influenced by activists. Therefore, action research reporting is designed to be translated into practice, setting actions in motion to bring about such change.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I shared my philosophy of education as a place of learning both within the classroom and in co-curricular engagement. I examined the current priorities of institutions and students in relation to education and provided examples of these priorities' shortcomings. After presenting proposed structure changes and explaining the benefits of co-curricular involvement on student success and learning, I detailed the method of using critical action research to incite change. In the following chapter, I will discuss the history of and current concerns within co-curricular involvement in the literature. This material informs my proposed programmatic intervention, ensuring a focus on involvement's influence on student success.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

In the following chapter, I detail the history of student affairs and students' involvement outside of the classroom. I also detail the history of co-curricular transcripts and other methods of keeping track of student involvement. These topics have influenced my research as I study how student involvement has been approached in the past and how it can be improved for the future. I also take time to cite literature about student identity development and the importance of co-curricular involvement on student life. I conclude by summarizing literature demonstrating the importance of advising for student involvement, including widely accepted best practices for student engagement.

Historical Background

Student Organizations

Thorough research into co-curricular involvement did not reveal historical context until the late 1800s. Student organizations find their origins in informal student gatherings such as 'eating clubs,' where groups of undergraduate students pooled their finances to rent a dining room and hire cooks to prepare their meals, or unofficial debate societies, designed to give students an outlet to share ideas not being covered in their classes (Thelin, 2011). Popularity for such groups grew as students felt at odds with administration, especially in terms of topics they wished to study (Hevel, 2016). Thelin (2011) noted that "if undergraduates found the formal curriculum to be stultifying, they at least had reasonable odds of finding or initiating interesting pursuits outside the classroom and the formal course of study" (p. 89). These groupings in colonial American universities, not yet organizations, could have transformed into the organizations seen today, however, they rarely lasted more than the academic year. Early student organizations also differed from modern organizations in that they were founded, run by, and

created in the interest of the students. Most early student organizations, or groups that resembled these, were not necessarily considered part of the university but rather created by students on or around the campus.

A large majority of the history of colonial education is from students compiling their personal experiences into memoirs such as Lyman Bagg's (1872) *Four Years at Yale*. It is through Bagg's collection of stories and personal memorabilia that Yale became a world within itself, with dynamic student organizations created out of want and necessity. Bagg details eating clubs, honor societies, varsity sports, literary groups, debating teams, initiation rites, college songs, and codes of conduct emphasizing the importance of resilience amid the dynamic student culture at Yale. A popular poster found in student dormitories of the 1890s proclaimed, "Don't Let Your Schooling Interfere with Your Education!" referring to students' desire to create organizations separate from faculty and administrative members of the college.

Sports in Higher Education

Sports are usually one of the first things thought of when thinking of activities outside of academic spaces. However, sports may not be typically thought of as co-curricular activities. In the late 1800s to the early 1900s, a rise in popularity of intercollegiate sports as a form of co-curricular involvement is seen and most interestingly, creation of associations funded by student dues and supported by alumni (Thelin, 1996). Student and alumni control of these organizations meant that they were able to avoid interference from academic leadership but, since these organizations were almost entirely separate from the college's control, the associations struggled to maintain themselves. Eventually, athletic associations were absorbed by universities to improve funding and participation, setting a precedent for institution sponsored activities for students that were separate from their studies (Thelin, 2011). By the early 1950s, universities

were constructing athletic facilities and students were leaning into university sponsored sports (Thelin, 1996). Between World War I and World War II, universities became well known for their athletic programs and outside stakeholders became increasingly involved in advertising and patronage of sporting events (Thelin, 2011).

‘College Life’

As the popular culture of colleges grew, so did interest in enrolling. Higher enrollment for most institutions did not stop even for war or economic crises (Brothen & Wambach, 2004). Students were eager to join campus communities they were hearing about or reading about in literature and magazines. In the early 1900s, universities also became well known for their students’ trends and behavior. College life was more than academics and activities, it was parties, proms, homecoming celebrations, speakeasies and more -- all driven by alcohol and what some would call hedonistic behavior (Thelin, 2011). While previous images of college students were portrayed as gentlemen, and sometimes ladies, the media portrayal of this era painted the college man as an alcohol fueled, gambling, speakeasy participant (Martin, 1995). Literature and magazines began to reflect the images of college life so many Americans were now experiencing, solidifying higher education as an obvious path for most young adults (Brothen & Wambach, 2004).

The popularity of press and media coverage solidified college life, more specifically co-curricular activity, as one of mass media’s biggest draws. Press coverage sparked jealousies across universities who claimed schools like Harvard and Yale were being shown favoritism (Thelin, 2003). The push for media coverage and development of radio broadcasts crossed paths in the late 1920s. Before Notre Dame football, university athletics were only watched by university students and alumni. It was Notre Dame football that became a popular radio program

across the country, leading to an influx of donations to the athletic department by fans across the country (Sperber, 1993). Whether listeners were alumni or not, listening to Notre Dame football games became a national pastime. Media coverage and depictions of college life across platforms became a way to draw a crowd (Hines et al., 2006). Movies depicting college settings drew large crowds to the theaters such as *Horse Feathers* released in 1932, surrounding a struggling college and their football team.

Keeping Track of Student Life: The Co-Curricular Transcript

With higher education becoming more and more popular, students elected to attend college not only to learn but also to experience the infamous ‘college life’ being so outlandishly portrayed in media (Thelin, 2011). Student memoirs show that as the students became more lackadaisical in their classes, universities were forced to create offices for student affairs (Hevel 2016). With college student focus being redirected from their studies to other aspects of college life, distracted students required more support from their institutions (Biddix & Schwartz, 2012). Early student affairs departments and professionals were originally focused on the implementation and enforcement of university regulations, acting as university mediators and enforcers (Long, 2012). Schwartz (2010) described the university administrators, known as deans of men and women’s, general approach to discipline, “deans of men could be intimidating and even frightening to students, as a dean could invoke suspension or expulsion on a hapless student” (p. 4). In the early years of the 20th century, student affairs professionals began moving away from disciplinary roles and into positions more closely related to modern format.

Between the years of 1950 and 1970, universities became increasingly concerned with retention and rates of degree completion (Brother & Wambach, 2004). This focus forced institutions to create programs for advising, new teaching and learning centers, expanded student

services, and a variety of other institutional tools to ensure student persistence through to graduation. What had been the responsibility of each student before 1950 was a matter of deliberate student success by the early 1980s. Universities were focusing on ways to ensure student success, both in the classroom, in degree completion, and in student-centered programs and activities outside of the classroom.

History & Development of a Co-Curricular Transcript

In the late 1800s a man named Walter Dill Scott graduated from Northwestern and went to Germany to pursue a PhD in Psychology. He became a professor at his alma mater after gaining professional experience in the business field and quickly rose to President of Northwestern in 1920, the same year he was made president of the American Psychological Association (APA) (Biddix & Schwartz, 2012). Scott's professional experience led him to establish a "personnel office" at Northwestern to apply the same approach he had used in business and industry to the college campus and the students at Northwestern (Coven, 2015). The office began interviewing and categorizing all students and creating what he called an appointment card, a personal record of each student. Students were interviewed each year and information was updated accordingly (Biddix & Schwartz, 2012). These appointment cards are thought to be the earliest form of what was first called developmental transcripts, later co-curricular transcripts in the 1970s (Coven, 2015). Scott's personnel office transformed into a student personnel department and became a model for student affairs offices in universities across the country (Hevel, 2016).

Scholarship on the relationships between academic transcripts and co-curricular transcripts began early (Brown & Citrin, 1977). Brown & Citrin (1977) called into question academic transcripts in use at the time and pondered whether student development aspects might

be included in future models. They also argued that before an institution implements a student development transcript, it will need to refine and define dimensions to make them more specific and relate them to the institutional mission. In other words, one cannot measure student development if one cannot clearly define it so the first step in creating such a record would be in defining skills it will be measuring. Brown & Citrin (1977) proposed two formats, checklists or portfolios, which can both be seen in co-curricular transcripts of today.

In the following years, Brown and Citrin collaborated with other authors such as Glen Pflum and Michael Preston, to survey leaders of higher education nationwide about “systematically involving colleges and universities in the personal development of college students” (Brown et al, 1978, p. 291). The findings of this study show that most participants who were higher education professionals in both student and academic affairs supported the notion that institutions should be doing more to support student personal development. Although student affairs professionals were overall more receptive to the transcript and increased focus on personal development, a clear majority of the academic affairs professionals were also in favor of such initiatives.

A year after the first study, Brown and other collaborators created a second, similar study surveying higher education professionals as well as students and parents (Brown et al, 1979). When comparing the studies of Brown and his colleagues, the only difference is that students and parents indicated they were interested in such a record for career development purposes while higher education professionals maintained the importance of measuring personal development. Even with that disparity, it is clear from both studies that there was support for implementation of some kind of co-curricular transcript.

Implementation of Developmental Transcripts

By the 1980s, the developmental transcript was used in place of the co-curricular transcript and was used to measure how students developed through their college careers. While co-curricular transcripts were used to record participation in activities, developmental transcripts were more closely related to the personnel records implemented by Scott. Researchers began looking at employability and career prospects using the developmental transcript to supplement an application (Bryan, et al., 1981). Bryan et al. (1981) conducted a national survey of employers giving examples of developmental or co-curricular transcript as well as sample resumes for the same hypothetical student. The results of the survey showed that 71% of employers “would definitely want” or “would prefer to have” a co-curricular transcript included as part of an application (Bryan et al., 1981, p. 32). This study aligns with Brown’s (1978; 1979) earlier findings that students and parents see the developmental transcript as a career development tool.

In September 1982, an edition of *New Directions for Student Services* was published with the theme “Mentoring-Transcript Programs for Promoting Student Growth.” The articles focused mainly on the purpose of the transcripts and their place in higher education rather than an outline for implementation. One of the first articles of the issue (Brown & DeCoster, 1982) lays out aspects of mentoring transcripts such as purpose and format. Thomas et al. (1982) write in the same issue about the relationship between mentoring itself and the processes of recording learning outcomes in the mentoring transcript. These articles in this specialty 1982 publication saw the role of the co-curricular transcript as a developmental tool meaning and found the value of the program not in the final product but rather in the process of creating it.

The Co-Curricular Transcript Manual

In the early 1980s, a Mentoring-Transcript Clearinghouse was established at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (Kramer et al., 1982) with a purpose of gathering and distributing resources to institutions interested in developing a “mentoring-transcript.” This mentoring transcript was a document recording mentor/mentee relationships that were non-organic, meaning the mentor and mentee were paired purposely due to common goals (Jacobi, 1991). In the early 1990s the clearinghouse was moved to the National Association for Campus Activities (NACA) Educational Foundation Commission for Student Development that transformed the resource into the *Co-curricular Transcript Manual* (CCTM). The manual contained examples of transcripts, current resources, and contact persons to aid institutions looking to develop their own programs.

While the CCTM has been managed by NACA since being moved there in 1990, NACA’s interest in co-curricular transcripts began in 1985 when they conducted a national survey for co-curricular transcript programs in colleges and universities. The data collected from the 1985 study showed that 43 institutions reported having a co-curricular transcript program of some sort. In 1992 NACA sponsored another study with an additional 35 institutions that reported starting a program since the 1985 survey (Cocurricular Transcript, 1995, 1992 Cocurricular [sic] Transcript Survey Results, as cited in Coven, 2015). The results of these two studies attest to the fact that universities were beginning to utilize the co-curricular transcript models to keep track of student involvement.

Co-Curricular Transcripts at Present

Although it appears interest in co-curricular transcripts seems to have increased since the 1990s, the mode of these transcripts began to change. As technology shifted in the 2000s, co-

curricular transcripts began to shift into e-portfolios (Coleman, 2017). These e-portfolios, although not exactly virtual co-curricular transcripts, were more user-driven and allowed students to assess their own developmental outcomes. The literature shows that institutions that adopted an e-portfolio have done so under career services (Garis, 2007), as opposed to an involvement tool. In the career services model, the tool was used to appear more marketable for future employers while the proposal detailed in Chapter 4 seeks to track non-academic learning experiences as well as transferrable skills.

Most recently, Hope (2021) highlighted how Michigan State University was implementing their version of a virtual co-curricular transcript. Hope explains that that learning outcomes and listing experiences will help students better understand what they have learned and gained from these experiences. Colleges and universities are implementing tools like My Spartan Story, the software being used to house co-curricular transcripts at MSU, to allow their students to track their co-curricular learning themselves and have virtual access to learning outcomes they can turn in to transferrable skills. This co-curricular transcript model, including learning outcomes and transferrable skills, is a good representation for what I am hoping my programmatic intervention will achieve. The MSU platform is digital and self-responsive while the model I am going to detail in the next chapter is more collaborative with university professional staff. In the co-curricular advising model, professional staff would be available to go over results and plan on next steps. The co-curricular advising program pairs co-curricular transcripts with typical advising models to improve successful program outcomes.

Connections to Student Affairs

Sense of Belonging

Most of the literature defines sense of belonging as a feeling of security and support that creates connectedness to a group or community (Museus et al., 2016). Gopalan and Brady (2019) categorize a sense of belonging as a necessary tool to promote success, engagement, and well-being among college students. Many scholars report that feelings of belonging and success will lead to persistence and ultimately improve retention (Museus et al., 2016; Gopalan & Brady, 2019; Komives, 2019).

Sense of belonging is important for culturally diverse students as well (Museus et al., 2016). Colleges and universities need to create opportunities for students to see themselves culturally represented in co-curricular opportunities to build meaningful connections with peers who are part of their same community. Stirling and Kerr (2015) explored meaningful co-curricular experiences in higher education and concluded that co-curricular participation is extremely beneficial to students both inside and outside the classroom. “Benefits of co-curricular participation include self-efficacy, satisfaction, feelings of support and institutional challenge, retention, academic achievement and intellectual engagement, enhanced understanding of others, deepened sense of spirituality, and practical skill acquisition such as interview skills and networking abilities” (Daniyal et al., 2012, as cited in Stirling & Kerr, 2015, p. 1). Stirling and Kerr theorized that meaningful co-curricular experiences involve participation in activities and opportunities that complement their academic learning.

Guilmette et al. (2019) surveyed students about their involvement both before and during their college experience. The researchers then analyzed the relationships between participation and elements of student success such as emotional well-being, academic success, and goal

regulation. Students with higher amounts of participation in extra-curricular activities and co-curricular involvement were found to be more successful in their academics, emotional capacity, and goal setting, leading to a better overall university experience. The researchers concluded that participation in extra-curriculars had a definitively positive effect on student experiences in college (Guilmette et al., 2019).

Retention

The ultimate purpose of co-curricular involvement is to ensure student sense of belonging, success, and retention. To discuss the benefits of co-curricular involvement, we need to take a closer look at retention and research surrounding persistence.

It is difficult to research methods of improving student success without also looking into current literature about retention. Retention is a huge buzzword in higher education, or how students can be encouraged to persist through graduation. This has been a concern of educators since higher education began but became a major focus of administration between 1950 and 1970. Retention and attrition began to affect how states funded their public institutions, pulling retention efforts to the forefront of administrators' minds. After 1970, retention theories began to emerge. Researchers like Spady, Tinto, and Bean coinvestigated why students were departing before their degree completion. Much of the research pointed to a lack of connectedness to the campus community, leading to the implementation and expansion of many student affairs departments (Aljohani, 2016).

Hiring professionals to focus on student engagement and sense of belonging became a way to improve rates of retention and persistence among students. Researchers, including Komives (2019), concluded that participation in co-curricular activities is associated with development of self-awareness, leadership skills, and retention through graduation. A

longitudinal study from Adkins et al. (2021) highlighted the importance of nonacademic factors in student retention. “Involvement in student organizations, living on campus, and greater social support are all associated with lower odds of dropping out” (Adkins et al., 2021, p. 14). The conclusion reached by most researchers is that colleges and universities need to be doing more to encourage student involvement outside of the classroom to improve retention rates.

Rethinking Co-Curricular Engagement Post-Covid-19 Pandemic

Given the turn to remote instruction during the COVID-19 global pandemic, there was a decrease in all forms of engagement as universities moved to online learning models (Daniels et al., 2021). The authors concluded that change in learning environment had a detrimental effect on students and their engagement to with the university and each other. Students not having face to face interactions with each other made them feel less connected to their classmates. Among other side effects of online learning, decline in mental health is one of the highest reported effects from the pandemic and the negative effects are continuously visible as we return to in-person learning (Daniels et al., 2021). Students already dealing with the stress of higher education struggled with also processing the pandemic, home life stressors, and the transition to online learning (Neuwirth et al., 2021). This decline in students feeling connectedness to their campus and peers has worsened engagement in co-curricular activities (Shenoy et al. 2021).

The pandemic has been cited as detrimental to student mental health (Daniels et al., 2021). Isolation and a feeling of disconnect between students and their peers has added to these mental health issues (Shenoy et al., 2021), creating an even greater need for campus engagement. Educational technologies are one of the most important tools for student engagement during this uncertain time of virtual learning. Keshvarev (2020, as cited in Daniels et al., 2021) suggests that the way forward from COVID-19 is to introduce a hybrid model. It is important to engage

students now more than ever and the flexibility of a hybrid campus allows students to connect to their communities from anywhere in the world.

Connection to campus communities is, in my opinion, one of the most important aspects of the student experience. The COVID-19 pandemic forced students, faculty, and staff to adapt to the virtual learning circumstances. The abrupt transition from in person learning to virtual environments has forced professional staff to reevaluate how they connect with students. This reevaluation has presented professionals with the opportunity to consistently rethink every department, program, or decision they make to consider virtual environments or COVID-19 protocols. For this reason, rethinking student engagement just as other aspects of higher education are reconsidered to benefit student success. The changes the pandemic has produced are now becoming a foundation for future student affairs issues.

Advising & Best Practices for Student Engagement

Rethinking Advising

When thinking of advising, most people's first thought is a professional who helps students pick their classes. Sanders and Killion (2017) state though advising was once a more clerical position designed to register students for classes, it has transformed into a more supportive function, providing benefits such as developing autonomy, encouraging cooperative learning, and critical thinking skills. The goal of the co-curricular advising intervention proposed is to fulfill that supportive function and assist students as they explore co-curricular involvement. To fully explore a co-curricular advising model, it is important to first examine the function advising has in higher education both in history and at present.

Brief History of Advising

Advising finds its inception in academics. However, academic advisors of colonial America were much more than individuals who helped students simply pick their classes. These faculty members lived on campus with the students and served in place of their parents, establishing the term *in loco parentis* (Wilder, 2013). When curriculum began to expand, and faculty members became more departmentally focused, academic advisors with knowledge of electives and coursework became more important and began to be appointed from among the faculty (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968). In 1876, the president of the Johns Hopkins University, Daniel Coit Gilman, established the first system of faculty advisors and in 1889, President Gilman appointed Edward Herrick Griffin “Chief of Faculty Advisors” (White & Khakpour, 2006). In the early 1900s, academic advising was still seen as a function of the faculty and had not yet achieved status as its own endeavor, separate from counseling and psychological services. This may have been the case because faculty members were still the main sources of academic advising, while the nonacademic experiences were the responsibility of counselors who arrived on campuses as part of the mental health and vocational guidance movements of the early twentieth century (Zhang, 2016).

After World War II and the establishment of the GI Bill which sent an influx of veterans to colleges and universities, there was a growing need for specialized professionals who could connect students with the right academic experiences for them (Thelin, 2004). For the most part, universities and colleges were creating and implementing their own models for academic advising, whether it be specialized professional staff or departmental faculty members (Zhang, 2016). Crookston (1972) encouraged colleges to seek a more standardized framework for advising and started a conversation within the professional community about how advising was

more than course selection. By 1977, a national conference on academic advising was organized to allow professionals the opportunity to discuss the topic of academic advising and best practices (Zhang, 2016). Two years later, in 1979, the National Academic Advising Association known as NACADA was established with 429 charter members and has grown to more than 12,000 members today (Cook, 2009). By 1981, the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) formally designated “academic advising” as a descriptor in higher education (Zhang, 2016).

As higher education faces the challenges of the twenty-first century, academic advising has changed by building upon the academic foundations of advising and adopting the language of instruction, specifically the notion of learning outcomes which can be utilized in other forms of advising as well (Keeling, 2004). Academic advising finds its roots in its faculty-based foundations, the introduction of a developmental angle, and the adoption of learning outcomes. These historical facts, when considered together, more clearly represent the work of advising as a student-centered, and consequently a learner-centered, profession within higher education (Zhang, 2016). It is from this baseline of academic advising that other student-centered forms of advising stem.

Best Practices for Student Engagement

Lester (2013) defines engagement as behavior that creates ties with institutions and builds students’ desire to work (p. 3). Involvement in co-curricular activities can boost engagement among university students. Reports issued by national organizations such as the American College Personnel Association (ACPA, 1996) and the Joint Task Force on Student Learning (1998) acknowledge the shared responsibility of academic and non-academic staff for student learning (Bresciani et al., 2004). This shared responsibility means that university professionals

are just as accountable for student engagement as faculty and academic staff. Professional staff who focus on student engagement are typically part of student leadership, involvement, or activities offices. The National Association for Campus Activities (NACA) was created to connect professionals to promote enhancement of the student experience. Although it was founded in 1960, the cooperative booking conference didn't become the National Association for Campus Activities (NACA) until 1982, establishing with the foundations of education, entertainment, and engagement.

The Competencies Provided by the National Association for Campus Activities (NACA)

The National Association for Campus Activities (NACA) empowers professionals to amplify the campus experience through inclusive learning, meaningful connections, and engaging entertainment that transforms college communities. Their educational initiatives serve as a foundation for program planning, execution, and assessment. Among the Competencies for Campus Activities Professionals listed on the NACA website, I have examined three competencies that will serve as best practices during the implementation of the co-curricular advising program I will detail in the following chapter. The highlighted competencies are organizational development and advising, campus culture and community building, and program and event management (NACA Professional Competencies, n.d.). Each includes its own skill set relevant for campus activities. Student affairs professionals should be able to both effectively teach as well as personally demonstrate mastery of these competencies.

Organization Development and Advising includes the following skill set for students and professionals to practice: Relationship Development, Training, Fiscal Management, Marketing & Branding, Experiential Leadership Learning, Strategic Planning, and Recruitment & Retention. Arguably the most relevant competencies under the Organization Development and Advising

umbrella are experiential leadership learning and recruitment and retention. Proficiency in experiential leadership learning looks like effectively mentoring students, facilitating student reflection, and providing appropriate advice or feedback. Professionals responsible for improving co-curricular experiences will have the skills to guide students in their own leadership development as well as develop their own leadership skills. Proficiency in recruitment and retention includes guiding students and organizations in identifying and successfully recruiting new participants as well as evaluating success in retaining member participation in organization operations.

Campus Culture & Community Building competencies, seen below, seek to create and cultivate affinity with the institution. Campus activities professionals need to understand, work within, and when applicable, challenge and preserve institutional culture, expectations, and traditions (NACA Professional Competencies, n.d.). These include: Institutional Culture & Expectations, Institutional History, Campus Politics, and Cultivating Sense of Belonging. The most relevant skills within the Campus Culture and Community Building umbrella are institutional culture and cultivating a sense of belonging. Professionals proficient in the institutional competency can understand and explain the institutional culture to those a part of the campus community and those outside the community. There is also continuous review and adaptation of programs and services to meet institutional expectations and affect change in the campus culture when necessary.

Program & Event Management Competencies consist of various skills that are required to effectively manage both continuing programs and distinct events, including administrative, relational, and student development programs (NACA Professional Competencies, n.d.). The skills included in the Program and Event Management Competency are as follows: Policy

Knowledge, Development, & Management, Assessment & Data Management, Technology, Legal Issues & Risk Management, Crisis Management, Networking & Business Relationships, Event Support, and Intentionality in Student Learning. The most relevant skills within this competency are networking and intentionality. Professionals proficient in networking and business relationships can identify key partners for programs and effectively communicate in a professional manner. Proficiency in student learning intentionality means facilitating student learning through campus activities programs, developing outcomes, and designing programs and events to accomplish those outcomes, and finally guiding students to articulate their learning through involvement in campus activities. A successful program touches all the professional competencies listed above, encouraging student experiential learning as the primary goal of the department.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed best practices for engagement, shared literature pertaining to the importance of advising, and analyzed the history of not only student affairs engagement efforts, but also student activities and co-curricular involvement. The insights provided above demonstrate the necessity for a more intentional university driven engagement efforts to better support students in co-curricular endeavors. In the following chapter, I will detail a proposal for a co-curricular advising program including marketing research, professional advisors, and tools for assessment. I provide a proposed timeline, budget, and detailed instructions for a successful program launch. This document, until this point, has been setting the stage for a thematic concern of poor engagement efforts. The following chapters are responsible for detailing my proposed programmatic intervention designed to remedy said thematic concern, a university wide co-curricular advising program.

Chapter 4: Program Intervention

Introduction to the Concern

During my graduate school interview, I was asked, “what would you fix about higher education with a magic wand and a million dollars?” At first, I was hesitant to validate my input because overall, my undergraduate experience was great. Once I began thinking about what I would do differently, if I could go back, the answer became obvious. I wish I had been more involved in activities outside of my studies. After the initial shock of transitioning to college life wore off, I felt like I had missed my opportunity to participate. I was unaware of the positive impact co-curricular involvement would have on my education. Buckley and Lee (2018) list improvement of mental and physical health among benefits of co-curricular involvement. Daniyal et al. (2012) list benefits such as “self-efficacy, satisfaction, feelings of support and institutional challenge, retention, academic achievement and intellectual engagement, enhanced understanding of others, deepened sense of spirituality, and practical skill acquisition such as interview skills and networking abilities” (p. 6). The development of these skills can be improved and grown through involvement opportunities which can be cultivated through co-curricular advising departments.

Typically, universities spend thousands of dollars on first-year student programming such as orientation and first year experience courses designed to familiarize students with the university (Schneider, 2010). First-year students are taken through every process the university introduces, including how to get involved in student organizations. After the first year, however, students are no longer catered to as they are at the start of their journey (Schneider, 2010). If they miss the window of opportunity during the first year, they feel less inclined to get involved (Birbeck et al., 2021). Students, especially second-, third-, and fourth-year students, are left to

find for themselves in an important area of their university experience, co-curricular involvement.

In this chapter I present my proposed intervention, a program that supports students in their co-curricular involvement efforts. In addition, the proposed program also helps those students who would otherwise not engage with the university community outside of their studies to understand the positive impact co-curricular involvement can have on their experiences. Below, I will introduce my programmatic intervention, review how my professional experience has influenced the intervention, the professional competencies the program accomplishes, a detailed outline of the proposed co-curricular advising program, and literary resources that influenced the chapter.

Introducing the Program

The title of my intervention is Co-Curricular Advising (CCA) and is a program intended to increase the number of participants involved in co-curricular activities. CCA is focused on helping undergraduate students understand the many benefits to participating in structured experiences outside of the academic space. Examples of these experiences might include: participating in university-sponsored student organizations, employment (both on and off campus), and volunteering at local community organizations such as libraries and animal shelters. The purpose of CCA is to provide a more structured pathway to increase student involvement and to ensure there are student affairs professionals ready and able to help support students as they find themselves outside of the classroom.

There is one primary goal for the CCA program: improve undergraduate student's overall well-being and sense of belonging. There are also three organizational goals (OG) that will be met through the completion of the primary goal including: (OG1) increase student involvement

outside of academic spaces, (OG2) improving retention rates, and (OG3) improving graduation rates.

Table 4. 1

Goals of the Program

Goal	Description	Measure
Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve undergraduate student's overall well-being and sense of belonging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Survey for well-being self-evaluation
OG1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase student involvement outside of academic spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20% increase in co-curricular activities by year one of the program. • 40% increase in co-curricular activities by year two of the program.
OG2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving retention rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attrition rates drop by 30% by year one of the program • Attrition rates drop by 45% by year two of the program
OG3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving graduation rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20% increase in graduations by year one of the program. • 40% increase in graduation by year two of the program.

Note: This table outlines goals for the co-curricular advising program.

The primary goal is measured by a survey. Students will self-evaluate their well-being and sense of belonging after participating in the co-curricular advising program. Organizational goal achievement is measured with quantitative results monitored through university records.

Measurable figures will be tracked semester to semester through comprehensive reports.

Theory to Practice

Increased support encouraging student involvement is an issue I feel passionately about. My undergraduate experiences, lacking in co-curricular involvement, influenced my research into advising systems for getting students involved. My feeling of missing the opportunity to become involved led me to strive for creating a system of advisors so future students have the

support to find their engagement to campus. In my professional experience, I have seen firsthand the benefits of student/staff mentoring relationships can have. As a mentor working with orientation leaders, I have been able to advise them in their degree paths, their internship searches, and their professional goals. It was the relationships I built with students through orientation that reaffirmed my proposal to appoint advisors to help students better engage with the university.

The brief internship that I held in the Office of Student Leadership and Involvement, working with student organizations, enlightened me to the overwhelming options provided by student involvement. Numerous student organizations can create an overwhelming decision for students and with little opportunity for professional staff to provide guidance, student engagement plummeted. The co-curricular advising program seeks to remedy this difficulty in encouraging student engagement by creating a space for professional staff advising, engagement opportunity matching, and support for co-curricular activity participation.

Professional Competencies

The American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association for Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) collaborated on a set of Professional Competencies designed to standardize professional efforts to succeed in their work with students. Two of these competencies have influenced the Co-Curricular Advising project detailed above: Student Learning & Development and Advising & Supporting. The student Learning and Development Competency seeks to accomplish designing intentional programs to promote student learning and development that are based on current research on student learning and development theories. Another outcome accomplished by this competency is to create learning outcomes to measure

progress toward achieving the goal set by the program. Both outcomes will be utilized by the co-curricular advisors to ensure student learning and development.

The Advising & Supporting competency seeks to improve the holistic wellness of ourselves, our students, and our colleagues. This improvement of wellness can be accomplished through facilitating student reflection to make meaning from their experiences in order to expand the students' involvement. The co-curricular advisors will consistently support their students by seeking opportunities to expand their own knowledge and skills in relevant best practices and engagement opportunities.

ACPA has also drafted statements to help student affairs professionals to improve the student experience. One of their many publications regarding student affairs professional competencies is the "Student Learning Imperative." This document records a set of proposed guidelines for a learning-driven student affairs division where professionals can "intentionally create the conditions that enhance student learning and personal development" ("Student Learning Imperative" p. 1). The five characteristics outlined in the document intend to redefine the goals of student affairs to center around student learning and personal development. The co-curricular advising proposal detailed below is a re-centering of student learning to include experiential learning as well as academic learning. The Student Learning Imperative states "student affairs must model what we wish for our students: an ever-increasing capacity for learning and self-reflection" ("Student Learning Imperative" p. 3). The advising model is the next step in the student engagement evolution that student affairs professionals can use to model that capacity for learning and change.

Programmatic Intervention Proposal

Buckley & Lee (2018) argue that extracurricular involvement helps develop transferrable skills such as communication, teamwork, problem solving, and self-confidence, improving academic performance as well as professional development. To encourage student involvement at all stages of the college experience, I propose a program, perhaps adjacent to student leadership and involvement offices, that is responsible for making sure students are sufficiently involved beyond their studies. Table 4.2 shows an approximate timeline for creation and implementation of the program, which would include a marketing campaign to raise campus awareness of the importance of involvement and the benefits to overall college experiences.

Table 4. 2

Proposed Program Timeline

Timeline			
Needs to be done	Part of Budget?	Due by	Notes
Co-curricular Advisor Hiring	Yes	Feb 22	8-10 Advisors (professional or graduate staff)
Advisor Training	Yes	Feb - June 22	
Marketing Materials created	Yes	June -August 22	
Marketing Materials Review	No	August 22	
Marketing Materials Printed	Yes	Aug 22	Posters, Flyers, Social Media, Yard Signs
Campus partner meeting	No	August 22	Discuss Marketing materials & program launch, Schedule follow up for Program launch support
Questionnaire Creation	Maybe	Fall 22	

Matching system creation	Maybe	Fall 22	
Matching system review	No	October 22	Testing for bugs
Campus Partner Follow-up	No	Nov 22	Updates, final questions
Program Launch	No	Jan 23	
Form Launch	No	Jan 23	
Participant info collection	No	Feb 23	Rolling collection and meeting
Advisor Matching	No	Feb 23	
Initial Meetings	No	Feb 23	

Note: This table is a suggested timeline for establishing the co-curricular advising program proposed.

A year before the program’s proposed launch date, eight to ten co-curricular advisors will be recruited through online job postings (see Appendix D). Graduate students and non-Master's level professional staff will be considered for the position. The advisor training will take place during the spring semester where newly hired staff will research co-curricular advising benefits, familiarize themselves with opportunities available for student engagement opportunities, and review advising best practices.

In the summer months before the program launch, the advisors will use their research to design marketing materials based on research surrounding the benefits of co-curricular involvement (see Appendix B). Once the marketing materials are created and printed, the program coordinator will host a campus partner meeting to discuss the purpose and goals of the program and encourage cross campus collaboration for the program launch. There will be at least two campus partner meetings to ensure all departments understand the purpose of co-curricular involvement and advising.

In the fall semester before program launch, an advisor will create a questionnaire (see Appendix A) to gauge students' interests, previous involvement, and how much they wish to participate outside of academics. The program coordinator will send this questionnaire digitally to the entire undergraduate population during winter session or just before the beginning of spring semester.

While the questionnaire is being created, an advisor will create a digital matching system to compile student responses and pair co-curricular advisors with specific student populations such as second-year students or graduating seniors. Upon their return to campus in the spring, each student would meet with their assigned co-curricular advisor to review their results and come up with a plan for each student to find an involvement opportunity that suits them. Frequency of advising sessions will be determined by student and advisor during their initial meeting.

At the end of each student /advisor meeting, the participants would fill out the exit ticket form (see Appendix C) together. The exit ticket, which includes recommendations for next steps, will serve as a hard copy of the advising session. Each advisor would be available for students to revisit later, in case they want to change their involvement schedule, and to review transferrable skills that can then be used on a resume.

External Resources

In my research, I found universities utilizing similar questionnaires and co-curricular advisors to boost involvement but never together to benefit students. In some cases, questionnaires are provided for students to self-gauge their interests and review a list of recommended student organizations on their own. There are also cases of professional staff available to meet to discuss involvement opportunities, although I have not been able to find

examples of questionnaires and staff to review questionnaires at one university. I believe by combining these programs, we are creating the ideal circumstances for involvement. There are many studies (Buckley & Lee, 2018; Kilgo et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2021) attributing a sense of belonging, academic success, and retention to co-curricular involvement (Gopalan & Brady, 2019).

After comparing data from students at different stages of their college career with different levels of involvement, Humphrey and Lowe (2017) concluded first and foremost that engagement and sense of belonging are strongly connected. Haber-Curran (2019) explained the importance of utilizing the term co-curricular vs. extra-curricular to emphasize the importance of involvement being complementary to education and not as an experience that is extra or separate from academic learning. I did, however, have trouble finding instances of university assisted co-curricular engagement efforts designed to get more students involved. In the co-curricular advising model, student success can be defined as sense of belonging, retention, and improved academic performance. This standardized definition paves the way for assessments, outlined in the following chapter, to measure quantitative figures such as retention and qualitative characteristics such as sense of belonging.

Conclusion

Educators can improve sense of belonging, academic performance, and retention rates by ensuring students feel connected to campus beyond their classes through encouraging co-curricular involvement (Brothen & Wambach, 2004). I am proposing a department responsible for ensuring student engagement and co-curricular activity experiences personalized to fit each students' needs. Though my research is ongoing, I will use sources such as Buckley and Lee (2018), Haber-Curran (2019), Humphrey and Lowe (2017), Kerr and Stirling (2015) and more to

help me explain the benefits of my proposed programmatic intervention as well as potential roadblocks to my research.

Chapter 5: Implementation and Evaluation

Introduction

In Chapter Four, I detailed an intervention designed to increase student engagement and co-curricular involvement. In this chapter, I outline the proposed timeline and budget for program implementation. After breaking down program execution step by step, I outline allocation of funds and suggestions for funding sources. I then review theories about leadership skills required of professionals looking to implement this program. I also discuss forms of assessment and the goals achieved by assessing the program on a regular basis and conclude with a look into the future of co-curricular advising.

Program Implementation

To implement the programmatic intervention detailed in Chapter Four, I have created the ideal timeline from proposal to program launch. The co-curricular advising program is easily implemented in one year. The goal for the timeline is to launch advising sessions in the spring semester. Thus, the program should begin a year prior to the expected launch date, with a co-curricular advising hiring. For example, if the program was going to begin in February 2023, then the advisors would be hired in February 2022. The advisors will be thoroughly trained during the spring and summer. Training for advisors will include campus specific information, such as student services available and opportunities for campus and community engagement, best practices for engagement, and opportunities to research scholarly sources about the importance of co-curricular engagement. The advisors would spend the spring semester becoming experts on engagement, the student populations they will be serving, and transferrable skills and hirability.

The next step of the process is a marketing campaign designed to increase awareness of the benefits of co-curricular involvement. Using research detailed in Chapter Three and any outside research the advisors would like to participate in, advisors will create marketing materials such as posters, social media campaigns, and more (see Appendix B). While these materials are being created, I also plan to have a campus partner meeting to inform the university departments about the new addition to the division of student affairs and the purpose of the co-curricular advisors. The goal is to inform campus partners of this service for students and the timeline in which it will launch.

Sometime during summer and fall sessions, advisors will create an online questionnaire to survey student interests. The questionnaire would gauge information such as previous involvement in activities outside of the classroom, level of involvement the student is seeking, and what their interests are outside of academics (see Appendix A). At the end of the fall semester and over break, the department would send the questionnaire to all students, especially marketed at those students who are not yet involved. This will enable the department to electronically collect information including how often a student would like to participate in their activity, what special interests students have, and how they would like their engagement to complement their academics. The department will use this information to pair each student with a trained advisor who would reach out to set up a meeting. The goal would be to have all information collected and all students assigned to advisors by the time campus opens for the spring semester.

The final stage of the campaign would begin in January with advisor and student one-on-one meetings. The advisors would review the questionnaire information with each student and recommend opportunities on campus or in the community to encourage student engagement. The

available opportunities could include student organizations, athletics, employment, or volunteering. At the end of each student/advisor meeting, the participants would fill out the exit ticket form (see Appendix C) together so the student has a hard copy of the advisor's recommendations. The exit ticket includes recommendations for either getting involved or exploring available opportunities, as well as next steps for advising sessions. According to the timeline, set up by the advisor and student and listed on the exit ticket, the student and advisor may set up more than one meeting until the student finds co-curricular involvement that satisfies their interests and provides them with educational experiences outside of the classroom. It is ultimately the goal of this program for students to be more intentionally engaged in activities outside of academic spaces and use the skills they learn in other spheres of their lives.

Funding

The proposed co-curricular advising department would require funding. I am proposing a budget of \$500,000 to accomplish program goals. The first instance of funding necessary would be to staff the department. I am projecting the need for eight to ten co-curricular advisors earning between \$40,000 and \$45,000 a year. The budget for hiring staff becomes between \$320,000 and \$450,000. The remaining \$50,000 or so would be reserved for training modules for advisors and staff, preparing them for this new role.

Next, advisors would be responsible for creating and print marketing materials. I am estimating \$1,000 in graphic design and printing costs for all marketing materials. For an institution of about 15,000 students, I would recommend printing at least 100 posters on 8.5x11 paper to hang in residence halls, academic buildings, and other common areas on campus. I would also suggest ten to twenty larger posters for higher visibility for important facts. I also

foresee about \$1,000 worth of incentives necessary for assessment purposes as students are more receptive to surveys when there is a prize involved.

Table 5. 1

Budget for Co-Curricular Advising

Budget Line Item	Cost
Co-curriculum advisor salaries (40,000-45,000, 8-10 advisors)	\$320,000-450,000
Training Modules	\$50,000
Graphic design and printing (Marketing materials)	\$1,000
Incentives (To encourage students in assessment efforts)	\$1,000

Note: Sample budget for Co-Curricular advising intervention.

Much of the co-curricular advising budget would come from the university's overall budget. I do, however, suggest contacting national organizations such as National Association for Campus Activities (NACA), American College Personnel Association (ACPA), and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) with funding requests for aspects of the project including training or advisor/ student matching systems. There may also be opportunities, if executed at a public institution, for federally funded grants. Additional, donor opportunities from university endowments and foundations should be considered.

Leadership Theories

The proposal of this program would require a campus leader willing to stand their ground for the advancement of student engagement. Northouse and Rowe (2007) described leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. The common goal, in this instance, is student co-curricular engagement. As a champion for student engagement, I would be implementing two leadership theories to convince university administrators to follow through on the program.

A leader categorized by Participative Theory is defined as someone who encourages participation and seeks input from the group (Ololube, 2015). Utilizing this theory, I would welcome suggestions for program modifications to be flexible enough to implement co-curricular advising. I would hope the administrators would be willing to open communication and collaboration in advancing co-curricular engagement. A leader categorized by Relationship Theory engages with others, creating connection that results in increased motivation and participation (Ololube, 2015). Utilizing this theory, I would build connections with all staff and administrators involved in implementation of co-curricular advising. According to the theory, the relationships I build with those involved in the project would benefit programmatic procedures and motivate everyone to create a beneficial program.

In addition to Participative and Relational Theories, I utilize the five encompassing practices compiled by Kouzes and Posner (1983). The first leadership practice that will benefit good decision making is to inspire a shared vision. It is better to go into a situation with an idea of how you would like it to conclude to set a goal for everyone involved. The term 'shared' is also extremely important because it is difficult to achieve a goal if it is not shared by everyone participating. It will also make challenging the process, the next practice beneficial to leadership, more difficult. Innovation and growth are important aspects of leadership that not only benefit the process which everyone is involved in, but also the team members who grow as a result. In motivating others to think outside the box, the leader is encouraging them to grow and challenge what they already know. A leader can't act on their own and must rely on their teammates as much as the teammates rely on them. In cooperating to achieve a goal, the leader is enabling others to act.

Of the six leadership styles, autocratic, participative, laissez-faire, transactional, transformational, and servant, it is my goal that the co-curricular counselors use a transformational leadership style. I would hope the counselors lead with encouragement, helping students discover their potential not only while searching for channels of involvement but also in converting their co-curricular activity skills into marketable professional skills. The goal of this program is to engage with students and to have them engage with the university, so the hands-on style of transformational leadership will be perfect for ensuring students get the support they need.

Assessment

In every program, the opportunity for assessment is the opportunity for growth. It is important for university administrators and staff to assess the weaknesses and places for improvement of their projects to improve circumstances and ensure best possible results. In the case of co-curricular advising, there needs to be assessment first prior to the marketing campaign. The students should be able to identify two benefits of co-curricular engagement, after viewing marketing materials and/or meeting with an advisor. It is also pertinent that the advising sessions be assessed as well. Ideally, students will be able to list three clubs, organizations, or opportunities that will add to their college career after meeting with the co-curricular advisor to discuss possibilities available to them. These assessments can be executed through student reflection meetings with the advisors, surveys, and tabling. The exit ticket that students complete with their co-curricular advisor would also serve as a useful assessment for the overall effectiveness of the program.

After each one-on-one meeting, the advisor would be responsible for assessing the growth of each student. Executing reflection meetings, asking qualitative questions, and using

active listening skills will assist advisors in assessing student co-curricular engagement progress. In a more official capacity, the department will send a survey to each participant at the end of each semester to gauge effectiveness and satisfaction with the program. Using feedback from these surveys, the co-curricular advising office can make necessary changes to improve functionality of the program. There will also be opportunities for tabling in popular student common areas to gauge general understanding and awareness of the benefits of co-curricular involvement.

Finally, the overall effectiveness of the proposed intervention will be seen in student participation rates with organizations across the campus and local community. This information should be readily available via attendance counts from events or can be collated from student surveys. The ultimate success of the intervention will help support the creation of well-rounded and involved students, ready to take on the challenges of life after college.

Looking Ahead

Although this program seeks to assist all students in making co-curricular connections on campus, participation will not likely reach 100% of students. Increasing awareness of the program will hopefully increase the number of participants each year with the goal of helping as many students connect with their campus as possible. Most of the examples and references in the programmatic intervention sections of this work theorize about a university of about 10,000-15,000 students. I can foresee a smaller university possibly having trouble with funding while larger institutions may have trouble staffing a department with enough advisors to serve a larger population. Ideally, once students become involved in beneficial activities, advisors would not need to meet with the students as often, lightening the caseload for the staff. In a perfect world, students would find the co-curricular opportunities most beneficial to them without the support

of professional staff but, until then, something more needs to be done for disengaged student populations. One way to address these challenges would be to include additional support from already involved students, or students who are already significantly engaged in co-curricular activities on and off campus. Utilizing these students as volunteers could lighten the workload of the co-curricular advisees and help build further rapport with students who are not yet involved and engaged outside the classroom.

After a few years of implementation, one way to extend the reach of the co-curricular advising program would be to examine and analysis the data of the student demographics of those who use the service. A department only serving specific populations, it not serving its purpose. Each year, the advisors should analyze the demographic information attributed to the students they are advising. Then, the student populations lacking in support can become the target of outreach efforts moving forward.

Conclusion

As a student who once felt unsupported in co-curricular involvement and is now entering the field of student affairs, I feel as though this programmatic intervention is a necessary addition to any student affairs division. A co-curricular advising program would not only encourage engagement but would increase student success and retention rates as well. This department is beneficial to both students and the institutions. In this thesis, I have detailed research on student engagement and history of student affairs and involvement. Chapter Four included a detailed proposal for a programmatic intervention to support co-curriculum involvement via dedicated student advisors. In this final chapter assessment tools for a necessary addition to colleges and universities were shared as well as considerations for the future and budget projections. The goal

of co-curricular advising is to encourage engagement and the instructions for success are listed above. I can only hope to one day see this programmatic intervention in action.

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Appendices

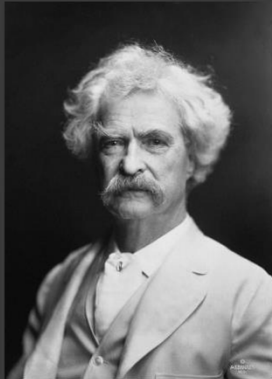
Appendix A: Questionnaire Questions

This is a list of sample questions for a student questionnaire.

1. I want my involvement to...
 - a. Distract me from school stress
 - b. Build upon previous interests
 - c. Complement my chosen career path
 - d. Further my future career goals
2. I want to participate in my activity or opportunity
 - a. As often as possible
 - b. Once a week
 - c. Once a month
 - d. Periodically
3. I want to use this opportunity to
 - a. Meet new people
 - b. Learn something new
 - c. Blow off steam
 - d. Gain professional experience

Appendix B: Marketing Posters

"Don't let your studies interfere with your education."
~Mark Twain



Experience education outside of class too.


Student Organizations • Campus Employment • Volunteer off-campus • Student Leadership



We noticed you
haven't gotten
involved!

Did you know students involved
outside of class tend to...

- ☆ Have better grades
- ☆ Feel more successful
- ☆ Find jobs more easily



email CCA@university.edu
to learn more



Did you know...

INVOLVEMENT IMPROVES

- **Time management**
- **Leadership skills**
- **Relationship Building**
- **Communication**
- **Other resume-worth skills**

Get involved for all
the right reasons

Appendix C: Exit Ticket

Name _____

Student will

Attend Join Research


Chat with Think about

_____ clubs or organizations
before _____

Next meeting _____

Will reach out Would like counselor
to reach out

Notes:

 **MaryClare Rae**
MR848733@wcupa.edu
Lawrence 202
(610) 888-1930

Appendix D: Job Description

Adapted from Kirtland Community College

Co-Curricular Advisor

Co-curricular advising at (university name) is a developmental process that considers students' learning needs, goals, and interests. Co-curricular advisors promote student success and increase student enrollment and retention by promoting and recruiting for programs, referring students at risk or in need of additional resources with the primary objective to assist with making informed decisions concerning their experiential education goals.

PRIMARY DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Advises students about available opportunities for students such as student organizations, employment (both on and off campus), and volunteering at local community organizations such as libraries and animal shelters
- Audits, monitors, and evaluates individual student engagement and involvement.
- Assists students in the development of an experiential education plan including choosing a course of action for further engagement.
- Educates students about course planning and registration processes, refers to available on-and off-campus resources to meet individual needs.
- Makes appropriate referrals to students perceived as at-risk, acts as an advocate as appropriate.
- Maintains up-to-date knowledge about the College's programs and requirements, consults with contacts at various partnering campus departments regarding engagement opportunities.
- Communicates electronically and in person with university students, staff, faculty, and community partners.
- Participates in on and off campus events promoting Kirtland Community College, assists with orientation programs.
- Processes progress reports for advisees.
- Maintains administrative documents and confidential student records.
- Develops and promotes internal communication and resource sharing in order to benefit student success.
- Provides recommendations for continuous improvement to all services for co-curricular advising purposes and to integrate practices and technology aimed at improving student service
- Gathers, develops and promotes best practices for continuous improvement
- Participates in individual and team professional development, remains current with technology used to provide advising services.
- Performs other related duties as assigned.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

- Bachelor's degree in the humanities or a related field.

- One to three years' experience in any form of advising or related careers in post-secondary education, or a combination of education and experience commensurate with the requirements of the position
- Demonstrated interpersonal communication skills.
- Experience in group presentations.
- Ability to process and maintain confidential information.
- Ability to work effectively with individuals of varying backgrounds, abilities, outlooks, ages, and nationalities