

Student Affairs
2007-2012 Strategic Plan
Executive Summary

In May 2006, the student services leadership team gathered for two-day retreat at St. Mary's Monastery in Rock Island, IL. From this experience we forged the draft of the first comprehensive strategic plan document for the division. Over the next year we refined the language, vetted the document among stakeholders, and wrestled with how the strategic plan became our everyday work rather than on top of our everyday work. In that year, we committed to viewing our roles as interconnected with each other and the university so as to better understand our place and purpose.

Now the Fall of 2012, we are different as a division. Pragmatically, five of the original nine remain in their current positions. Reporting lines for student services have shifted to academic affairs and we have become student affairs. Philosophically, we see a deeper appreciation for our service to and influence of the university. We have forged deeper collaborative relationships within and beyond our division. Functionally we have come to view St. Ambrose students as collectively ours, belonging not to some but to the university as a whole. Most, we have gained a sense of place as professionals, as colleagues, and as Ambrosians by knowing that in being different we can make a difference in the lives of those we serve.

What follows is an executive summary of our 5-year strategic plan outcomes, arranged under the 4 plan goals:

Plan Goal # 1: We will foster on-going personal growth opportunities for each student.

The objectives of this goal were designed to extend the St. Ambrose experience by fostering growth and development within each individual student. To that end, the highlights of our work include:

- To emphasize connectedness and relationships, the student services new student orientation session evolved into a focus on student life, moving from a panel presentation of information given, to a more in-depth conversation-based format allowing parents and students understand keys to success, discuss expectations they have, and receive information desired.
- A committee of Student Affairs New Student Seminar instructors, developed a common curriculum based on the learning outcomes from the CAS (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education) and Learning Reconsidered I & II. The program was then piloted and presented to the Director of Retention and Director of the First Year Experience for distribution and adaption by all NSS instructors.
- A peer mentor program was designed and piloted for students to guide fellow students through the trials and tribulations of college. Students were trained on skills of communication, conflict resolution, decision making, compassion and compassion fatigue.
- A wellness plan was developed for the university under the guidance of faculty, staff, and dining services committee. The plan focuses on programming, facilities, assessment, and initiatives that will proactively encourage students to maximize their personal wellness through a balanced spiritual, intellectual, ethical, social, psychological, and physical approach.

Plan Goal #2: The Student Affairs Division will foster a sense of social responsibility in students.

The objectives of this goal were to encourage habits of engagement in and service to the broader community in all students. To that end, the highlights of our work include:

- The division initiated the development and adoption of a St. Ambrose citizenship statement to articulate our common values. This statement has become a visible marker in e-mail footers, graduation speeches, and university presentations.

- To better represent the breadth of student learning, the division comprehensively studied and considered the creation of a co-curricular transcript. Outcomes for the study revealed that the development of such a document would be redundant and less effective than current practices.
- We established a baseline report of service in conjunction with Campus Ministry and established a system for recording the hours of service for which the division is responsible. Much of this data educates the annual Presidential Honor Roll Award application.
- Together with Campus Ministry, we examined mechanisms for highlighting, acknowledging, and rewarding volunteerism. The outcomes included a proposal for service honor cords at graduation and similar recognition opportunities that are currently under review.
- The Division instituted a greater emphasis on welcoming and supporting diverse identities and created the coordinator of intercultural life and leadership position to support such efforts. Many new diversity programs were initiated, with an emphasis on student-initiated action by working with students groups such as MACA, SOUP, Active Minds, and the international students. The division maintains leadership for and an active presence on the Diversity Work Group committee.

Plan Goal #3: We will foster a sense of community

The objectives of this goal were designed to develop and deepen a sense of connectedness and belonging within the division area of responsibility as well as the larger university. To that end, the highlights of our completed work include:

- We developed an opportunity for the St. Ambrose community to celebrate diversity and unique perspectives through participation in the annual Diversity Fest;
- We created a comprehensive summer orientation program that emphasizes opportunities to share personal narrative and what it means to be/become an Ambrosian;
- We now offer a collaborative, comprehensive and energized Welcome Week each fall semester that emphasizes our institutional values through events such as the Freshman Frenzy, Urban Plunge, Opening Convocation and Blessing of the Academic Year.
- Annual quarterly professional training and development for the division, under the leadership of the Training and Development Committee, with topics ranging from trends in the field of student development, personality assessments, geo-ethnic storytelling, and techniques for improved leadership and supervisory skills.
- We produced a comprehensive compilation of those campus traditions that ground us, seek to infuse meaning, and develop a sense of connection with all those who have shared in the St. Ambrose experience
- Using the annual and bi-annual institutional and divisional assessments that allow us to document the effectiveness of our work, to identify those areas in which we excel, and challenge us to improve student growth and learning.

Plan Goal 4: We will influence the University organizational culture.

The objectives of this goal were to encourage division personnel to collaboratively engage in the campus community, to contribute to the overall learning environment, and to actively contribute to the strategic vision of the university through our work. To that end, the highlights of our completed work include:

- To better serve our clients, a comprehensive electronic customer service training program was designed and implemented for all staff in the division. Staff members are often recognized for their exceptional efforts in assisting clients with their needs.
- To assess our effectiveness, Student Affairs developed standards of excellence based on professional organization criteria. The Training and Development Team (TDT) then provided training for ongoing professional development and awareness on these areas.

- For the purpose of guiding each student's holistic development, Student Services merged with Academic Affairs to become Student Affairs. The design was implemented to more intentionally integrate co-curricular and curricular programs for better utilization of resources and a deeper learning experience for students.
- The division implemented the utilization of various assessment tools for data collection to guide departmental expectations, programs, and initiatives. Also, we produced the first year in review to capture this data.
- To support the delivery of a holistic learning environment across campus, we placed strategic priority on functional programmatic collaboration across campus to influence our decision-making, offerings, and priorities.