

# Student Affairs Identity Crisis: Problem Handouts



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# Student Affairs Identity Crisis

## Problem Statement

For those unfamiliar with the student affairs profession, the term "identity crisis" can be confusing. The profession of student affairs originated with the Dean of Men position, which was designed to attend to student's character development, behavior, and non-academic problems. In many ways, employees in this field acted as surrogate parents to the students. As the needs of students grew, so did the role of the student affairs professional. The last major revolution in the profession occurred in the 1960s and 1970s with the abandonment of "in loco parentis" practices. The profession has since been attempting to define and assert itself as a significant force in college student education. This effort is manifested in an incredible variety of ways, and the role of the student affairs professional is different on each campus. A common core exists within the profession, stemming from units providing service (financial aid, dining services, security, career services) and units providing student support (residence halls, counseling services, multicultural centers, student health). A common core does not exist within the profession in regard to defining or delivering student education outside of the classroom. Various publications such as The Student Learning Imperative, The Boyer Report, reports from The National Survey of Student Engagement, and others describe the concept of "seamless learning," which connects in-class learning with out-of-class learning.

The effort to transform the profession of student affairs from a caretaking and problem resolution entity on campus to that which has a tangible educational mission contributes heavily to the idea of "identity crisis" and requires an in-depth exploration by those working on the college campus in a non-faculty, educator role. It is the opinion of the faculty developing this course that the students will not be well served by an examination of existing student affairs units, especially those found on the home campus. Students will face many problems facing current professionals and will use the problems to develop their vision of how this profession should be defined.

The actual problem has multiple layers and is manifested in many parts of the profession. The overall identity problem is introduced in the first gathering with the article "Collaborations and Partnerships" by Charles Schroeder in Higher Education Trends for the Next Century (ACPA web publication). The students begin with a formal process of framing the full problem and identifying information needs before being allowed to discuss solutions. The class meets bi-weekly for five hour periods and groups are provided work time in each session. During each period, a different aspect of the profession is addressed and discussed. For each aspect of the profession, students are given additional problems and issues that come directly from newspaper articles from around the country. The additional problems and assigned readings prompt exploration about current student issues, societal expectations of the profession, institutional culture, and leadership challenges.

The examination of the primary "identity" problem and the issues that exist in various aspects of the profession contribute to the final group assignment of developing a strategic plan for the entire profession, a job description for the ideal Vice President of Student Affairs, and ideal organizational chart and mission statement for a student affairs division.





# Student Affairs Identity Crisis

## Part 1: Article for Analysis

### *Item 1: Collaboration and Partnerships*

Charles C. Schroeder, Professor

Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri

A revolution is underway and student affairs must be willing to join the cause or be swept aside in the inevitable transformation that will occur. Nowhere is this revolution more apparent than in recent reports (Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, 1997; Wingspread Group on Higher Education, 1993) on the status of higher education that call for major reform of undergraduate education by connecting undergraduate experiences with student learning. The reports highlight major trends that are dramatically affecting the quality of undergraduate education; trends such as: the rapid rise in college costs; reduced faculty teaching loads; an emphasis on research over teaching; shifting economic agendas at the state and national levels; greater emphasis on access, affordability and accountability; accusations of inefficiency, duplication and waste; the emerging role of technology in transforming the campus; industry critique regarding the poor preparation of graduates; increasingly diverse student populations; deteriorating public trust in the higher education enterprise; and lack of service and institutional assistance to local communities and states. Colleges and universities are responding to these challenges by rethinking the large lecture halls, discreet academic departments, faculty tenure and other features that have defined traditional institutions for centuries. Schools are designing curriculums more relevant to employers, communities and students, and experimenting with innovative pedagogies that help bridge the gap between ideal academic standards and actual student performance. The challenges and trends highlighted by recent higher education reports are emerging from two very different cultural



perspectives—the managerial culture of governing boards, corporations and governmental agencies and the collegial culture of colleges and universities. These cultures are increasingly in conflict and the conflict simply reflects the opposite and at times, antagonistic, values and principles prized by members of each group. The managerial culture values productivity, efficiency, accountability, hierarchical organizational structures, technical leadership, a customer-orientation, and "bottom-line" results. These qualities are in stark contrast to those valued by the collegial culture which emphasizes autonomy, shared governance, qualitative (as opposed to quantitative) judgments, faculty prerogatives, peer leadership and merit. The constant struggle between these competing perspectives is limiting undergraduate education reform and threatening the future of student affairs. According to Rice (1998) what is needed is a vision of a new culture—a collaborative culture—that incorporates the most admirable qualities of the other two. The following qualities are associated with a collaborative culture: learning-centered; interdependent; bi-cultural; generative communication; pro-active; and systemically-oriented. Because student affairs organizations straddle the managerial and collegial cultures, they share many of the values prized by each; therefore, student affairs is in a favored position to provide leadership for the creation of a collaborative culture through developing partnerships with a variety of internal and external constituents to promote student learning and educational attainment.

Collaborative partnerships within and across organizational settings are flourishing as educational and service institutions cope with increased complexity and massive change. Because higher education and student affairs are faced with similar challenges, the importance of forging collaborative partnerships to enhance student learning is a central tenet of the Student Learning Imperative (ACPA , 1994)—"Student affairs professionals attempt to make seamless what are often perceived by students to be disjointed, unconnected experiences by bridging organizational boundaries and forging collaborative partnerships with faculty and others to enhance student learning." Similarly, the new document, Principles of Good Practice in Student Affairs (ACPA and NASPA 1997), emphasizes that, "Good practice in student affairs forges educational

partnerships that advance student learning."

Although collaboration is quite easy to extol, it is difficult to achieve. Staff in student affairs, for example, have historically kept their efforts focused almost exclusively within their organizational boundaries, rather than reaching out and assuming a broader, institutional perspective necessary for collaboration with internal constituents (i.e., faculty, academic administrators, etc.) as well as such external constituents as educational sectors (i.e., K-12 institutions, "feeder" high schools), community constituents (local businesses, not-for-profit organizations, social service agencies) and governmental organizations (municipal government; federal and state agencies; local legislative delegations). To develop effective collaborative partnerships with these constituents that address the previous list of challenges, certain obstacles and constraints must be acknowledged and overcome.

### **Obstacles and Constraints to Developing Collaborative Partnerships**

During the past 30 years, college and university enrollments have more than quadrupled. As institutions have become more complex, we have attempted to address complexities through specialization and, in the process, our organizations have become increasingly fragmented. Today many campuses—especially large public universities—are characterized by a constellation of independent principalities and fiefdoms, each disconnected from the others and from any common institutional purpose or transcending value. It is not uncommon for student affairs' divisions, colleges and schools to be quite autonomous, with different foci, priorities and expectations for staff, faculty and students. Our highly specialized, hierarchical organizations have led to increased compartmentalization, often resulting in what has popularly been described as "functional silos" or "mine shafts." These vertical structures, while often effective at promoting interaction within units, create obstacles to interaction, coordination and collaboration between units. Nowhere is this problem more apparent than with regard to the historical gap that separates academic affairs and student affairs. What prevents collaboration between the two groups on campus most directly involved with students? An abundant literature (Blake, 1979 and 1996; Kuh, 1997; Love, et al. 1993; and Whitt, 1996) suggests that a

variety of factors can prohibit collaboration, including: fundamental cultural differences between faculty and student affairs educators in terms of personality styles, educational preparation, values, and purposes; the historical separation of the formal curriculum from the informal co-curriculum; a prevailing view that the role of student affairs is ancillary, supplementary or complementary to the academic mission of the institution; competing assumptions about what constitutes effective undergraduate learning; and, different institutional expectations and rewards for academic faculty and student affairs educators. As Young (1996) indicates, these are not new concerns, but rather deeply imbedded issues that carry long histories within student affairs and higher education. Over 50 years ago, for example, the "A Student Personnel Point of View" enumerated many of these challenges and emphasized the need for collaboration between student personnel workers, faculty, and students to reform the campus community (Roberts, 1998). If obstacles such as these constrain collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs, then it is not surprising that collaborative initiatives that connect student affairs and various external constituents are equally challenging and, hence, rarely pursued.

***NOTE: Recommendations section of article omitted for purpose of allowing PBL groups the opportunity to frame team strategies.***

## **Conclusion**

Higher education is in the midst of a dramatic and profound change. Reform of undergraduate education is a priority for most colleges and universities. Increasing success rates, improving student learning productivity, developing civic leadership, enhancing multicultural understanding and achieving higher levels of educational attainment necessitate greater integration between curricular and co-curricular experiences. Addressing these imperatives requires the development of collaborative partnerships between student affairs and various internal and external constituencies. As suggested by the recent Kellogg Commission (1997) report entitled "Returning to Our Roots: The Student Experience," new forms of educational and administrative leadership are needed because, "Our challenges are no longer

technical issues of how to allocate rising revenues, but difficult adaptive problems of how to lead when conditions are constantly changing, resources are tight, expectations are high, and options are limited. We live in an age of transformational, not technical, change. Our leadership, like our institutions, must become transformational as well (p.v)." We can view these challenges as overwhelming threats, or as opportunities to transform undergraduate education by developing collaborative partnerships with important internal and external constituents. Such an effort is surely worthy of our time and attention.

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### ***Step 1 - The Problem***

1. How would you describe the problem? Develop a single-sentence definition.
2. How has the problem shown itself? Whom does it hurt, and how does it hurt them? Under what conditions does it hurt them?
3. How big is the problem? Is it getting worse?
4. What results can be expected to occur if the problem is not solved?
5. What is presently being done to meet the problem? In what ways are these efforts ineffective?

### ***Step 2 - Analysis of the Problem***

1. What causes led to the present problem? What conditions exist that allow the causes to act as they do?
2. Which of these causes are major and which are secondary?
3. Should solutions deal with the major causes of the problem, with the secondary causes, or with the symptoms of the problem?
4. What is the absolute minimum action that must be taken to address causes or symptoms of the problem?
5. What would an ideal solution to the symptoms or problems be?
6. What will your solutions cost in terms of person-power or other resources?
7. What are the boundaries that a solution must observe? Do social customs, institutions, laws, etc. place a boundary on the feasibility of possible solutions? Should any of these serve as additional criteria that possible solutions must meet?

### ***Step 3 - Decision and Actions***



# Student Affairs Identity Crisis

## Part 2

Additional items for consideration:



## ***Item 2***

To Whom It May Concern:

We are representing a Consumer Studies Leadership, Integrity and Change class. As leadership students and students of the University, we know that it is important to have power in numbers in order to achieve a goal. Through observation and personal experience, we have come to a conclusion that there is a lack of diversity in a number of dormitories here on campus. We are aware that the administration does encourage students who are minorities to live on Laird Campus versus the other parts of campus. Our class wants to do something about this. Our vision is to help promote cultural unity throughout the university environment with a direct focus on housing assignments. We wish to implement a Diversity Housing Program Plan in which all students of various ethnic backgrounds, cultures, sexual orientations, religions etc. will be represented fairly throughout the university housing facilities. With this plan, we intend to remove the current practices of housing segregation here at the University of Delaware. Our vision implementation will begin with the housing integration for the incoming freshman class of 2005. The Diversity Housing Plan will encourage all students to experience, learn and appreciate people of all cultures. We are asking for your organization's support in making our vision a reality. We would greatly appreciate your presence when we present our vision to the Housing Administration on November 23th, 2004 at 2:00pm. We would also appreciate any written support from your organization, regardless if you can or cannot represent yourself at the presentation. Please contact us if you feel that your organization would be able to support. We will contact you with the location at a later date.

Thank you for considering this.



### ***Item 3: College campus depression rates increase—Academic demands may trigger anxiety, stress***

By Gary Gangi

Published: Monday, January 26, 2004

The Round Up, online student newspaper New Mexico State University

CARBONDALE, Ill. - One in seven young adults battles depression. On the Southern Illinois University campus, this statistic calculates to 3,221 students. And, according to a recent study by the American Sociology Association, this number is on the rise.

The study, conducted at Kansas State University's counseling center, examined trends in college students regarding psychiatric problems over a 13-year period. The findings showed the number of students seen each year for depression-related illnesses doubled and the number of suicidal students tripled.

Clinical psychologist Katy Hoganbruen, who is the senior director of prevention for the National Mental Health Association, said initial signs of clinical depression typically occur between the ages of 18 and 25, about the time young people are enrolled at universities. "There are quite a few stressors for college students," Hoganbruen said. "With the demands of college life: academic performance, relationships, substance abuse and family, it may be hard for students to distinguish what is depression or just the blues."

Janet Coffman, director of the Counseling Center, said the university experience can be overwhelming for many students as they begin studies away from the familiarity of friends and family. She also believes the academic demands of college may trigger anxiety and stress-induced depression. "A lot of college students don't keep regular routines and might attribute their symptoms to other things or attempt to self-medicate with substance abuse, which usually means caffeine during the day and alcohol at night," said Barb Elam, Wellness Center coordinator. "This behavior may prolong the student's symptoms until they are near the end of their rope or contemplating suicide. It is better to get treatment earlier than later."

Depression is considered the "common cold" of psychiatric diseases and ranks second to cardiovascular diseases as most common ailments in the United States. Major depression is often difficult for university students to recognize due to the lifestyle habits of college students, which disguise many symptoms. The most identifiable symptoms of major depression are irritability, irregular sleep patterns (either insomnia or oversleeping), overwhelming feelings of anxiety, stress or sadness, fatigue, excessive crying, increased sexual activity, dramatic mood swings and difficulty making decisions. Most clinical assessments determine that if a person experiences five or more of these symptoms for more than two weeks they should seek professional help.

"A professional is really the only one who can determine whether it is clinical depression or the upcoming final exam," Hoganbruen said.

Depression may afflict any person at any time, however, people with a history of clinical depression within their families and those who experience traumatic events are more susceptible. College students also remain a high-risk group due to considerable life choices and changes they face in times of academic and emotional stress.



Elam said students should never ignore symptoms of depression or attempt to "cure" themselves. Instead, she advocates a healthy lifestyle that includes a normal sleeping pattern, good nutrition, meditation and exercise several times a week to combat minor depressive feelings.

<http://www.roundupnews.com/media/paper474/news/2004/01/26/News/College.Campus.Depression.Rates.Increase-587902.shtml>



#### ***Item 4: Univ. of Colorado parties to top of list***

Wednesday, August 30, 2003 CNN.Com

BOULDER, Colorado (AP)— The University of Colorado topped the list of party schools in the nation, while Brigham Young University was "stone-cold sober," according to the Princeton Review's latest survey.

The "Best 351 Colleges" survey, based on responses from more than 100,000 students at U.S. campuses, ranks colleges in such categories as "most religious students," "most beautiful campus" and "best campus food." The review, which has no affiliation with Princeton University, has been conducting the study since 1992.

Despite a six-year effort to curb binge drinking at the University of Colorado, the school ranked third in widespread use of marijuana, fourth in the prevalence of hard liquor consumption and 11th in the prevalence of beer usage, Princeton Review reported in its 2004 findings. CU also ranked first among schools where students study the least.

Last year, it came in at No. 8 on the party list.

Brigham Young University was ranked the top "stone-cold sober" school, according to the study, while Army's military academy at West Point, New York, was the hardest to get into.

Nearly 63 percent of students at the Boulder school binge drink, according to Bob Maust, coordinator of the A Matter of Degree Program, which tried to reduce binge drinking at CU. A Harvard study showed about 44 percent of college students nationwide binge drink.

CU student Alexandra Kass, 21, said her study habits haven't suffered at a university that also rated three out of four stars for academics in the survey. "If someone can't balance their social life and studying, then too bad for them," Kass said.

#### **Rankings under fire**

The "party school" category is based on questions focusing on the amount of alcohol and drug consumption, the amount of time students spend studying, and the popularity of fraternities and sororities.

University officials questioned the latest Princeton Review report. They said that the faculty also includes Nobel Prize winners and that numerous students have won awards. "If they want to study hard and play hard, they will get a great degree, but if they come here just to play hard, they won't be here long," said Ron Stump, CU's vice chancellor for student affairs.

The American Medical Association has criticized party school listings, saying they legitimize high-risk drinking and portray alcohol as an essential part of student life.

Princeton Review editorial director Robert Franek said the survey merely reports on conditions at the schools. Other top 10 party schools included the University of Wisconsin-Madison; Indiana University, Bloomington; University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia; University of Texas-Austin; The University of the South, Seawee, Tennessee; DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana; Saint Bonaventure University, Olean, New York; and the University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.



## **TOP TEN**

1. University of Colorado, Boulder
2. University of Wisconsin-Madison
3. Indiana University - Bloomington
4. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
5. Washington and Lee University
6. The University of Texas at Austin
7. The University of the South
8. DePauw University
9. St. Bonaventure University
10. University of Florida



# Student Affairs Identity Crisis

## Part 3

Additional items for consideration:





### ***Item 5: Students are giving colleges a lesson in free speech***

By Mary Beth Marklein,

USA TODAY College campuses, long viewed as forums for dissent and bastions of free speech, are looking more and more like legal battlegrounds.

In the second of what promises to be a series of lawsuits aimed at abolishing restrictions on student speech, a California student plans to file a lawsuit against his college in federal court today, saying limits on when, where and how he exercises his First Amendment rights are unconstitutional.

The legal challenge reflects the growing unease among civil liberties advocates, who argue that the range of restrictions on campus speech creates a dangerous chilling effect.

Some campus administrations, for example, want to restrict "chalking," in which students debate abortion, gay rights and other hot-button issues in multicolored messages on campus sidewalks.

Others—including Pennsylvania's Shippensburg University, sued last month—have developed speech codes declaring that words or actions that are "inflammatory, demeaning or harmful to others" are undeserving of protection.

And a growing number of campuses, including the University of Houston, University of Maryland and Florida State University, allow protests only in designated areas.

In today's lawsuit, student Christopher Stevens, 20, says Citrus Community College in Glendora, Calif., told him that he could conduct a "pro-America rally" outside the campus free-speech areas only if he did so as part of a registered club.

Instead, Stevens, 20, found a lawyer. "Constitutionally, we are not required to be part of any group to enjoy free speech," he says. "The school seems to think you have to be recognized by them before you can protest."

No particular incident prompted the year-old policy, but two men protesting abortion were arrested in November for stepping outside the zone, says Citrus College president Louis Zellers. He says it was adopted to ensure that demonstrations don't disrupt students from their studies and to reduce the potential for the protests to escalate into violence. The idea is "to protect not only the people who want to speak or demonstrate, but also our students who are intimidated by it," Zellers said.

He says the free-speech zones are centrally located. But critics argue they often are confined to slivers of a campus—less than 1% at Citrus College, Stevens says. Challenges are being coordinated by the Philadelphia-based Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), which says it plans more lawsuits. When challenged, West Virginia University, the University of Texas-Austin and other schools have backed down, declaring the entire campus a free-speech zone.



### ***Item 6: Macomb is a college town; open your eyes and smell the beer***

By Brendan Mulcrone

Published: Friday, October 17, 2003

The Western Courier, Western Illinois student newspaper

Western Illinois University students know we live in a college town.

But as for the residents of Macomb, I don't think it has come to their senses quite yet. It seems like many of them are like the Reed family.

According to an article in Wednesday's Western Courier, the Reed family lives on Adams Street and has been having problems with students.

I, for one, am disappointed in the students that have made asses out of themselves by threatening Macomb residents. I'm disappointed because they are the average college drunks. I thought more of the students here, but I guess I was wrong.

The students acting that way should be caught and punished to the extreme. This is to send a message to the rest of the students, saying it will not be tolerated in Macomb.

At the same time, I side with my fellow students. First off, the Reed family should have expected that the city and campus police would do the bare minimum. Students' dollars run this city. If it weren't for us, this city would be poorer than it already is.

The Reed family also made a mistake in living on the one of the most student-populated streets off campus. You can't go down Adams Street without seeing another student, no matter what time it is.

My advice for the Reed family is to rent out your house and live in a better location if you don't like what's happening. The city, state and campus police can only do so much.

OK, let's just say that they catch whoever is doing this to the families on Adams Street and in the neighborhood.

The students will get a fine and maybe some jail time, though this is highly unlikely. Once those students leave, other students will begin to do the same thing, year after year. Do you see a cycle here?

No matter how you handle the situation, families will continue to have these problems unless they take different actions—besides whining about it. Just move.

If any Macomb residents are reading this, if you get one line out of this entire column, then understand this: You live in a college town. The problem will only be resolved until the following year.

As for the Reed family and other families who have had to deal with this, you have two choices. One is to whine about the problem year after year.

The other is you can move away from the problem and rent your old house out, because no matter what, students will live on and party on that street.



### ***Item 7: Colleges sell safety and hide reality***

Sunday, November 21, 2004

Susan Nielsen The Oregonian News

Oregon colleges sell safety. Students expect it and parents demand it, so colleges brand themselves as safe havens for learning.

They should sell reality instead—as long as college campuses everywhere remain safe havens for rape.

"You go to these colleges and they say they are all about safety," said a mom from Multnomah County who said her 18-year-old daughter was raped in October at an out-of-state private school. "I had no idea. It was a parent's worst nightmare."

I wrote last week about the prevalence of sexual assault on college campuses, and heard from a number of parents who said their children were raped at colleges in Oregon and elsewhere. Their names are withheld here, in keeping with The Oregonian's policy to protect the confidentiality of alleged sexual assault victims.

One mom choked up while saying her daughter was raped at Eastern Oregon University in La Grande and is getting better after four years of counseling.

A mom from Clackamas County said her daughter was raped at Reed College in Portland last year by an acquaintance. "Your references to Reed strengthened my impression that Reed would prefer to sweep these incidents under the carpet," she wrote in an e-mail.

In an interview Friday, her daughter said the same. Reed's official crime statistics show no reports of rape over the past three years.

Then there was the mom who sent her smart, strong daughter off to college this fall, only to get the worst phone call of her life soon after.

These families learned the hard way. They shouldn't have to.

College women are more likely to be raped than other women their age, and they're less likely to report the crime. They're in greatest danger of being raped during the first few weeks of freshman year, according to a report on campus acquaintance rape published in 2002 by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Policing.

And yet colleges continue to sell themselves as safe and special places, separate from the real world. They're too afraid to say the truth: Colleges are indeed special, but their most vulnerable students—the freshmen women who are 17 to 19 years old—are at high risk for one of the most damaging, complicated kinds of violent crime.

"We have to burst that bubble," said Phyllis Barkhurst, executive director of the state attorney general's Sexual Assault Task Force. But, she said, "campuses are afraid they're going to get a reputation and become a place where parents don't want to send their kids."

Barkhurst described two types of rapists on college campuses. One is the sex offender, who gets a thrill from forcing sex. The other is what she calls the "I'm-gonna-have-sex offender," someone who doesn't see himself as a rapist.



It's the guy who targets freshmen girls who are new to campus, afraid of getting a bad reputation and unlikely to press charges. Sometimes it's the guy who orders the memory-erasing "date rape drug" from the Internet, and maybe offers a few spares to his pals.

If colleges were honest with themselves, they'd send letters to parents of incoming freshmen and explain the prevalence of sexual assault on all campuses. They'd ask families to talk about risks and responsibilities. They'd do the same with incoming students themselves, bluntly describing scenarios involving alcohol, date-rape drugs and attentive new acquaintances from upper classes.

They'd tell students the difference between campus judicial hearings and criminal prosecution, and make sure students and their families knew how to navigate both systems.

But most colleges just sell safety instead. They fear the blow to their reputation from being the only one to tell the truth.

Funny; that's exactly how students feel who are raped.

"How universities are seen is a huge factor," said Linda Anderson, who coordinates support services for assault victims at Oregon State University in Corvallis.

Amy Shattuck, coordinator of the women's resource center at Portland State University, agreed. "The parents are paying and they want their kids to be safe. What ties into that are liability and reputation."

The state's Sexual Assault Task Force will hold Oregon's first statewide conference this spring on campus rape. It's a great opportunity for Oregon colleges to talk openly about the problem.

Parents aren't going to like the truth. But they should know, from parents who learned the hard way, that anything is better than a phone call from a distraught daughter who believed she was in a safe place.



# Student Affairs Identity Crisis

## Part 4

The following problems will be designed and will be tailored to the class dynamic and individual traits (observed through Part 3.).

1. Fiscal
2. Faculty Senate Resolution
3. President's low opinion of Student Affairs
4. Mission deliver via three unique organizational structures
5. Group case study on attainment of general education goals