ABOUT NASPA ADVISORY SERVICES

NASPA Advisory Services provides mission-sensitive guidance to vice presidents for student affairs and other campus leadership. Our services include expert reviews, guided self-assessments, and resources to enhance student affairs practice at the division level. NASPA Advisory Services is grounded in the Association’s mission as the principal source of leadership and professional development for the student affairs profession. Every Advisory Services project is guided by reviewers who act as trusted partners and bring extensive, senior-level and subject matter expertise.

Learn more at the NASPA Advisory Services website (https://advisoryservices.naspa.org/).

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................................................................................... 1

METHODOLOGY ............................................................................................................................................................................ 2

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS .............................................................................................................................................................. 6

History and Organization ................................................................................................................................................................. 6

Staff ........................................................................................................................................................................................................... 8

Identity and Strategy ....................................................................................................................................................................... 9

Infrastructure and Resources ............................................................................................................................................................ 9

Leadership and Communication ....................................................................................................................................................... 11

Collaborations and Partnerships ..................................................................................................................................................... 12

Assessment ................................................................................................................................................................................................ 13

Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) .................................................................................................................................. 14

Student Experience, Wellness and Success ........................................................................................................................................... 17

RECOMMENDATIONS ...................................................................................................................................................................... 19

APPENDIX ......................................................................................................................................................................................... 26
INTRODUCTION

In response to a request from the Northwestern University (the University; Northwestern) vice president for student affairs, NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) proposed a comprehensive review of the University’s Division of Student Affairs (the Division; Student Affairs) that would inform a Division strategic planning retreat. This review and resulting strategic planning retreat were conducted through NASPA Advisory Services: a guided self-assessment and external review process for divisions of student affairs and services.

The purpose of NASPA Advisory Services is to:

- provide higher education institutions—particularly institutional executives, including presidents and vice presidents—with mission-sensitive guidance on strengthening essential practices and critical elements for divisions of student affairs;
- offer an external examination of a division of student affairs as a whole, providing expert perspective, meaningful insight, and valuable recommendations with an emphasis on foundational elements of review; and
- strengthen the functionality, productivity, and effectiveness of a student affairs division within a respective university mission and culture.
METHODOLOGY

NASPA worked closely with the vice president for student affairs (vice president); assistant vice president for inclusion and chief of staff (assistant vice president for inclusion) and executive director of student affairs assessment and planning (executive director), for all project activities. The review consisted of the following activities:

**INTRODUCTORY PROJECT CALL**

NASPA conducted an introductory project call with the assistant vice president and executive director on March 17, 2021. The purpose of this call was to formally launch the project; identify the vice president’s goals for the review and strategic planning retreat; introduce the P.R.A.C.T.I.C.E.S. framework, self-assessment and custom survey; identify initial documents for review; and review the project activities and timeline.

**PROJECT PARTICIPANT BRIEF**

NASPA drafted and shared a project participant brief with Northwestern for distribution to participants of the comprehensive review project. This document provided a high-level overview of the project activities, including the self-assessment and external review; timeline; and the NASPA Advisory Services URL and email address for more information.

**P.R.A.C.T.I.C.E.S. SELF-ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGIC PLANNING SURVEY**

NASPA created a custom, online web portal for Northwestern Student Affairs staff members to participate in the P.R.A.C.T.I.C.E.S. self-assessment and custom strategic planning survey. P.R.A.C.T.I.C.E.S. consists of nine elements for self-
assessment: student affairs *policies, resources*, alignment and partnership with *academic affairs, compliance, technology, inclusion, community, evidence*-based practices, and *student success* efforts.

NASPA worked with Northwestern to identify and assign a total of 289 Student Affairs staff members to various modules within the P.R.A.C.T.I.C.E.S. self-assessment as well as the custom strategic planning survey. Northwestern then communicated these assignments to NASPA.

NASPA emailed all self-assessment participants their P.R.A.C.T.I.C.E.S. assignments and web portal log-in information on April 6, 2021. Reminder emails were sent on April 13, 20, and 23, 2021 to staff members who had not completed their assigned self-assessments. Each reminder email specified any incomplete self-assessment modules. NASPA closed the self-assessment on April 23, 2021.

NASPA compiled aggregate responses from the P.R.A.C.T.I.C.E.S. self-assessments and custom survey into separate summaries and reports. Summaries were then shared with members of the NASPA Advisory Services Review Team in order to inform remote interview activities.

P.R.A.C.T.I.C.E.S. and the custom survey data are referenced selectively within this report of NASPA’s findings, analysis, and recommendations. P.R.A.C.T.I.C.E.S. reports and custom survey results were made available as supplemental documents to the vice president in addition to this report of overall findings, analysis, and recommendations.

**IDENTIFICATION OF REVIEW TEAM**

NASPA considered it critical that the reviewers who worked with Northwestern Student Affairs have significant leadership experience within divisions of student affairs at four-year, selective, private institutions. NASPA identified and recommended two established, student affairs experts from the NASPA Advisory Services reviewer pool for this project: Dr. Joy Hoffman, independent consultant and Enku Gelaye, J.D., senior vice president of student affairs and dean of students, Emory University. Abby Vollmer, director of NASPA Advisory Services, served as
the Review Team’s project director. Northwestern approved NASPA’s recommendation for the Review Team.

**INTERVIEW WITH VICE PRESIDENT**

NASPA organized and conducted an interview with the vice president, assistant vice president for inclusion and executive director on May 4, 2021 via video conference. The entire NASPA Review Team participated in this interview, which focused on the vice president’s perspectives on the Division and her priorities within the strategic planning process.

**DATA COLLECTION AND REVIEW**

NASPA requested and reviewed relevant documents and data as part of this review. This included Student Affairs webpages, strategic plans, assessment reports, task force reports, organizational chart, and division and department staffing lists.

**REMOTE INTERVIEW PERIOD**

NASPA and Northwestern mutually agreed to a remote interview period facilitated by the Review Team on May 10-12, 2021. NASPA developed and shared a draft remote interview schedule consisting of individual and group meetings with the vice president and her designees for review and feedback. Participants were sent the finalized remote interview information which included instructions on how to access the meeting platform with support from the administrative assistant. NASPA developed question prompts based on the vice president’s priorities and used these prompts to guide meetings. Meeting participants were then provided with opportunities to address the same topics across different meetings.

NASPA met with 112 members of the Northwestern community during the remote interview period, including Student Affairs leaders and staff members; faculty and campus colleagues; and students. The schedule of interviews is located in the Appendix.
REPORT OF FINDINGS, ANALYSIS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report contains NASPA’s findings, analysis, and recommendations based on all project activities. It is intentionally structured around major themes and findings that emerged through NASPA’s review of documents and the remote interview period. Self-assessment and survey responses are used selectively to underscore areas of emphasis. Full P.R.A.C.T.I.C.E.S. response and survey data were shared in separate, individual reports.
FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

HISTORY AND ORGANIZATION

History and Context

Established in 1851, Northwestern University, in Evanston, Illinois, has grown from a single educational building with two faculty that served the Northwest Territory to now being a highly-selective university that boasts 12 schools and colleges and has campuses in Chicago, Illinois and Doha, Qatar. The Northwestern University Evanston campus sits on the traditional and ancestral homelands of the people of the Council of Three Fires, the Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and Odawa as well as the Menominee, Miami and Ho-Chunk nations.¹ Northwestern serves 22,448 students² across both undergraduate and graduate programs.

Student Affairs Overview

The Northwestern University Division of Student Affairs provides comprehensive programs and services that promote engagement and community-building; support holistic well-being; and provide critical support for the academic, and future career success of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students.

The Division employs over 275 professionals, in addition to numerous student employees across its departments. The vice president for student affairs, Dr. Julie Payne-Kirchmeier, began her role in an interim capacity in June 2019 when the current vice president had to take a medical leave of absence. Prior to serving in the interim role, she served as an associate vice president and chief of staff within the Division. She was appointed to the permanent position of vice president in March of 2020.

¹ https://www.northwestern.edu/native-american-and-indigenous-peoples/about/Land%20Acknowledgement.html
The vice president has nine direct reports who serve in a leadership capacity. These nine direct reports include the following staff members with respective portfolios encompassing over 30 Student Affairs departments.

- *Dean of students*. This area includes the following departments: Student Assistance and Support Services, Intervention and Support, CARE, Community Standards, Off-Campus Life, AccessibleNU, and Parent and Family Programs.

- *Assistant vice president for inclusion and chief of staff*. This area includes the following departments: Campus Inclusion and Community; Racial and Equity Strategy, and VPSA Office.

- *Assistant vice president for student engagement*. This area includes the following departments: Campus Life, New Student Experience, Religious and Spiritual Life, and Commencement/Senior Experience.

- *Associate vice president of operations and services and executive director of Norris University Center*. This area includes the following departments: Division Services, Assessment and Planning, Norris University Center, Major Contracted Services and Division Facilities Projects.

- *Executive director for business and finance*. This area includes Human Resources.

- *Executive director for residential services*. This includes the following areas: Residential Life, Residential Academic Initiatives, Assignments and Facilities and Operations and Administration.

- *Executive director for counseling and psychological services*. This area includes the following departments: Chicago CAPS, Evanston CAPS, Training and Development and Sports Psychology.

- *Executive director of health services*. This area includes the following departments: Sports Medicine and Health Promotion and Wellness.

- *Executive director for northwestern career advancement*. This includes the following areas: Career Advising, Career Counseling and Employer Outreach.
**STAFF**

*Assets and Opportunities*

The human capital in the Division, the staff, is one of its greatest assets. Staff are highly committed to the students they serve, to each other as colleagues, to the Division, and to the University. The Division has benefited from a history of present and highly regarded senior leadership. Staff in Student Affairs are seen as well-trained, hardworking and passionate by their colleagues across campus. They are recognized as consistently being the staff who step up to address critical student needs. Staff are regarded as innovative and flexible in the development of programs and services; this was particularly referenced in response to the rapid shifts that needed to be made during the COVID-19 pandemic and the racial justice/DEI unrest in past 18 months.

*Challenges*

As previously mentioned, one of the greatest assets of the Division is its staff. However, its greatest asset is at risk. Staff at Northwestern and across the field of student affairs are burned out and in critical need of advocacy, care and support. A common theme that was heard throughout the surveys and the interviews was the pressure that Northwestern’s ‘perfectionistic culture’ and demanding quarter system places on not only students, but staff, especially in Student Affairs. Staff, across all levels of the organization, described expectations to behave as if they are ‘on-call’ and treat every student-related matter as ‘urgent’ with immediate response, which results in the constant blur of work and personal life boundaries.

Senior leadership in the Division should advocate for staff by creating a clearer, more well-defined understanding of what Student Affairs is and what Student Affairs is not and communicating boundaries regarding how and when staff in the Division will respond, particularly when contacted by university partners external to the Division. An opportunity also exists to reset both the expectations of and modeled behaviors of managers in the Division in the areas of work-life integration and employee self-care.

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3 [https://www.leadershipexchange-digital.com/leadershipexchange/2021spring/MobilePagedArticle.action?articleId=1665543#articleId1665543](https://www.leadershipexchange-digital.com/leadershipexchange/2021spring/MobilePagedArticle.action?articleId=1665543#articleId1665543)
IDENTITY AND STRATEGY

Assets and Opportunities

The Division, as an organization, has a strong presence that is distinct from other functional units in the University. Staff within the Division have a clear understanding of the difference between their respective departments and the broader Division. The Division is viewed as a valuable partner in the University’s pursuit of student learning and success.

Challenges

Being seen as a valuable partner is both an asset and a challenge, as the Review Team heard many examples of how the departments within Student Affairs are a ‘catch all’ for anything student-related. Refinement of the vision, mission and values provides an opportunity to help reset who Student Affairs is and highlight the expertise it brings to the Northwestern community. The relaunch of the Division’s core statements and strategic plan also provides an opportunity to generate excitement and build community around shared purpose.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

Assets and Opportunities

The Division, which supports over 30 departments, provides both a breadth and depth of resources to the campus community. The Division is one of the first to welcome new Wildcats through new student and family programs and one of the last to say farewell to students as they participate in commencement. The Division provides space for students to live, learn and engage via housing and union facilities. The Division provides leadership development, community engagement opportunities, religious and spiritual support, diversity and inclusion programming, social justice education, and tailored assistance for specialized populations including students with disabilities and students who are first-generation or come from low-income backgrounds. The Division supports wellness via direct health, counseling and sports medicine services; helps students navigate the various systems when facing a personal crisis through case management support; provides confidential services for students impacted by sexual or relationship violence; and provides prevention education. The Division strives to keep the Northwestern
community safe and holds students accountable by enforcing community standards. And, lastly, the Division creates opportunities for students to explore their post-Northwestern opportunities through career services.

**Challenges**

While the Division has a breadth and depth of resources, challenges in the organization, infrastructure and resourcing of the Division exist. The Division currently has numerous staff vacancies. Confusion and concern exist over whether and how vacancies will be filled. Should vacancies remain unfilled, there was an expressed desire to show support for already understaffed areas and evaluate what they can ‘stop doing’ rather than shifting more responsibilities onto over-extended personnel.

There is inconsistent presence of Student Affairs services between the Evanston and Chicago campuses; this was particularly felt by those staff who don’t work on the Evanston campus. Additionally, Northwestern serves over 13,000 graduate and professional students. The Review Team heard from staff, both internal and external to the Division, and graduate students, that it is unclear whether or not Student Affairs is structured to support the non-undergraduate populations. Graduate students expressed receiving communication from the Division about programs and services that was at times confusing or misleading. They felt like communications weren’t really tailored to graduate student needs and that programs and services being shared may not actually be ones they are welcome to utilize (e.g. emails about career services events that are labeled “For Juniors and Seniors only”.) Sending broad messages to graduate students without first identifying specific programs, events, and resources that actually benefit them not only bombards their inboxes with materials that are irrelevant; it perpetuates feelings of displacement.

**P.R.A.C.T.I.C.E.S Self-Assessment: Resources**

The P.R.A.C.T.I.C.E.S self-assessment included a module titled “Resources,” which focused on how Student Affairs:

- Strives to systematically plan for and allocate resources (including fiscal, human, and physical infrastructures)
- Seeks to support, train and manage the performance of staff within the division
Full responses to this self-assessment module are listed in a separate report.

Below, NASPA highlights what respondents reported as perceived strengths and areas for further development for Northwestern Student Affairs based on responses of the three staff members who completed the module.

**Perceived Strengths**

- Demonstrated process for budgeting and monitoring expenses.
- Fair and impartial practices in hiring, evaluating, and disciplining employees.

**Perceived Areas for Further Development**

- Division has fiscal, human and physical infrastructure resources sufficient to support its operations.
- Processes for financial planning and budget development include appropriate opportunities for participation by its constituencies.
- Division can demonstrate its appropriate support of on-going professional development for staff and regularly evaluates the professional development programs offered.
- Assessment is included in student affairs staff members’ position descriptions.

**LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATION**

**Assets and Opportunities**

In general, leadership across the Division was seen as visible and accessible. Several structures for communication and engagement across the Division were discussed including various team meetings and all-divisional staff meetings. Opportunities for coaching and development for managers in the division were identified as a need. One area that was highlighted was that managers need coaching on how to effectively cultivate and support the professional aspirations of staff, no matter their level in the organization.
Challenges

The Division has two primary leadership structures. The Student Affairs Leadership Team (SALT) is comprised of the executive leadership who report to the vice president for student affairs and the Student Affairs Council is an expanded leadership group that includes director-level positions. Concerns were expressed that there were not enough opportunities for staff at all position levels to communicate and engage with the leadership structures and that more representation is needed by non-Director staff.

Perceptions of the effectiveness of the communication channels across the Division were mixed. The farther removed staff were from senior leadership the less likely they were to perceive communication to be consistent, transparent, and timely. Closing the loop on communication also seems to be a challenge as staff perceive that they are constantly moving from one ‘fire’ to another without the structured opportunity to debrief, reflect and learn.

COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Assets and Opportunities

Student Affairs collaborations and partnerships exist within and outside the Division. External stakeholders readily discussed the collaborative nature of staff within the Division and expressed, overall, satisfaction with existing partnerships. As an example, the Office of Equity (OE) shared that staff within the Division were quick to connect with OE when needed and praised the staff as being really good thought partners and having a strong sense of student needs. The Provost, who is new to her role, expressed great interest in being an ally that could help build better partnerships between the Division and faculty.

Challenges

Participants described numerous collaborations and partnerships but there wasn’t always a consistent understanding of what ‘collaboration’ meant in terms of roles, responsibilities and duration. Lack of clearly defined expectations has created a culture of ‘collaborate at all cost’ that is often reactionary and not tactical. Division staff also expressed that because collaborations weren’t always strategic, beneficial
partnerships were sometimes missed and duplication of programs and resources existed in other areas.

Partners outside the Division praised the willingness of Student Affairs to collaborate and engage but noted challenges after the initial launch of a project or initiative. Partners felt isolated and limited in their ability to support or champion the project due to lack of communication and transparency.

**ASSESSMENT**

*Assets and Opportunities*

The Division has built a strong foundation of assessment practices. Staff acknowledged and could speak to regular assessment practices within the Division. The Division conducts a biannual Student Affairs Staff Survey which solicits “feedback about satisfaction, sense of community, needs and experiences as employees of the Division.”

*Challenges*

The Division has built a strong foundation in the early phase of the assessment cycle. Challenges exist in ‘closing the loop’ on assessments and communicating both the outcomes and application of the findings. Staff expressed frustration that while the Staff Survey solicited their feedback, they didn’t see any tangible results from concerns that were consistently expressed on the survey. Campus partners expressed the desire to see the Division demonstrate that their decisions, especially those involving resources, were data-informed.

**P.R.A.C.T.I.C.E.S. Self-Assessment: Evidence**

The P.R.A.C.T.I.C.E.S. self-assessment included a module titled “Evidence,” which focused on how Student Affairs:

- Strives to regularly assess programs and services, and use the respective data as the basis for decision-making in regard to the effectiveness, impact, and quality of work;
- Seeks to demonstrate that it is using evidence-based information and knowledge to design and implement initiatives that result in

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improved student learning, as well as to allocate and repurpose resources.

Below, NASPA highlights what respondents reported as perceived strengths and areas for further development for Northwestern Student Affairs based on responses of the two staff members who completed the module.

**Perceived Strengths**

- Assessment: Needs, operations, student learning and satisfaction:
- Tools and Practices:
  - Division use of key performance indicators and dashboards
  - Division participation in and use of benchmarking surveys
- Coordination of assessment practices across the Division
- Planning and innovation:
  - Using assessment to help identify signature and innovative programs, and in program/service improvement

**Perceived Areas for Further Development**

- Evidence-based culture:
  - Using data to inform division-level practices, including resource allocation
  - Reporting the results of Student Life assessments to students and external campus partners

**JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (JEDI)**

**Assets and Opportunities**

Staff in the division are seen as knowledgeable and well-trained, especially as it relates to justice, equity, diversity and inclusion work. Staff across the Division consistently raised JEDI topics as critical to the current work and future priorities of the Division. They acknowledged and praised the recent re-organization and creation of the Inclusion cluster within the Division as well as the hiring of a new Chief Diversity Officer position for the University. Staff, across the organization, expressed interest in continued professional development and training on diversity-related topics and for ethos of shared responsibility in JEDI work (not just localized
to the inclusion cluster or staff from diverse backgrounds). Critical opportunities exist for Student Affairs to model and champion JEDI best practices, continue challenging systems of oppression, and serve as a leading partner in the development of broader University strategies.

**Challenges**

Healthy skepticism around JEDI work exists amongst staff as there has been a perceived pattern of initial action with lackluster follow through in long-term outcomes and resource allocation. Recent JEDI activity, both at the University and the Division-level, has been met with mixed review. Some have felt it is a step in the right direction toward acknowledging the experiences of underrepresented and minoritized students and staff at Northwestern, while others labeled responses as performative, and missing clear examples of how root issues were going to actually be addressed.

Accessibility as it related to facilities was consistently raised as an ongoing challenge. This challenge was exacerbated when the housing requirement was implemented and aging and limited facilities were not wholly considered.

Staff retention, particularly for BIPOC staff, was also raised as a challenge that the Division needs to address. Specifically, participants noticed retention challenges for Black staff. A defined JEDI strategy would help reduce taxation that occurs when BIPOC staff are continually asked, if not required, to lead and support this work. Staff from minoritized backgrounds would also benefit from a mentoring program and stronger, more formalized, support for staff affinity groups. Advocacy is also necessary around institutional job family structures as minoritized staff are noticeably impacted by barriers to promotion within position lines, particularly those that are entry-level.

**P.R.A.C.T.I.C.E.S. Self-Assessment: Inclusion**

The P.R.A.C.T.I.C.E.S. self-assessment included a module titled “Inclusion,” which focused on how Student Affairs:

- Strives to cultivate, strengthen, and sustain an inclusive and equitable community for all campus members, especially students;
- Seeks ways to ensure access, voice, acknowledgement, opportunity, and participation at all levels of students’ experiences.

Full responses to this self-assessment module are listed in a separate report.

Below, NASPA highlights what respondents reported as perceived strengths and areas for further development for Northwestern Student Affairs based on responses of the 12 staff members who completed the module.

**Perceived Strengths**

- Division is seen as a key partner in collaborating on issues related to campus inclusion and has structures in place to address incidents of discrimination involving students.
- Assessing the extent to which campus community members feel a sense of belonging.

**Perceived Areas for Further Development**

- Supporting diverse campus communities and perspectives
- Creating a more inclusive institution and community, especially at it relates to facilities
- Staff recruitment, retention, and professional development
- Assessing inclusivity efforts including collecting data on the effectiveness in creating more inclusive communities for staff and students; fostering a safe climate for staff and students to talk about issues of discrimination or oppression; collecting data on strategic initiatives and plans related to inclusion.
- Inclusion in planning and resource allocation including inclusion initiatives formally stated in a strategic plan; and alignment of Student Affairs strategic initiatives and plans regarding inclusion with the larger institutional strategic plan.
STUDENT EXPERIENCE, WELLNESS AND SUCCESS

Assets and Opportunities

Student Affairs is aptly attuned to student needs. The launch of the new strategic plan presents a pivotal opportunity to clearly define what community, engagement, wellness, and success should look like at Northwestern. This opportunity should include the intentional gathering and application of feedback and insights from students.

Challenges

The pace of work on the quarter-system and a broader University culture centered on excellence is pushing already overwhelmed students to a crisis point. Isolation experienced during the pandemic negatively impacted students’ sense of community and belonging, especially for students from already minoritized identities. It was shared that prior to the remote interviews that Northwestern had been experiencing an increase in student self-harm and ideation. The Review Team heard concerns from external stakeholders and students on the status of waitlists for Counseling and Psychological Services and even if not reality, this is a pervasive perception.

The Division has the agency to create a comprehensive strategy around holistic wellness and student care. This strategy should be co-developed and magnify the voices from units that work most directly in this space, including those whose expertise is in public health education. This strategy will require advocacy for better infrastructure and resourcing.

Many of the individual colleges have built strong micro-communities but this has created a series of ‘shadow Student Affairs type-services’ within the colleges that don’t actually report to Student Affairs. It has also tested the ability of the Division to foster an overall identity for the Wildcat community because students do not necessarily see the Division as the go-to for co-curricular resources. This is further challenged by an unclear strategy around student engagement and lack of investment in the communal spaces on campuses. The Review Team also heard that the relationship between the campus communities of Evanston and Chicago is not well-integrated and could be embraced more fully.
P.R.A.C.T.I.C.E.S. Self-Assessment: Community

The P.R.A.C.T.I.C.E.S. self-assessment included a module titled “Community,” which focused on how:

- Student Affairs works to promote efforts to convey to all enrolled students that they are important and valued;
- Student Affairs pursues systems and adequate opportunities for students to have a sense of safety, belonging, and campus pride;
- Student Affairs leadership seeks to have external involvement supporting the institution and its students.

Full responses to this self-assessment module are listed in a separate report.

Below, NASPA highlights what respondents reported as perceived strengths and areas for further development for Northwestern Student Affairs based on responses of the six staff members who completed the module.

Perceived Strengths

- Opportunities for student engagement
- Traditions and innovations
- Fraternity and sorority life

Perceived Areas for Further Development

- Assessing community and climate
- Alumni involvement
- Athletics and recreation
- Student Affairs collaborations and communications
RECOMMENDATIONS

NASPA presents the following recommendations to Northwestern in order to address those challenges we regard as priorities for Student Affairs in their future strategic plan. This external review and strategic planning process was requested during the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. It is impossible to ignore the toll this global pandemic is enacting within our communities and institutions.

As proponents and advocates for the student affairs profession, we believe that a well-functioning student affairs division can—and should—play an invaluable role in responding to crises such as the one we currently face by supporting students (e.g., providing basic needs such as food and shelter, especially for those with limited to no alternatives; assisting with navigating resources for financial support; attending to health and mental health; and offering a sense of community during difficult times). Perhaps, now more than ever, the need for strong student affairs divisions is felt across the country. We recommend the following actions in that spirit and with tremendous respect for the Northwestern leadership and Student Affairs community in facing current challenges.

DIVISION GUIDING STATEMENTS

Vision

1. Current Statement: We will be full partners in the student learning experience. The Division of Student Affairs partners with the academic schools/colleges and other University divisions in alignment with the University’s vision and mission to advance student learning and success.

   a. Observations and Recommendations: Vision statements are intended to be aspirational. There is an opportunity to stretch the reach of this statement beyond being centered as a full partner. Based on the survey data, interviews, and Review Team observations, it is recommended that the vision include language that centers the Division’s emphasis on equity and wellness as well as highlights the unique lens and expertise of the Division compared to other units of the University.
i. **Revised Sample Statement:** We will be partners in the student learning experience who leverage our expertise on student development to advance equitable student learning, engagement, wellbeing, and success.

**Mission**

2. **Current Statement:** The mission of the Northwestern University Division of Student Affairs is to educate students, engage the community, and enrich the Northwestern experience. We pursue our mission through providing learning programs, services, and mentoring to maximize students’ potential; removing barriers to learning; strengthening readiness to learn; and sustaining a safe and healthy Northwestern community.

   a. **Observations and Recommendations:** The mission statement, overall is good, and describes the work of the Division. An opportunity exists to use assessment data to demonstrate how the Division meets its mission. Based on the survey data, interviews, and Review Team observations, it is recommended that the mission include language that centers the Division’s emphasis on equity.

   i. **Revised Sample Statement:** The mission of the Northwestern University Division of Student Affairs is to educate students, engage the community, and enrich the Northwestern experience. We pursue our mission through providing programs and services to maximize students’ potential; removing barriers to learning; strengthening readiness to learn; and fostering a safe, inclusive, and healthy Northwestern community.

**Values and Principles:**

3. **Current Values:** Integrity, Social Justice, Innovation, Collaboration, Stewardship

   **Current Principles:** Commitment to Excellence, Intentionality, Accountability, Authenticity, Curiosity, Communication

   a. **Observations and Recommendations:** The survey data demonstrated that while the values and principles are generally viewed as valuable, there is confusion over the difference between the two in terms of their application and purpose. It is recommended that the principles be eliminated (or subsumed into values) and the values can be reframed as the aspirational core values of the division that guide the way work is done. The Review Team also recommends considering adding a value focused on wellness that is inclusive of both students and staff.

   i. **Revised Sample Values:** Holistic Wellness, Well-being
IDENTITY AND STRATEGY

4. As the Division begins work on its strategic plan, identify opportunities to help engage staff in understanding the vision, mission, and goals of the Division.
   a. Consider using creative branding and incentives to provide a mechanism by which guiding statements are ‘front and center’ for staff.
   b. Embed statements, such as values, into regular communication from the Division (e.g. in masthead of emails.)
   c. The members of the senior leadership team provide supervision and support to directors in defining their role—and that of their department—within the Student Affairs mission and strategic plan. This should include assisting directors and their direct reports with connecting to a larger, divisional vision, and articulating how their department contributes to it. The goal should be to stimulate ownership while furthering interconnectedness and collaboration among departments.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND EXPERIENCE

5. Reconsider leadership and training models to foster the development of thought leaders and managers within the Division.

6. Advocate on behalf of administrative assistants and maintenance technicians for improvements in class and labor issues, include job family barriers, access to relevant professional development including computer training, degree completion, and access to dedicated workspace and technology.

7. Consider the role and use of exit interviews with staff who leave the Division. Use the data gathered from these interviews to enhance and improve the experience of staff across the organization.

8. Prioritize staff well-being and work-life integration. Engage in dialogues with all levels of staff to identify opportunities to create more balance, provide more flexibility, and initiate opportunities to communicate about ‘what to sunset’ before something new is added to staff members’ responsibilities. The transition of presidential leadership also provides an opportunity to
articulate needs of the Division related to wellness, boundaries, and leadership role modeling.

9. As the team shifts out of the pandemic and into a new strategic plan, consider creating opportunities for bonding and positive community building. Find ways to move the team from coalescing around the current shared struggle of responding to adversity, crisis, and stress to a shared sense of purpose, healthy community, genuine care, and support.

**RESOURCES**

10. Given the significant changes in budgets and staffing over the last few years, it is essential for the Division to facilitate a “reset” and identify strategies, processes, and structures that will empower Student Affairs to meet student needs, advance the Student Affairs mission and vision, and bring the Northwestern mission and vision to life. Identifying multiple funding sources to support this work will be necessary, as well as discerning where the Division has agency over funding and where leadership needs to advocate for additional resources (human and fiscal).

11. Leverage existing Campus Master Plan work or initiate master planning that considers contracting an architectural firm in collaboration with campus partners to create a short-term and long-term student experience master plan.
   a. Engage Development partners in the creation of a campaign to help support master plan initiatives.

**COLLABORATION**

12. Conduct a departmental program inventory mapping process for the Division to determine where program duplication may be occurring. This inventory can also be used to demonstrate areas of duplication with other divisions and be communicated to university colleagues.

13. Dismantle the culture of ‘collaboration at all costs’ and reformulate a collaborative culture that promotes functional boundaries and honors and acknowledges each partners roles and contributions.
LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATION

14. Clarify and communicate the role and function of the Student Affairs Council.
   a. Expand participation by adding ‘at-large’ seats to the Student Affairs Council that would be open to any level of staff.
   b. If the Student Affairs Council discusses issues that are not appropriate for all staff, consider renaming the group. “Student Affairs Council” may be perceived as something that should be open to everyone in the division vs. being seen as a “Director level-specific meeting”. (The Review Team recognizes not all staff on the Council hold Directors titles, but the perception was shared that this was the composition of the Council.)
   c. Minimally, create an opportunity for all staff to provide input in meaningful ways and practice transparency around issues, initiatives, and work that affect everyone in the division.

15. Senior leadership would benefit from inversing their ‘attention heat map’ and have intentional interactions with front-line, entry-level staff across the Division.

16. Develop a communication plan and strategy that is sensitive to different audiences within the University including undergraduate students, graduate students, and Academic Affairs/faculty.

17. Leadership (across the reporting lines) need to develop greater consistency in disseminating information to staff to ensure that all staff are receiving accurate and timely messages.
18. Enhance post-incident assessment efforts to include reflection groups that provide space for staff to address incident response from both a practical and personal lens. Deliberately document and communicate post-incident assessment in a way that is sensitive, sustainable, and keeps staff informed.

**ASSESSMENT**

19. Emphasize closing the loop on assessments. Departments should be expected to show the results of assessments including how they inform process and resource planning, and how results are being applied to affect change and improvements. Leadership needs to demonstrate how they are taking assessment work into consideration when it comes to programmatic and resource decisions.

20. Communicate not only the results of the Student Affairs Staff Survey but then communicate how decisions (such as changes in communication channels or improvements to employee recognition programs) were driven by the results of the survey.

21. Seek feedback on students’ perceptions of their campus community. Use this data to sunset, enhance, or create new opportunities to create and foster students’ sense of community at Northwestern. Demonstrate to students how their feedback was used in decision-making.

**JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

22. JEDI should be clearly named within Student Affairs priorities. While already recognized in many ways as leaders in this space, the Division should:
   a. Capitalize on division-wide strategic planning to develop a strong, cohesive JEDI division-level strategy.
   b. Continue to foster opportunities to partner at the University-level, especially with the new Chief Diversity Officer and Provost.
   c. Allow for shared metrics—funding sources, staffing, and climate indicators.

23. Explore ways to embed a JEDI framework into human resources practices within the division, including position descriptions, recruitment, hiring, and
onboarding processes, supervision practices, professional development, and annual performance evaluations.

**CAMPUSS PARTNERS**

24. Improve communication about Student Affairs to campus partners, including Academic Affairs. This should include sharing the rich assessment data that exists to demonstrate how their work aligns with the Division’s mission, strategy, and the contributions of the Division to students’ experiences, retention, persistence, success, and completion.
   a. Demonstrate how decisions, especially resource-driven ones, are informed by data.

25. Partner with the Office of Equity on the in-progress physical accessibility audit to help guide and prioritize timeline for facilities updates.

26. Partner with the graduate and professional schools to conduct a needs assessment to better understand where the gaps in support and services exist for graduate and professional students.
# APPENDIX

## REMOTE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### Monday, May 10, 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:15 am – 9:50 am</td>
<td>NASPA Team Check-In</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 am - 10:50 am</td>
<td>Student Affairs Leadership Team (SALT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 am - 11:50 am</td>
<td>Student Affairs Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 pm - 1:00 pm</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 pm - 1:50 pm</td>
<td>Associate/Assistant Directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00 pm - 2:50 pm</td>
<td>Program Coordinators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Tuesday, May 12, 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:00 am - 10:50 am</td>
<td>Associate/Assistant Directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 am - 11:50 am</td>
<td>Administrative Assistants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 pm - 12:50 pm</td>
<td>Group of Undergraduate Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 pm - 2:00 pm</td>
<td>Lunch Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00 pm - 2:50 pm</td>
<td>Health and Wellness Providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00 pm - 3:50 pm</td>
<td>Specialists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Wednesday, May 12, 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00 am-9:50 am</td>
<td>Maintenance Techs &amp; Housekeeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 am-11:20 am</td>
<td>Group of VPSA Peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30 pm-11:55 pm</td>
<td>Interview, CDO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 pm-1:00 pm</td>
<td>Lunch/Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 pm-1:50 pm</td>
<td>Interview, Provost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:15 pm-2:40 pm</td>
<td>Interview, Trustee, Chair of Student Life Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00 pm-3:30 pm</td>
<td>Review Team Initial Debrief with VPSA and Project Leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Wednesday, May 19, 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:30 am-9:55 am</td>
<td>Interview, Senior VP, Business and Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 am-10:50 am</td>
<td>Group of Graduate Students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DOCUMENTS

Northwestern Student Affairs Strategic Plans

- Division of Student Affairs Strategic Plan (website)
- Student Affairs Mission Poster, 2016

Northwestern Student Affairs Departmental Strategic Plans

- Campus Life Strategic Plan (website)
- Campus Inclusion and Community Strategic Plan, 2016-2022

Northwestern Unit/Department Annual Reports

- CAPS:
  - 2019 Annual Report CARE
  - CAPS Annual Report-2019
- Dean of Students:
  - 2018-2019 ANU Annual Report
  - 2018-2019 OCL Annual Report-Final 2.0
  - DOS Annual Report 2018-2019 Final
  - NCA Annual Report 2018-2019
- Division Resources:
  - FY19 Dining Annual Report
  - FY19 Division Services Annual Report
  - FY19 Norris Annual Report
  - FY19 SAA&P Annual Report Final
  - FY19 SABF Annual Report
  - FY19 Safe Ride Annual Report-final
  - FY19 SAHR Annual Report
  - FY19 SAIT Annual Report
  - FY19 SAM Annual Report
  - FY19 Special Projects Annual Report
- Health Service:
  - 2019 Northwestern University Health Service Annual Report-final
  - FY2019 HPaW Annual Report Final
- Residential Services:
  - Residential Services Annual Report 2018-2019
- Student Engagement:
  - CIC Annual Report 2019
- Consistent Data Collection for Units to Report Annual in the Division of Student Affairs, revised 2019
- 2019 Student Affairs Annual Report Guidelines

Diversity and Climate Assessment Reports

- The African American/Black Students Experience Final Report (Summer 2016)
- Undergraduate Student Report on the Student Climate Survey for Diversity, Winter, 2018
- Graduate Student Report on the Student Climate Survey for Diversity, Winter 2018

Assessment Reports, Other

- Learning in the Co-Curriculum, updated June 2018
- Learning in the Co-Curriculum, Sixth Annual Student Learning Assessment Conference, 6/25/2019
- Learning in the Co-Curriculum, Seventh Annual Student Learning Assessment Conference, 6/23/2020