historical perspective of student affairs

reflecting on our past, looking to the future...

northern illinois university division of student affairs
When Ernest E. Hanson graduated from Northern Illinois State Normal School in 1930, the country's financial situation was precarious: It was the Great Depression, an era that witnessed a nearly ten-year economic downturn. Hanson remained hopeful. With degree in hand, Ernie ventured north to increase his academic knowledge and professional prospects. In 1935, Hanson received his Master of Arts degree from the University of Michigan and, in 1941, returned to his alma mater to serve as the Dean of Men. Finding his scholarly pursuits incomplete, Hanson again journeyed to the Wolverine State and, in 1952, obtained his Ed.D. from Michigan State University.

In 1964, President Leslie A. Holmes appointed Ernest E. Hanson as the Vice President for Student Personnel Services.

By changing from an in loco parentis (the university acting in the place of the parent) philosophy, an outmoded concept for contemporary university life, Student Personnel Services moved toward divisional reorganization, placing major emphasis on student-centeredness. Dr. Hanson's administration experienced profound social transformations and turbulent student unrest: Quality housing, demographic shifts, racial and gender equality, personal freedom, and antiwar views figured prominently.

There were three (now, perhaps, four) eras when Northern Illinois University transformed the identity of student programs and services: Student Personnel Services (1964-1972), Division of Student Affairs (1972-1996), Student Services and Student Affairs (1996-2004), and Division of Student Affairs (2004-present). Chief Student Affairs Officers, such as Dr. Ernest Hanson, were synonymous with their respective eras, and few doubt that their personal visions proved inseparable from their professional aspirations, or that their divisional goals embraced the university's mission by representing the voices of their respective students.

This brief history summarizes the past forty-three years, highlighting accomplishments of Dr. Hanson and the Chief Student Affairs Officers who followed him. It celebrates the Division of Student Affairs, and Northern Illinois University’s enduring commitment to student-centered service, student learning, inclusiveness, and collaborative relationships.

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Northern Illinois University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution.
Ernest E. Hanson received his Bachelor’s Degree from Northern Illinois State Normal School, his Master’s Degree from the University of Minnesota, and his doctorate from Michigan State University.

During Dr. Ernest Hanson’s administration, the increase of applications from post-World War II babies skyrocketed NIU’s enrollment from 6,000 to more than 12,000, straining the limits of all available housing and student union space. During this time, the university built a new student union, the Student Center (later named for President Leslie Holmes); and essential on-campus housing: The Twin Towers (Grant South) opened in 1965, Grant North in 1966, and Stevenson South and Stevenson North in 1967 and 1968, respectively.
Harry Husa received his Bachelor’s and Master’s Degrees from Northern Illinois University. Dr. Husa earned his doctorate from Michigan State University, and did post-doctoral work at the University of Chicago.

In 1971, President Richard Nelson appointed Harry Husa as Acting Vice President for Student Personnel Services. During Dr. Husa’s tenure, the residence halls continued experimenting with co-ed living and 24-hour visitation for female students. As Chair of the Committee to Study Student Living, Husa endorsed the learning potentialities of coeducational living. His administration was an intense period of transition: Collaboration between Husa, President Nelson, students, faculty, and administrators formed the Student Personnel Service Committee. This committee would later recommend that there be a Division of Student Affairs administered by its own vice president.
Harry J. Canon received his Bachelor of Arts Degree from Lycoming College, Williamsburg, Pennsylvania, and his Master of Science Degree from Pennsylvania State University. Dr. Canon earned his doctorate from the University of Nebraska.

In 1973, President Nelson appointed Harry J. Canon as Vice President for Student Affairs. Dr. Canon viewed role modeling, which played a pivotal part in establishing social norming as a national movement, as crucial to the ethical and moral development of students. Reasoning that residents would respond to new policies with responsibility and maturity, he collaborated with Student Housing Services and the Inter-Hall Council, and endorsed a policy that legally permitted alcoholic beverages in the residence halls. In 1974, Dr. Canon founded the Harry J. Canon Fellowship to provide Student Affairs' professionals with opportunities necessary to prepare them for future middle- and upper-level management positions.
Margaret Barr received her Bachelor of Arts Degree from State University of New York, and Master's Degree in College Student Personnel from Southern Illinois University. Dr. Barr earned a doctorate in Higher Education Administration from the University of Texas-Austin.

In 1983, President William Monat appointed Margaret Barr as Vice President for Student Affairs. Under Dr. Barr's leadership, the NIU Learning Center in Stevenson Towers South expanded to a Learning and Study Skills Laboratory. To provide safety to students on university property, Barr imposed new security guidelines for social events. Her administration saw the construction of the Recreation Center, which provided faculty, staff, and students with diverse facilities and cutting-edge fitness programs.
Jon Dalton received his Bachelor’s Degree in Philosophy from Franklin College, Franklin, Indiana. He earned Master’s Degrees in Religion and Philosophy from Yale University, and Student Personnel from the University of Kentucky. Dr. Dalton also obtained his doctorate in Higher Education from the University of Kentucky.

In 1986, President John LaTourette appointed Jon Dalton as Vice President for Student Affairs. Under Dr. Dalton’s leadership, the university responded to several highly publicized racial incidents. Working closely with President LaTourette, the University Council and key university offices, Dalton’s administration and student organizations developed a spectrum of programs and events to combat campus racism. Among these programs was Unity Through Diversity Week.
Barbara Henley received her Bachelor's Degree in History and Teacher Education from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Dr. Henley earned her Master's and doctorate from The Ohio State University.

In 1989, President LaTourette appointed Barbara Henley as Vice President for Student Affairs. Under Dr. Henley’s leadership, Unity Through Diversity Week expanded to a yearlong celebration. Henley’s administration witnessed the grand opening of the Campus Life Building, an addition to the Campus Recreation Center, and the gala dedication of King Memorial Commons. Dr. Henley established task forces to improve current university policies regarding hazing on Greek Row and the use of alcohol and on shared governance that focused particular attention on Campus Recreation Center facilities and usage. She also initiated a policy that all administrative offices be open during the noon hour.
Donald R. Buckner received his Bachelor's Degree in Chemistry from Cornell University, New York, and a Master's Degree in industrial management from the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, New York. He received a second Master's Degree in Guidance and Counseling from the University of Missouri. Dr. Buckner obtained a doctorate in Student Affairs Administration from the American University at Washington, D.C.

In 1990, Donald R. Buckner was appointed the Associate Vice Provost for Student Affairs. Dr. Buckner contributed to the creation of an inclusive campus community by coordinating the first major National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) conference, Racial Discrimination on Campus: Promoting Peer Initiatives and Student Action. Dr. Buckner proposed the idea for the Stacy Dolby Award for Enhancement of Racial and Ethnic Diversity which recognizes the student, faculty, or staff member from NIU most actively involved in enhancing the Division's commitment to racial and ethnic diversity on campus. His crowning achievement, transformation of the residential life program into living spaces that accommodate student lifestyles and academic interests, and fusing racial diversity into hiring practices, established Housing and Dining Services as a nationally-recognized program.
Gary Gresholdt earned his Bachelor’s Degree and a Master’s Degree in Counseling from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. Dr. Gresholdt received his doctorate in Adult Continuing Education from Northern Illinois University.

In 1998, Gary Gresholdt was appointed the Associate Vice Provost for Student Affairs. Dr. Gresholdt’s administration continued to improve services for students with disabilities. His dedication included serving as Chair of the Presidential Commission on Persons with disabilities, and as Section 504 Compliance Officer. Collaborating with university offices and administrators, Student Affairs launched the annual National Disability Mentoring Day. Under his leadership, Student Affairs witnessed the grand opening of the state-of-the-art Campus Child Care Center, and the grand re-opening of the renovated Stevenson Towers residential complex.
**vision**
The Division of Student Affairs inspires students to engage and succeed in their individual pursuit of learning as they transform into dynamic leaders.

**mission**
In alliance with the educational mission of Northern Illinois University, the Division of Student Affairs creates student learning opportunities beyond the classroom that inspire intellectual, personal, and civic growth for leadership in a diverse and complex world.

**core values**
Student-centered service
Partnerships focused on student learning
Establishing an inclusive community
Actively building collaborative relationships