Descriptions of Professional Competencies for Student Affairs Practitioners

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Advising and Helping
Addresses the knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to providing counseling and advising support, direction, feedback, critique, referral, and guidance to individuals and groups.

Assessment, Evaluation, and Research
Focuses on the ability to use, design, conduct, and critique qualitative and quantitative AER analyses; to manage organizations using AER processes and the results obtained from them; and to shape the political and ethical climate surrounding AER processes and uses on campus.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
Includes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to create learning environments that are enriched with diverse views and people. It is also designed to create an institutional ethos that accepts and celebrates differences among people, helping to free them of any misconceptions and prejudices.

Ethical Professional Practice
Pertains to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to understand and apply ethical standards to one’s work. While ethics is an integral component of all competency areas, this competency area focuses specifically on the integration of ethics into all aspects of self and professional practice.

History, Philosophy, and Values
Involves knowledge, skills, and attitudes that connect the history, philosophy, and values of the profession to one’s current professional practice. This competency area embodies the foundations of the profession from which current and future research and practice will grow. The commitment to demonstrating this competency area ensures that our present and future practices are informed by an understanding of our history, philosophy, and values.

Human and Organizational Resources
Includes knowledge, skills, and attitudes used in the selection, supervision, motivation, and formal evaluation of staff; conflict resolution; management of the politics of organizational discourse; and the effective application of strategies and techniques associated with financial resources, facilities management, fundraising, technology use, crisis management, risk management, and sustainable resources.

Law, Policy, and Governance
Includes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes relating to policy development processes used in various contexts, the application of legal constructs, and the understanding of governance structures and their effect on one’s professional practice.
Leadership
Addresses the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required of a leader, whether it be a positional leader or a member of the staff, in both an individual capacity and within a process of how individuals work together effectively to envision, plan effect change in organizations, and respond to internal and external constituencies and issues.

Personal Foundations
Involves the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to maintain emotional, physical, social, environmental, relational, spiritual, and intellectual wellness; be self-directed and self-reflective; maintain excellence and integrity in work; be comfortable with ambiguity; be aware of one’s own areas of strength and growth; have a passion for work; and remain curious.

Student Learning and Development
Addresses the concepts and principles of student development and learning theory. This includes the ability to apply theory to improve and inform student affairs practice, as well as understanding teaching and training theory and practice.