

Big Shots and Little Steps: Toward a Collaborative Environment

Bonita C. Jacobs

Some of us in student-services-related positions may have difficulty believing that our positions categorize us, in the eyes of some, as Big Shots worthy of great respect. Yet, we make decisions each and every day which affect numerous students and colleagues. “Big Shot” is simply a term to indicate that we have power over other people, and I would say we qualify.

Much of our professional dialogue centers around the urgent need for student affairs and academic affairs to work as allies, rather than as adversaries, to create better environments for students, more cooperation between staffs, and increased student retention and satisfaction. Now that we have established that we are Big Shots, it seems that we now have an opportunity to do just that.

The publications in this edition of the journal highlight the level of opportunity that we have to initiate collaborative efforts. Included are Jeske and Rode’s article on “Current Practices in Undergraduate Student Mentoring,” an obvious collaborative effort between the divisions; Fried’s article on “Steps to Creative Campus Collaboration,” which goes to the heart of this discussion; and Marling and Bradford’s article on “Instituting a Summer Supplemental Instruction Program,” another discussion of a clearly collaborative effort.

In addition, Benz provides information on urban collaboration in his article, “Incorporating the City Into an Urban Campus’s Orientation Program,” and Geelhoed discusses community service issues in “Capitalizing on Student Interests: Community Service and Orientation,” both pointedly indicating the need to expand collaborative efforts even beyond the campus. Miller, Randall, and Nadler’s “Reviving an SGA: A Case Study,” of a student government during its rebirth walks us through a deliberative process involving students, faculty, and student affairs staff. Even the book review on *Achieving Personal and Academic Success* underscores the need for collaboration.

Each of the contributions to this issue of the journal describes collaboration through small steps. Whether it is mentoring or supplemental instruction, community service or urban orientation, the collaborative effort typically involves one targeted area of student-focused services and is a joint development between two or more areas of the college or university. Interestingly, none of these articles indicate that the initiative resulted from a mandate “from the top,” but, then again, we are all Big Shots able to take small steps to increase collaboration on campus.

As you read the journal, and I hope you read it carefully, read it as a Big Shot, one

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with power over people and an ability to get things done. Rather than thinking that “they” would never go for a proven idea as discussed in one of the articles, decide if you, the Big Shot, believe that the result of your initiative will make for a better campus for students, faculty, and staff. If so, your next step is to take little steps to implement a new collaborative effort on your campus!