

# Intentional Professional Development: Feedback from Student Affairs Professionals

Steven M. Janosik  
Stan Carpenter  
Don G. Creamer



*Despite long-standing calls for more intentional professional development as a way to ensure a higher quality workforce in student affairs, little progress has been made. Various committees and task forces have suggested frameworks for program development, the certification of program quality and attendance, the recording of individual participation, and recognition of individual achievement; but associations have failed to act because of a variety of concerns. To date, information on the views of affairs professionals on such issues is limited and has not been studied in a systematic way. This study sought to fill this void.*

A study of 2,346 student affairs professionals showed that there is a great deal of support for a more structured program of professional development activities as defined by Creamer et al. (1992). This held true especially for women, minorities, entry-level professionals, and

---

Steven M. Janosik is an associate professor in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia. Stan Carpenter is professor and chair of the Educational Administration and Psychological Services Department at Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas. Don G. Creamer is a professor emeritus of educational leadership and policy studies at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia.

those holding bachelors degrees. Respondents at smaller institutions and community colleges were as supportive as student affairs staff members at larger institutions. Resistance to the development of an intentional professional development program because of the cost of attending programs that carry CPECs or adverse effects upon less experienced or underrepresented professionals were not confirmed by these data.

A number of professions have some form of required professional development, usually at the entry level and then on a continuing basis. Indeed, it is often suggested that such learning is an obligation of a professional (Smutz, Crowe, & Lindsay, 1986; Carpenter, 1991). However, despite many articles, chapters, and reports spanning decades (Carpenter, 1998; Creamer & Claar, 1995; Creamer & Woodard, 1992; Creamer, Winston, Schuh, Gehring, McEwen, Forney, Carpenter, & Woodard, 1992; Creamer, Janosik, Winston, & Kuk, 2001; Janosik, 2002), very little has been done to organize professional development education and activity in student affairs work. Carpenter (2001, 2003) has suggested that, while professional development is an individual responsibility ultimately, it should be pursued and accomplished intentionally, with an awareness of the cutting edge of the profession. Professional associations have a role in helping to fulfill this personal responsibility.

In the absence of specific guidance, student affairs professionals who wished to keep their skills and knowledge current have had to rely on reading journals, consulting with their colleagues, attending conferences and workshops, and bringing speakers to campus, among other methods. The reliance on personal responsibility, however, is likely to be insufficient in the face of increasing calls for accountability in higher education (Carpenter, 1998; Schroder, 2003; Thelin, 2003) and the specter of the doubling of information every 7 years (Moore, 1995). This lack of attention to developing a more intentional process of professional development that helps ensure a higher quality workforce in the profession led Creamer et al. (1992) to suggest that a system for the “assessment of professional competencies and needs, continuing professional education, and recognition and reporting systems” is crucial for the profession’s well-being (p. 3). The topic continues to receive attention at the national level. The members of the executive board of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators

(NASPA) commissioned a proposal on a National Voluntary Registry that would be used to recognize and certify the professional development activities of their members in 2002 (Janosik, 2002) and the current president of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) commissioned a Task Force on Certification in 2005.

Reasons that have hindered progress on the issue of ensuring quality through a more intentional system of professional development are numerous. Carpenter (1998) noted a lack of consensus about what constitutes appropriate professional practice, the question of controlling or prescribing practices on individual campuses, the proper roles of professional associations, jurisdictional disputes among professions and professional organizations, and diversity, among others (p. 162). Others, such as Merrily Dunn, cochairperson of ACPA's Task Force on Certification, listed concerns such as the cost of attending programs, testing concerns, organizational control and power issues, fear of discrimination, and lack of consensus on core competencies as possible barriers to such an idea (Dunn, personnel communication, April 4, 2005).

While these summaries rely on anecdotal data and, in many instances, the thoughts of small numbers of student affairs professionals participating in panel or group discussions, this feedback has been important. Our hope was to build on these conversations by assessing perceptions of a much wider constituency.

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of support among a large group of student affairs professionals for a more intentional program of professional development activities that would include: (a) a program built around some structure such as professional competencies and needs, (b) continuing professional education, (c) recognition of effort, and (d) a reporting system mechanism. These are the basic elements of a model proposed by Creamer and his colleagues (Creamer et al., 1992).

## Method

### Instrument

A 16-item questionnaire was developed and revised through multiple

rounds of e-mail exchanges among 12 student affairs professionals. These professionals were serving on a task force devoted to the issue of professional development at the time the study was conducted, have had a long-standing interest in this topic, and have done extensive research using survey instruments. The final instrument consisted of six questions designed to evaluate support for specific elements of an intentional professional development program. For purposes of the study these elements included: (a) developing a defined professional development curriculum, (b) offering programs based on a curriculum, (c) assigning continuing professional education credits (CPECs) to programs that meet quality standards, (d) earning credits and recording professional development activities, (e) creating a career development transcript, and (f) seeking voluntary professional certification.

As further evidence of the questionnaire's content validity, task force members agreed by consensus that the final questions fairly represented the components of a professional development program currently being discussed by the members of ACPA's Task Force on Certification. A four-point Likert scale was developed as a response pattern for each question (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree). Ten other items solicited demographic information about the respondents. Once the questionnaire was finalized, it was converted to an electronic form and permission was obtained to host the survey on the computer servers at a research-intensive university. The Institutional Review Board of this institution approved the study.

## Participants

The researchers received permission to survey the members of ACPA, an international organization composed of a wide range of student affairs professionals. The fact that many of these potential participants were also members of NASPA was seen as positive. The membership database consisted of 6,815 viable e-mail addresses at the time the survey was posted on the Internet.

Association members were contacted by e-mail, invited to participate in the study, and directed to the URL where the electronic survey could be found. As electronic responses were returned, personal and

institutional identifiers were stripped from the data before the e-mail messages containing the data were delivered to the researchers. Participants were reminded that their responses would be used as grouped data only.

These processes assured confidentiality and anonymity. Two reminder e-mails were sent by administrators in the central office in an effort to increase the response rate. The first reminder was sent 10 days after the initial message and the second reminder was sent 11 days after the first. Respondents were not provided any incentives for their participation.

### Data Analysis

Simple frequency counts were calculated on the demographic data and responses to the six questions. Since the quantitative data were categorical, chi-square tests were conducted to examine differences between groups. Phi was also calculated to determine effect sizes. All responses were included in the analysis. Nonresponses to items in the questionnaire were treated as missing data. Totals may not, therefore, sum to 2,346 responses in some instances.

## Results

A total of 2,346 (34.4%) useable surveys were returned. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to check for the consistency of responses among the association members who completed the questionnaire. The coefficient for the six items given this sample ( $n = 2346$ ) was .89, which confirmed the consistency of responses and was sufficiently strong to allow group comparisons.

Pearson correlations were calculated to assess the inter-item correlation among the six questions designed to assess the level of support for various components of an intentional professional development program. These data are shown in Table 1. The items were moderately correlated as expected.

### Demographic Characteristics

The typical respondent was more likely to be a student affairs practi-

**Table 1**  
**Pearson Correlations Between Program Component Items**

Item	Developing Curriculum	Offering Programs	Attendance and CPECs	Earning & Recording CPECs	Career Transcripts	Voluntary Certification
Developing Curriculum		.708**	.528**	.489**	.484**	.515**
Offering Programs			.532**	.509**	.475**	.486**
Attendance and CPECs				.710**	.606**	.577**
Earning & Recording CPECs					.637**	.596**
Career Transcripts						.672**
Voluntary Certification						

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

tioner who was a White female, holding a masters degree, with nine years of experience in a mid-level position within her department at a large 4-year institution. The specific composition of the respondent group can be found in Table 2. Cross validation using chi-square was completed to test if the respondent group was representative of the association's membership. This analysis revealed no significant difference between the respondents and the membership when race was compared ( $\chi^2 = 10.08$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $p = .073$ ). Additional analyses revealed that the two groups were significantly different when type of institution and highest degree earned were examined. Respondents were more likely to work at 4-year institutions than was the membership at large ( $\chi^2 = 5.01$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .024$ ) and more likely to have earned a master's degree or a doctorate but less likely to have earned a bachelor's degree ( $\chi^2 = 131.27$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Other characteristics could not be compared because the metrics used in the respective data sets were not congruent with one another.

**Table 2**  
**Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 2,346) \***

<b>Gender</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>
Female	64.4	1495
Male	35.6	828
<b>Race</b>		
African American	9.0	209
Asian American	2.6	61
Hispanic or Latino	3.8	87
White; non-Hispanic	79.5	1844
Multiracial	2.5	59
Other	2.5	59
<b>Highest Degree Earned</b>		
Bachelors	11.5	267
Masters	68.6	1598
Doctorate	20.0	466
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Practitioner	92.8	2026
Faculty Member	7.2	158
<b>Organizational Level</b>		
Entry	38.7	808
Mid	33.4	697
Upper	27.9	582
<b>Institutional Type</b>		
2-year	4.8	99
4-year	95.2	1948
<b>Institutional Size</b>		
Small (1–4,500)	21.1	519
Medium (4,501–10,000)	18.2	448
Large (> 10,000)	60.7	1496

\*Numbers may not total to 2,346 due to missing data.

Simple frequencies were calculated on each of the six program elements of the model. Large majorities supported the creation of a more intentional program for professional development. Because concerns have been raised about the effects of such a program on student affairs professionals at smaller institutions, those without advanced degrees, and minorities, among others (Dunn, personnel communication, April 4, 2005), additional analyses were conducted to assess the level of support by those subgroups.

An important finding was that there were no significant differences in the responses to the proposed program elements when institutional type was examined. Respondents from 2-year institutions were not statistically different from their counterparts at 4-year institutions. There were also no significant differences when institutional size and certification status of the respondent were examined. Because of this consistent lack of difference and in the interest of space, additional analyses on these four independent variables (i.e., institutional type, institutional status, institutional size, certification status of the respondent) by program element item have been omitted.

### *Developing a Defined Professional Development Curriculum*

Ninety-three percent of respondents support an effort to develop a professional development curriculum based on core professional competencies to help individuals make more purposeful decisions about their professional development. Women (94%) were significantly more supportive than men (90%). Minorities (95%) were significantly more supportive than White (92%) respondents. Professionals in entry- (95%) and mid-level (95%) positions were significantly more supportive than those in upper level (88%) positions in their organizations. Professionals holding bachelors (98%) and masters (94%) degrees were significantly more supportive than those holding terminal (86%) degrees. These data are reported in Table 3.

### *Offering Programs Based on a Curriculum*

Ninety-four percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it would be helpful if professional associations offered some conference programs and regional workshops based on a student affairs curriculum of some type on a consistent basis. Women (95%) were significantly more supportive than men (93%). Professionals in entry- (96%) and mid-level (95%) positions were significantly more supportive



**Table 3**  
**Chi-square Results for Developing a Curriculum**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Agree (%)</b>	<b>Disagree (%)</b>	<b><math>\chi^2</math></b>	<b>df</b>	<b>p</b>	<b><math>\Phi</math></b>
<i>Gender (N = 2313)</i>						
Women	1399 (94)	89 ( 6)	8.95	1	.003	-.062
Men	748 (90)	77 ( 9)				
Total	2147 (93)	166 ( 7)				
<i>Race (N = 2310)</i>						
White	1698 (92)	139 ( 8)	4.22	1	.040	-.043
Minority	450 (95)	23 ( 5)				
Total	2148 (93)	162 ( 7)				
<i>Position (N = 2079)</i>						
Entry	766 (95)	41 ( 6)	31.78	2	.000	.124
Mid	654 (95)	38 ( 6)				
Upper	508 (88)	72 (12)				
Total	1928 (93)	151 ( 7)				
<i>Degree Earned (N = 2321)</i>						
Bachelors	260 (98)	5 ( 2)	42.12	2	.000	.135
Masters	1496 (94)	100 ( 6)				
Doctorate	397 (86)	63 (14)				
Total	2153 (93)	168 ( 7)				

than those in upper level (90%) positions in their organizations. Professionals holding bachelors (99%) and masters (94%) degrees were significantly more supportive than those holding terminal (90%) degrees. No statistical difference was found when race was compared. These data are reported in Table 4.

*Assigning CPECs to Programs that Meet Quality Standards*

Eighty-three percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would support an effort to certify professional development programs that met a set of agreed upon standards by assigning CPECs to them. Women (86%) were significantly more supportive than men

**Table 4**  
**Chi-square Results for Offering Programs**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Agree (%)</b>	<b>Disagree (%)</b>	<b><math>\chi^2</math></b>	<b>df</b>	<b>p</b>	<b><math>\Phi</math></b>
<i>Gender (N = 2306)</i>						
Women	1408 (95)	78 ( 5)	4.47	1	.034	-.044
Men	759 (93)	61 ( 7)				
Total	2167 (94)	139 ( 6)				
<i>Race (N = 2303)</i>						
White	1717 (94)	114 ( 6)	2.15	1	.143	-.031
Minority	451 (96)	21 ( 4)				
Total	2168 (94)	135 ( 6)				
<i>Position (N = 2071)</i>						
Entry	768 (96)	39 ( 5)	19.05	2	.000	.096
Mid	657 (95)	33 ( 5)				
Upper	521 (90)	56 (10)				
Total	1946 (94)	125 ( 6)				
<i>Degree Earned (N = 2313)</i>						
Bachelors	263 (99)	3 ( 1)	23.67	2	.000	.101
Masters	1499 (94)	91 ( 6)				
Doctorate	412 (90)	45 (10)				
Total	2174 (94)	139 ( 6)				

(79%). Minorities (88%) were significantly more supportive than White (83%) respondents. Professionals in entry- (87%) and mid-level (86%) positions were significantly more supportive than those in upper level (76%) positions in their organizations. Professionals holding bachelors (89%) and masters (85%) degrees were significantly more supportive than those holding terminal (74%) degrees. These data appear in Table 5.

**Table 5**  
**Chi-square Results for Recording Attendance at CPEC Programs**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Agree (%)</b>	<b>Disagree (%)</b>	<b><math>\chi^2</math></b>	<b><i>df</i></b>	<b><i>p</i></b>	<b><math>\Phi</math></b>
<i>Gender (N = 2298)</i>						
Women	1270 (86)	203 (14)	21.90	1	.000	-.098
Men	649 (79)	176 (21)				
Total	1919 (83)	379 (17)				
<i>Race (N = 2295)</i>						
White	1504 (83)	318 (18)	7.39	1	.007	-.057
Minority	415 (88)	58 (12)				
Total	1919 (84)	376 (16)				
<i>Position (N = 2065)</i>						
Entry	695 (87)	108 (13)	33.96	2	.000	.126
Mid	589 (86)	99 (14)				
Upper	434 (76)	140 (24)				
Total	1718 (83)	347 (17)				
<i>Degree Earned (N = 2306)</i>						
Bachelors	237 (89)	29 (11)	37.27	2	.000	.127
Masters	1350 (85)	236 (15)				
Doctorate	337 (74)	117 (26)				
Total	1924 (83)	382 (17)				

*Earning Credits and Recording Professional Development Activities*

Eight-seven percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would participate in a program where CPECs could be voluntarily earned and recorded as a record of professional achievement. Women (89%) were significantly more supportive than men (82%). Minorities (91%) were significantly more supportive than White (86%) respondents. Professionals in entry- (93%) and mid-level (88%) positions

were significantly more supportive than those in upper level (76%) positions in their organizations. Professionals holding bachelors (96%) and masters (89%) degrees were significantly more supportive than those holding terminal (73%) degrees. These data are reported in Table 6.

**Table 6**  
**Chi-square Results for Earning and Recording CPECs**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Agree (%)</b>	<b>Disagree (%)</b>	<b><math>\chi^2</math></b>	<b><i>df</i></b>	<b><i>p</i></b>	<b><math>\Phi</math></b>
<i>Gender (N = 2297)</i>						
Women	1319 (89)	159 (11)	23.07	1	.000	-.100
Men	675 (82)	147 (18)				
Total	1991 (87)	306 (13)				
<i>Race (N = 2293)</i>						
White	1563 (86)	258 (14)	7.02	1	.008	-.055
Minority	427 (91)	45 (10)				
Total	1990 (87)	303 (13)				
<i>Position (N = 2066)</i>						
Entry	746 (93)	60 ( 8)	78.59	2	.000	.195
Mid	609 (88)	80 (12)				
Upper	436 (76)	135 (24)				
Total	1791 (87)	275 (13)				
<i>Degree Earned (N = 2304)</i>						
Bachelors	257 (96)	10 ( 4)	95.91	2	.000	.204
Masters	1408 (89)	178 (11)				
Doctorate	331 (73)	120 (27)				
Total	1996 (87)	308 (13)				

*Creating a Career Development Transcript*

Eighty-four percent of respondents favored creating a program where they could create their own career development transcript. Women (87%) were significantly more supportive than men (80%). Minorities

(90%) were significantly more supportive than White (83%) respondents. Professionals in entry- (90%) and mid-level (85%) positions were significantly more supportive than those in upper level (75%) positions in their organizations. Professionals holding bachelors (96%) and masters (86%) degrees were significantly more supportive than those holding terminal (73%) degrees. These data can be found in Table 7.

**Table 7**  
**Chi-square Results for Developing Career Transcripts**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Agree (%)</b>	<b>Disagree (%)</b>	<b><math>\chi^2</math></b>	<b><i>df</i></b>	<b><i>p</i></b>	<b><math>\Phi</math></b>
<i>Gender (N = 2302)</i>						
Women	1285 (87)	194 (13)	17.44	1	.000	-.087
Men	661 (80)	162 (20)				
Total	1946 (85)	356 (15)				
<i>Race (N = 2298)</i>						
White	1522 (83)	305 (17)	12.18	1	.000	-.073
Minority	423 (90)	48 (10)				
Total	1945 (85)	353 (15)				
<i>Position (N = 2072)</i>						
Entry	723 (90)	81 (10)	58.49	2	.000	.168
Mid	586 (85)	106 (15)				
Upper	430 (75)	146 (25)				
Total	1739 (84)	333 (16)				
<i>Degree Earned (N = 2310)</i>						
Bachelors	255 (96)	10 (4)	76.24	2	.000	.182
Masters	1361 (86)	226 (14)				
Doctorate	334 (73)	124 (27)				
Total	1950 (84)	360 (16)				

### *Seeking Voluntary Professional Certification*

Eighty-seven percent of respondents indicated support for the creation of a program where members, on a voluntary basis, could seek professional certification by their association based on their academic preparation, experience in the field, and continuing professional education. Women (89%) were significantly more supportive than men (83%). Minorities (92%) were significantly more supportive than White (86%) respondents. Professionals in entry- (90%) and mid-level (89%) positions were significantly more supportive than those in upper level (81%) positions in their organizations. Professionals holding bachelors (94%) and masters (88%) degrees were significantly more supportive than those holding terminal (78%) degrees. These data and the accompanying statistical analysis are shown in Table 8.

## Discussion

In the past, concerns have been raised about the need for and the ramifications of certification efforts in the field of student affairs. These are not trivial issues and should not be minimized. It must be noted, however, that professions with similar concerns have overcome them. Teachers, counselors, social workers, nurses, accountants, doctors, and lawyers are all required to maintain their skills and knowledge levels through systems of continuing education. Other groups of professionals, such as the college physical plant administrators, have created certificate programs that can be taken voluntarily during the course of several years at their association's annual summer conference as a way to show professional development. These are only a few examples of a large and growing movement across a wide array of professions and occupations.

This study shows that there is a great deal of support for intentional professional development and voluntary certification within this group of student affairs professionals. This holds true especially for women, minorities, entry-level professionals, and those holding bachelors degrees. Just as noteworthy, respondents at smaller institutions and community colleges were as supportive as student affairs staff members at larger institutions. Resistance to the development of an intentional professional development program because of the cost of attending programs that carry CPECs or adversely affecting less expe-

**Table 8**  
**Chi-square Results for Voluntary Certification**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Agree (%)</b>	<b>Disagree (%)</b>	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	$\Phi$
<i>Gender (N = 2301)</i>						
Women	1321 (89)	159 (11)	18.59	1	.000	-.090
Men	681 (83)	140 (17)				
Total	2002 (87)	299 (13)				
<i>Race (N = 2295)</i>						
White	1569 (86)	256 (14)	11.04	1	.001	-.069
Minority	432 (92)	39 ( 8)				
Total	2001 (87)	295 (13)				
<i>Position (N = 2066)</i>						
Entry	717 (90)	84 (10)	27.30	2	.000	.115
Mid	616 (89)	76 (11)				
Upper	462 (81)	111 (19)				
Total	1785 (87)	271 (13)				
<i>Degree Earned (N = 2308)</i>						
Bachelors	251 (94)	15 ( 6)	50.27	2	.000	.148
Masters	1401 (88)	186 (12)				
Doctorate	353 (78)	102 (22)				
Total	2005 (87)	303 (13)				

rienced or underrepresented professionals was not confirmed by these data.

At least three quarters of every group supported the idea of creating a more intentional program of professional development activities based on some type of student affairs curriculum. Respondents supported the creation of a certification process that would assign CPECs to programs that meet established criteria. They supported mechanisms that would allow them to earn CPECs, record their professional development activity, and receive recognition by their associations for that effort. In most instances, this support fell in the 85% to 90% range.

Those who were statistically less supportive tended to be well-established professionals, who hold upper-level positions at their institutions, hold terminal degrees and may be well along in their careers. However, even among this group, support was strong.

### Implications for Policy and Professional Practice

The importance of these findings can hardly be overstated. Winston and Creamer (1997) have observed that while there has been a clear trend toward hiring student affairs professionals with strong directly related preparation and experience, under credentialed and uncredentialed individuals are still hired at our colleges and universities. These individuals are more likely to be employed at smaller, less prestigious, rural institutions where there are fewer resources of all types including labor. This study suggests that respondents at these types of institutions and those with bachelor's degrees are just as supportive of intentional professional development as are other groups that might find themselves in more advantageous work environments. Indeed, these individuals may have the most to gain from such a program.

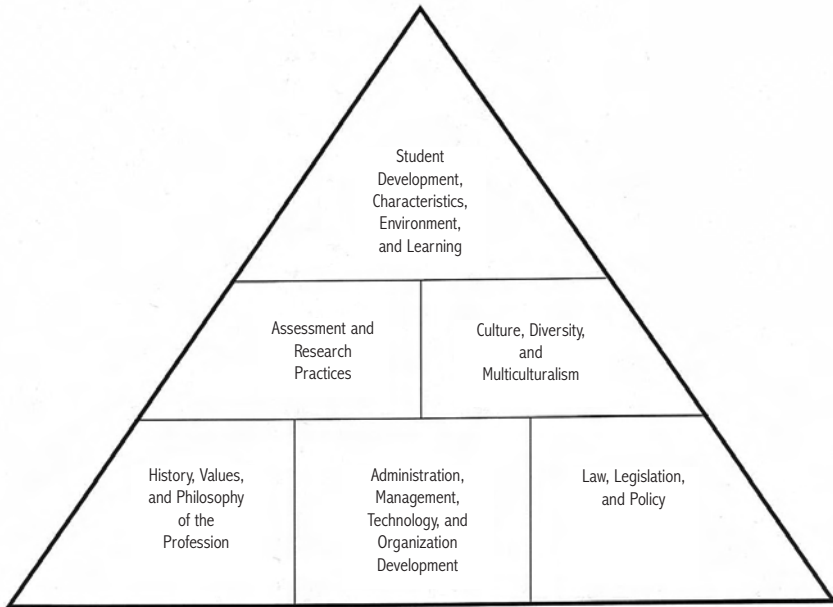
To ensure a quality workforce, Janosik, Carpenter, and Creamer (in press) suggest that professional associations should agree upon and develop an intentional plan for continuing professional education. The findings of this study suggest that student affairs professional strongly support such a mechanism.

Some progress has already been made on this idea. NASPA's 2006 national conference program chairperson used a student affairs "curriculum matrix" to highlight the content areas addressed by selected programs at its national convention. A slightly revised version of such a curriculum matrix, which is being tested by a national student affairs association, is shown in Figure 1 (Janosik, 2002). This is one example of such a structure, but others might work as well.

ACPA's president has formed a Steering Committee that is working on identifying professional competencies, and members of the Task Force on Certification are completing their work on a final report. These two groups, along with the Council on the Advancement of Standards and others, should be brought together as soon as possible to coordinate this work.



**Figure 1**  
**The Student Affairs Professional Development Curriculum**



As the leaders in these organizations continue their work, they should consider the following recommendations:

1. Responsibility for the development of these programs should be delegated to central staff, executive directors of their respective associations, or some group that can ensure greater continuity for the quality of the overall program.
2. One or more major national higher education leadership organizations should take leadership in developing this CPEC program for professional development.
3. Those who enter the field without formal academic preparation and allied professionals, such as nurses, accountants, and others in student affairs organizations should be afforded an opportunity to learn about the underpinnings of the field and about the nature and behavior of their clientele. A modified CPEC program could

be readily developed by senior scholars and practitioners and should be provided by the general associations, perhaps in conjunction with specialty associations.

4. Access by professionals with all levels of previous education, budget, learning style, remoteness of location, and so on must be assured.
5. Access must be paralleled by consumer advocacy and awareness, buttressed by peer review. Not all programs would qualify for CPEC credit, and some sort of process would need to be created to make professional judgments about relative quality. Participant must be given information necessary to make an informed, intentional decision. Such data should include learning outcomes, audiences, credentials of the presenters, and how the program meets CPEC criteria, among other things.
6. Professionals who choose to organize their professional development in the prescribed and suggested ways and in an intentional, continuing manner should be recognized. Systems to manage record and manage the program should be established by professional associations or some consortium of them.

## Limitations

All research suffers from certain limitations, and this study was no exception. The numbers of items in the study limited the level of detail in the structure of an intentional professional development program that could be examined. Respondents may have felt differently about other components that could have been included. Self-report data might not be as reliable as other forms of data such as observation. The number of chi-square tests performed and the unequal number of respondents in various groups may have increased the possibility of Type I errors. It is also important to note that the size effects were small. Although many of the group comparisons in the study were statistically significant, the interpretation of their practical significance may be limited. Despite these shortcomings, this study is the first large-scale assessment of its kind and these results add a great deal to the discussion about intentional professional development and voluntary certification.

## Conclusion

In another forum, we have argued that “all professional associations have an obligation to ensure the quality of professional preparation and practice. All professional associations have an obligation to improve the skills and knowledge base of their members” (Janosik, Carpenter, & Creamer, in press). We maintain that professional associations in student affairs have been too passive on both counts. The future of our profession rests on the willingness of those who lead these associations to do more. This study has shown that, despite the concern expressed by some leaders in the field, the members of one of the largest student affairs associations support a more structured system of professional development that includes the earning of CPECs and being recognized in some official way by their associations for their efforts. Like so many reforms or good habits, the best time to begin was two decades ago. The second best time is now. We need to begin active work on a model of intentional continuing professional development that is profession driven, peer reviewed, research based, accessible to all, responsive to diversity, voluntary, and challenging.

## References

- Carpenter, D. S. (1991). The student affairs profession: A developmental perspective. In T. K. Miller, R. B. Winston, & W. Mendenhall (Eds.), *Administration and leadership in student affairs*, (2nd ed.) (pp. 212–231). Muncie, IN: Accelerated Development.
- Carpenter, D. S. (1998). Continuing professional education in student affairs. In N. Evans & C. Phelps (Eds.), *The state of the art of preparation and practice in student affairs* (pp. 159–176). Washington, DC: American College Personnel Association.
- Carpenter, D. S. (2001). Student affairs scholarship (re?)considered: Toward a scholarship of practice. *Journal of College Student Development*, 42 (4), 301–318.
- Carpenter, D. S. (2003). Professionalism in student affairs work. In S. Komives & D. Woodard (Eds.), *Student services: A handbook for the profession* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) (pp. 573–591). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Creamer, D. G., & Claar, J. (1995). *Report of the Interassociation Committee on continuing professional education to the NASPA and ACPA boards*. Unpublished paper available from the authors.

- Creamer, D. G., Janosik, S. M., Winston, R. B., & Kuk, L. (2001). *Quality assurance in student affairs: Role and commitments of NASPA*. Policy statement published by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, Washington, DC.
- Creamer, D. G., Winston, R. B., Schuh, J., Gehring, D., McEwen, M. L., Forney, D., Carpenter, D. S., & Woodard, D. B. (1992). *Quality assurance in student affairs: A proposal for action by professional associations*. Report published by the American College Personnel Association and the National Student Personnel Association, Washington, DC.
- Creamer, D. G., & Woodard, D. B. (1992). *Accrediting and credentialing in college student affairs: The role of ACPA and NASPA Boards*. Unpublished paper commissioned by the American College Personnel Association and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, Washington, DC.
- Janosik, S. M. (2002). *The development of a national registry for student affairs administrators*. Report published by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, Washington, DC.
- Janosik, S. M., Carpenter, D. S., & Creamer, D. G. (in press). Beyond professional preparation programs: The role of professional associations in ensuring a quality workforce. *Journal of College Student Affairs*.
- Moore, K. (1995). *Women in leadership: Preparing for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of NASPA IV-East, Dearborn, MI.
- Schroder, C. C. (2003). Using the lessons from research to develop partnerships. In S. Komives & D. Woodard (Eds.), *Student Services: A Handbook for the Profession* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) (pp. 618–636). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Smutz, W. D., Crowe, M. B., & Lindsay, C. A. (1986). Emerging perspectives on continuing professional education. In J. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (vol. II, pp. 385–423). New York: Agathon Press.
- Thelin, J. R. (2003). Historical overview of American higher education. In S. Komives & D. Woodard (Eds.), *Student Services: A Handbook for the Profession* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) (pp. 573–591). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Winston, R. B., Jr., & Creamer, D. G. (1997). *Improving staffing practices in student affairs*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.