

Teacher-Scholar: The Journal of the State Comprehensive University

Volume 10
Issue 2 *Student Affairs at the State
Comprehensive University*

Article 1

January 2021

Preface to the Special Issue: Student Affairs at the State Comprehensive University

Phillip A. Olt
Fort Hays State University, paolt@fhsu.edu

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Recommended Citation

Olt, Phillip A. (2021) "Preface to the Special Issue: Student Affairs at the State Comprehensive University," *Teacher-Scholar: The Journal of the State Comprehensive University*. Vol. 10: Iss. 2, Article 1.

DOI: 10.58809/JSQV8105

Available at: <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/ts/vol10/iss2/1>

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**Preface to the Special Issue:
Student Affairs at the State Comprehensive University**

Phillip A. Olt
Fort Hays State University

Both state comprehensive universities (SCUs) in the United States and the profession of student affairs have reached crisis points emerging from 2020. As the COVID-19 pandemic profoundly affected worldwide health and economies, so too did it impact higher education.

Pandemic conditions forced any institutions to abruptly shift from their traditionally residential modality to delivering educational experiences at a distance. With many state comprehensive universities already struggling from enrollment declines and state funding shortfalls, the pandemic weighed heavily on the sector. SCUs have often marketed themselves for small class sizes that were ideal for teaching and close connection to the faculty, but the pandemic suspended that environment for many institutions. This has left many SCUs in an untenable position and potentially approaching the death spiral of low enrollments driving cost cutting measures that, in turn, lead to even lower enrollments.

Similarly, the field of student affairs has struggled with delivering a personal development experience in an impersonal (distance) environment. Over the last decade, many in the field had called for an investment in the development of student affairs for remote students, and professional organizations have responded. The most recent edition of the competencies issued jointly by the two largest professional organizations in the field—the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA)—came out in 2016, in part to add a new competency of “Technology.” The University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA) has drastically increased its influence in recent years though a focus on such services for non-traditional students and settings. And yet, despite this gradual reorientation of the profession, student affairs has struggled during the current pandemic.

Call for Submissions

In this special issue of *Teacher-Scholar: The Journal of the State Comprehensive University*, authors are encouraged to submit original manuscripts based on new data collection and/or analysis that investigate student affairs within the context of the state comprehensive university. For the purposes of this special issue, “student affairs” is defined broadly and does not exclude specific divisions of practice (ex. academic advising); rather, it may include anything that extends beyond the standard curriculum of academia in order to develop the whole student.

This may even include coursework wherein it is oriented toward the student affairs mission (ex. freshman orientation taught as a for-credit curricular requirement). Submissions do not need to specifically investigate the pandemic crisis, though such submissions are welcome.

In addition to the general Aims & Scope for the journal, submissions are welcomed for this special issue from the following additional categories:

1. **Assessment and Program Evaluation.** Authors may submit original reports of organizational assessments and program evaluations. All such submissions must have Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for submission which allows the inclusion of the institution's identity and the program/division under consideration (ex. Fort Hays State University, Residential Life), though protecting confidentiality at other levels. This is important as a matter of interest disclosure from the author(s) and relevance to readers. Further, the author(s) of assessment or program evaluation submissions *must* include recommendations for practice and/or lessons learned that are written with readers at other institutions in mind.
2. **Philosophy of Practice.** Such submissions must be situated within the body of research literature and current events in order to focus on the appropriate role of student affairs at the state comprehensive university during and after the pandemic crisis.
3. **Auto / Duo / Polyethnography.** While these forms of qualitative research would already be allowed under the Aims & Scope of the journal, they are especially encouraged for this special issue for those working in student affairs to share their lived experiences as situated in the context of research literature.

Contact

Authors with questions about the applicability of a topic or approach may contact the editor for this special issue prior to submission—Dr. Phillip Olt (paolt@fhsu.edu).