

# Campus Life Cluster Retreat Summary Report

*prepared by*

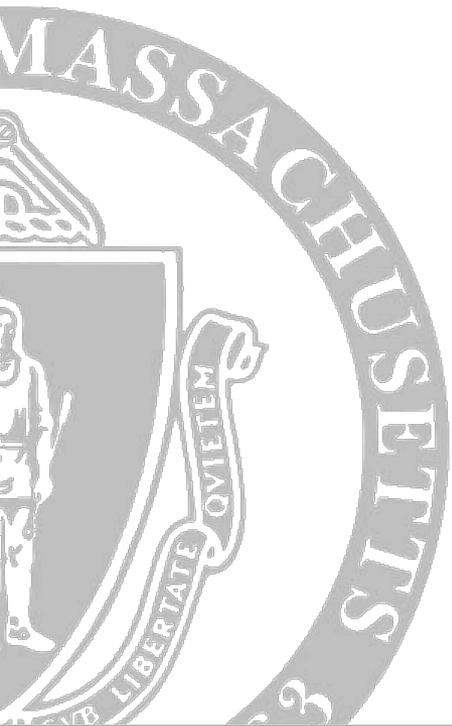
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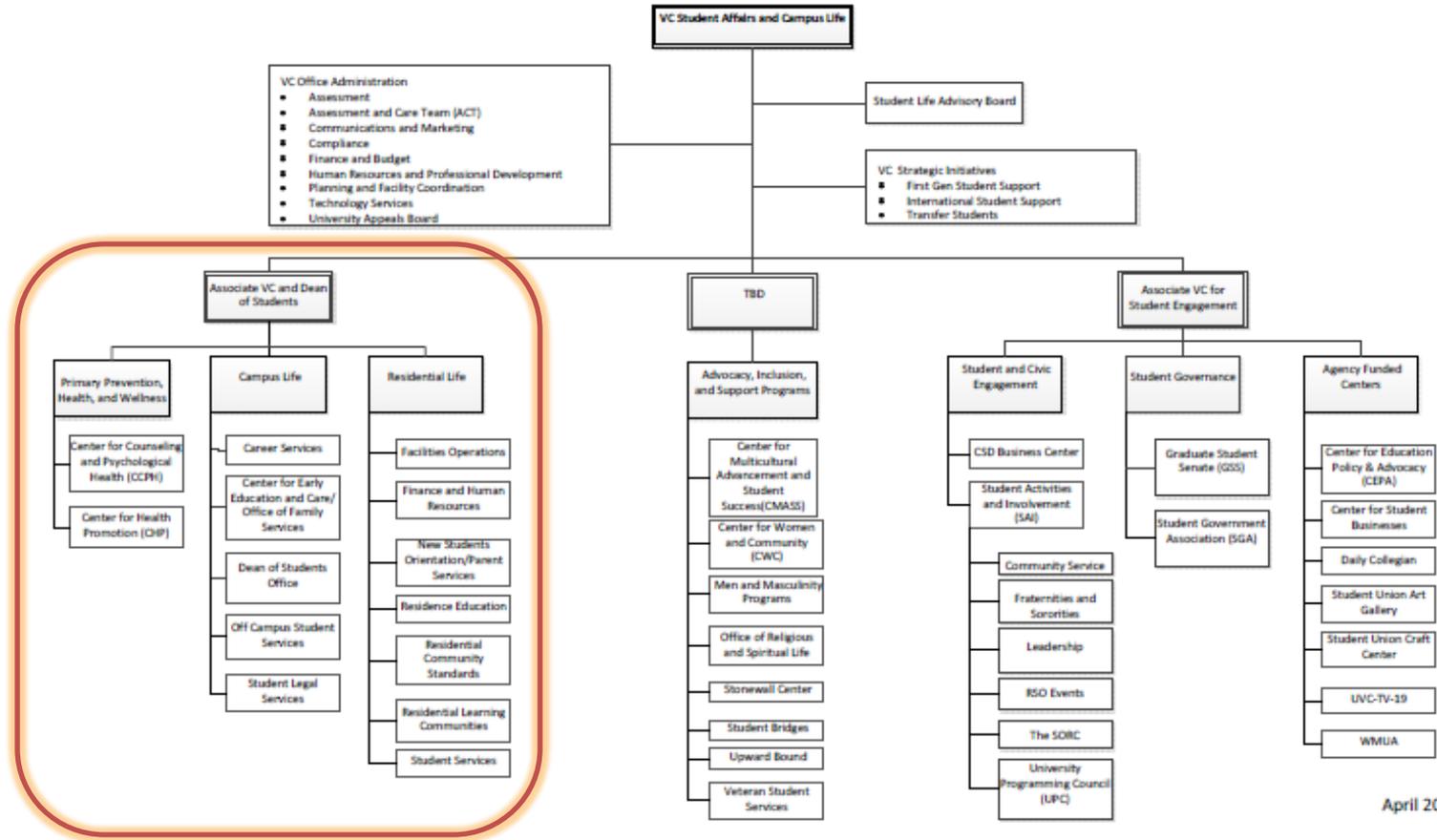
*"Culture does not change because we desire to change it.  
Culture changes when the organization is transformed –  
the culture reflects the realities of people working together every day."*

*– Frances Hesselbein*



# SACL – New Model

University of Massachusetts Amherst  
Student Affairs and Campus Life



April 2014

## Introduction & Overview

This report is a summary of the information generated during the Campus Life Cluster retreat on May 14, 2014. The retreat activities represented first-round brainstorming discussions around four key questions/topics:

1. Purpose
2. Core Values
3. New Roles & Responsibilities
4. Maximizing Effectiveness

Retreat participants kept notes of their input during each retreat activity. As retreat participants identified additional questions and/or topics lying outside of those key questions, they made note of them within a separate “Parking Lot” topic.

Participants’ handwritten and digital notes were submitted, transcribed, then analyzed using a process of iterative open coding, to identify categories and themes.

**This report is offered to the Cluster as a working document. It is intended to provide a starting point for the next round of Cluster discussions, as the Cluster continues its work to clarify, refine, focus, and move toward consensus around their purpose, values, roles and responsibilities, and action plans.**

## Purpose

*We described our Cluster's purpose in the following ways:*

1. ***What our Cluster DOES:*** Mostly focusing on what we are already doing right now, but sometimes also focusing on what we must start doing.
  - The ways we describe what we do tend to be either **student-focused** or **colleague-focused**.
2. ***What our Cluster PROVIDES***
3. ***Our INTENDED GOALS for students***
4. ***Key CONTEXT features***
5. ***Our Cluster NEEDS, including topics for further Cluster DELIBERATION***

## Purpose: What Our Cluster Does

### STUDENT-FOCUSED

How we currently engage or should engage with students and/or on their behalf

***THEME: Create immediate, essential, welcoming, safe environment; support individuals via the built-in environment***

- Policy
- Space
- Safety
- Different students with different needs
- Put practices into work that support student success; change practices if they are not meeting the needs of students

***THEME: Help, encourage & support students***

- When they most need it; vulnerable period of life, during potentially sensitive situations or stressful events
- Become adults; transition from being parented to independent, through graduation
- Create connections
- to be successful
- to be healthy
- Make life decisions

***“We are first responders.”***

## Purpose: What Our Cluster Does

### STUDENT-FOCUSED

How we currently engage or should engage with students and/or on their behalf

#### ***THEME: Teach students***

- to be good community members
- to advocate for themselves
- to value differences
- to make good decisions

#### ***THEME: Challenge students***

- Address behavior that is incongruent with university values
- Expose them to differences
- Challenge the privileged

*Also mentioned:*

- Meet students' most basic life needs

## Purpose: What Our Cluster Does

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### **COLLEAGUE-FOCUSED**

**How we currently engage or should engage with each other, including co-workers situated both inside and outside the cluster**

- Advocate for students
- Build community
- Collaborate, partner
  - With parents & families
  - Coach faculty
- Support the academic mission of the university – “some of the stronger academic connections happen at this cluster”

## Purpose: What Our Cluster Provides

***THEME: Supportive living and learning environment that allows students to reach their potential & graduate***

- Safety – including safe to fail & be picked up
- Security
- Structure
- Belonging
- Programmatic opportunities

***THEME: A good basis***

- Core set of services that lets students be successful
- Policies & practices that support student success

*Also mentioned:*

- Access to care, services, support
- “Framework for a society”
- Direct front line service; immediate crisis response & resource

***The Campus Life Cluster is  
“a living laboratory for skill development.”***

## Purpose: Our Intended Goals for Students

*Our Cluster purpose includes our descriptions of what students can or should DO, with the support of our Cluster's work.*

- ***Make a connection, find a friend***
- Accountability
- Balance life and academic life
- Engaged citizens
- Learn
- Responsibility
- Transition to independent living

### ***THEME: Function in the real world, including:***

- Live with other people
- Get good apt
- Negotiate with landlords, neighbors
- Pay bills
- Prepare to live on their own as they graduate
- Gain life skills

## Purpose: Key Context Features

*While discussing our Cluster purpose, we identified key context features that shape and define our Cluster's work. These features are central to understanding our work.*

### **Key context features central to our cluster's work**

- We have to serve everyone
- Meet students where they are
- See students at their worst or best
- Work with high risk populations
- Respond to crises of all kinds
- Capture students with particular sets of issues/concerns that wouldn't be captured otherwise
- Outside of the classroom

## Purpose: Our Cluster Needs

*While discussing our Cluster purpose, we began to identify some of our Cluster needs*

### ***THEME: Communication & connection within the Cluster***

- More sense of community
- Be able to have conversations
- More cross-conversations in the cluster
- More meeting outside of vertical (like ACT)
- Interconnection with other parts of the cluster
- More horizontal – we get stuck in the vertical
- More efficient conversation for students in distress

#### *Also mentioned:*

- Focus on the whole student life
- To include employees too
- To be responsive to parents as well, within the cluster

### ***THEME: Consistent information & messaging***

- More cohesion of information among different campus agencies/individuals for more integrated experience for students
- One person who is coordinating the message to ensure that all depts are providing same information

### ***THEME: Put more energy into prevention***

- Rethink prevention at the counseling center
- Responding to crisis vs programming to help prevent

## Purpose: Our Cluster Needs

*While discussing Cluster purpose, we identified a number of related questions and topics that need further deliberation within our Cluster.*

### **For further Cluster deliberation:**

- Correct cluster name?
  - Health & wellness as the title of the cluster
- Confusing that Associate VC & DOS is above cluster
- Get a department in cluster under Campus Life
- Is there a change from before? (re purpose)
- Perception of each of our positions (e.g., Res Life: hotel management vs supportive)
- What links us as a cluster, as opposed to the other groups?
- We are losing kindness, patience within system; students we bring in at 67% narcissism scale?

## Core Values

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*We defined our Cluster core values in 2 ways:*

***Cluster-focused***

***Student-focused***

## Core Values: Our Definitions

### CLUSTER-FOCUSED

#### ***THEME: Build & model a culture of collaboration***

- Work as a team on particular students so they are getting the benefit of everyone's expertise (area of improvement)
- Staying connected to each other, that's how we wrap around the students and make them feel "known" and respected
- We as a cluster help navigate the community for our students and model the relationships – org chart exists for us but not for students, learn culture by seeing us work together
- Open up the process of collaboration and walk towards it

#### ***THEME: Knowledge***

- We shouldn't just help our students in our areas of expertise, but make sure we know enough to help them/direct them/connect them with others
- Understand each others' roles and how we are going to work together
- We need people to be well informed -- so this should be a core value.

## Core Values: Our Definitions

### CLUSTER-FOCUSED

#### ***THEME: Skills, training***

- How to negotiate people
- What help can we give each other is how we speak/connect; e.g. here's how you start a hard conversation or here's how to de-escalate

#### ***THEME: Trust***

- Trusting expertise of different departments
- Have a better sense of each other's values – divisional, departmental, institutional and make sure they line up better

#### *Also mentioned:*

- Respect job differences
- Receptive to feedback
- Appreciate inquiry
- Build on what organization does well
- Appreciate people's strengths and build on that

## Core Values: Our Definitions

### STUDENT-FOCUSED

#### ***THEME: Good quality of life***

- Health and wellness for students, staff, faculty
- Safety
- Social justice

#### ***THEME: Help students develop***

- Student-centered, with high focus on student development, human development, personal development
- “Make students healthy, responsible, engaged”
- Teach students to be articulate about what they want and need, and what they should do about it
- Developing workplace skills, talents, and abilities that will help them be leaders and community minded people – if you’ve been helped, you’ll be able to help someone else
- “Go out into real world and use what we have given them”

## Core Values: Our Definitions

### STUDENT-FOCUSED

#### ***THEME: Care & support***

- The act of caring for students
- Active referrals – figure it out, ask questions, pick up the phone – doing it with students until they get it
- Take care of each other
- Not letting students get lost in the crowd – not being numbers and helping students in one separate area at a time (we need to not be “too big for that”)
- Feeling supported through processes even if they disagree
- Empowered in the system and self-determined

#### ***THEME: Connection***

- Finding the connection between students and the university, other students, staff, etc. – in good ways too (student organizations and initiatives)
- High connection to students
- Try to create personal connection
- Build bridges to the community or outside partners

#### *Also mentioned:*

- Systematic advocacy – notice that something isn't working, working on system issues rather than just one student

## Roles & Responsibilities

*We discussed our Cluster's roles and responsibilities in the following ways:*

**1. We identified 4 types of Cluster roles and responsibilities**

- ***Student-specific***
- ***Institution-specific***
- ***Cluster-specific***
- ***Individual***

**2. Our Cluster NEEDS**

**3. Topics for further Cluster DELIBERATION**

## Roles & Responsibilities: Student-Specific

### ***THEME: Increase student contact & input***

- Student involvement in decision-making
- More direct contact with students
- More individuals that have direct contact with students
- Move where they are

### ***THEME: Train peers to train others***

- Emphasis on training peers to train others
- New initiatives involving students educating other students
  - CCPH can train RL staff on how to teach stress reduction, etc.
  - Not just being brought in for an evening to teach 5 RAs

### *Also mentioned:*

- Advocate for our students
- Serve students as a whole and need to serve students equitably
- Help student to see there is a connected network of people who care
- Primary bridge to academic affairs
- Other clusters have identity-focus to their work, we have the strongest academic connections – NSO, RLC, Career, DOS

## Roles & Responsibilities: Institution-Specific

### ***THEME: Systematic approaches & responses to crisis***

- Campus response to crisis, systematic approach to particular instances
- Consistent and systematic responses

### ***THEME: Teach***

- Teaching campus how to work with students
- We need to teach culture/community and make the balance

#### *Also mentioned:*

- Build the bridge between academic affairs and student affairs

## Roles & Responsibilities: Cluster-Specific

### ***MAJOR THEME: Build relationships and collaborate within the Cluster***

- Have people build relationships across cluster lines
- Intentional engagement of stakeholders within the cluster in planning and implementation of initiatives
- Looking at how we work with each other – genuinely collaborating with each other
- More interaction, and asking what are we overlapping
- Need for releases and an increase in interactions/collaboration – finding ways to work around confidentiality
- Need to get to know each other better and our roles/responsibilities more clearly
- Others don't actually know what someone does
- Roles that help with cross collaboration
- Ways to come together other than SALAD
- Students get “lost in the shuffle” so much – if we work together better, we can get them where they need to go and/or help make a connection more directly
- There is a lack of respect for jobs across areas. Do others actually what we all do? There is a lot of assumption that makes staff not feel valued
- We don't collaborate well – more systemic collaboration and communication
- We can do better at getting students the information and services they need without passing the buck; if we interacted as a division more, we would have the faces, names, hunches as to how to direct students or find better support for them
- We need to communicate more; more programming/education

## Roles & Responsibilities: Cluster-Specific

### ***MAJOR THEME: Constructive within-Cluster communication model/structure for information-sharing and dialogue***

- Roles that infuse everyone and enhance communication.
  - Allow feedback, create space for conversations, and use honest conversation – creating structures that allow space for this to happen
  - Creating communication model for the cluster – cross-communication
  - Finding a better way to communicate with colleagues across departmental lines
  - It seems that we will need to do a better job informing other departments in the cluster re: programming, trends, issues
  - Lines of communication and domains instead of columns
- ListServ – to know contacts and programs that are available, create and infrastructure that supports this
  - Dialogue is too hierarchical, hard to get information to the lower levels, current zones of information-having is hard for those of us who don't work with students to feel a part of the larger community, but we are expected to understand the academic component of the work
  - Need to approach each other without the prejudices that our roles employ – i.e. we need to speak the same language and see each other as resources, not competition to resources
    - Probably duplicate efforts going on

## Roles & Responsibilities: Cluster-Specific

### ***THEME: Use data that we have within the Cluster***

- Use Assessment, we have data available – how do we make it available to all?
- Share data with others – dept and divisional report sharing
- We have data but are still not using it in decision making
  - CCPH has data, RL has data – how do we share it? The Wiki? Most didn't even know what it is.

### ***THEME: Cross-train***

- Cross-training so we understand each other's roles in specific types of instances
- Education on community pieces

### ***THEME: Sustainable efforts***

- When one person leaves, their knowledge and projects shouldn't leave
- Sustainable projects and relationships

## Roles & Responsibilities: Individual

We also identified a set of **Individual** staff roles and responsibilities.

### ***THEME: Respect each other***

- There is a lack of respect for jobs across areas. Do others actually know what we all do? There is a lot of assumption that makes staff not feel valued
- Ownership and respecting one another, it doesn't become "someone else's job"

## Roles & Responsibilities: Our Cluster Needs

*While discussing Cluster roles & responsibilities, we identified some related Cluster needs*

- Leaders need to be the champions of cross-cluster structures and advocacy
- SALAD needs to reach farther, deeper into the organization
- SALAD is an information drop, but not an opportunity for feedback
- Departmental and divisional report sharing

## Roles & Responsibilities: Our Cluster Needs

*While discussing Cluster roles & responsibilities, we identified a number of related questions and topics that need further deliberation within our Cluster.*

### **FOR FURTHER CLUSTER DELIBERATION**

#### **THEME: Working with students**

- *How do we learn more about our students?*
- *How do we get feedback from the student?*
- *How to deal with students who are coming forward on behalf of someone else/follow up*
- *How do we catch all students that need support and point out potential needs with colleagues*
- *Could CCPH be more involved with offering for credit classes to teach relaxation, etc. to RAs?*
- *How to maintain one on one contact*

#### **THEME: Organizing our work**

- *How do we do it different NOT do MORE?*
- *Online culture – why do I have to meet with anyone?*
- *Difficult to record and document what we do, did.*
- *Make sure the documentation doesn't exceed the student interaction.*
- *Don't get bogged down in paperwork retention*
- *How do we shift from a learning not just doing organizing?*
- *How do you recognize when something is not right?*

#### **THEME: Working with each other**

- *How do we collaborate and maintain student confidentiality where do we overlap? How can we do that better?*
- *How should we be behaving with colleagues – hierarchies of respect/disrespect develop*

## Maximize Effectiveness

*We discussed how to maximize our Cluster's effectiveness in the following ways:*

- 1. We focused primarily on what we need to do COLLECTIVELY as a Cluster.***
- 2. We also identified what we need to do to maximize our effectiveness FOR STUDENTS***
- 3. Our Cluster NEEDS, including topics for further Cluster DELIBERATION***

# Maximize Effectiveness: What We Need to Do Collectively

## ***MAJOR THEME: Initiate personal connections and relationships within the Cluster***

### ***THEME: Intentional team building***

- Get to know each other
- Get the division together for a day or two to create relationships
- Having a purpose to coming together and achieving something with ancillary goal of getting to know each other and learn how each of us works/thinks
- Some socializing with team building purpose (obstacle course?)

### ***THEME: Understand each other's work***

- Need more orientation to each other's work
- Re-orientation of everyone in the cluster (Sessions by each of the units and what they are doing?)
- Walk-around opportunity
- Spend time in each other's areas, see what it's like in other areas
- Understand each other's protocols and policies, to similar situations
- Have a clearer sense of what each department and person does

# Maximize Effectiveness: What We Need to Do Collectively

## ***MAJOR THEME: Healthy, supportive work climate/environment***

### ***THEME: Feel valued in our work***

- Value the work, the employees
- Invest in employees
- Acknowledgement from within the cluster
- We need the sense that our creativity, ideas and proposals are actualized more ground up, as opposed to top down
- Build in opportunities for appreciation
- Have folks feel appreciated – peer to peer, not just top down

### ***THEME: Create structures for addressing negative situations***

- Conflict resolution structure/process
- Create structure enabling folks to express any concerns

### ***THEME: Respect, respect employees***

### ***THEME: Supported, including support from management***

#### *Also mentioned:*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Feel inspired</li> <li>▪ Life/work balance</li> <li>▪ Comp time</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop a core value around employees</li> <li>▪ High morale</li> <li>▪ Combat negative culture by trusting one another to do the right thing</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

# Maximize Effectiveness: What We Need to Do Collectively

***MAJOR THEME: Develop and commit to shared goals and shared responsibility for the Cluster***

## ***THEME: Goals***

- Refocus and make sure we're all on the same page
- Create shared goals
- Making goals concrete ("concretizing")
- Talk about what our division goals are and what that means
- Make a checklist that all staff should do - meet 5 new colleagues, go to 5 campus events, meet 5 students - as part of annual goals

## ***THEME: Responsibility***

- Everyone has a responsibility to move the division forward, not just the leader
- No scapegoating. It's not just up to the leader-- everyone has a responsibility to move the organization forward

## ***THEME: Innovation***

- Shared commitment to innovation
- Be willing to think outside the box
- Not get stuck in assumptions; think outside the box

# Maximize Effectiveness: What We Need to Do Collectively

***MAJOR THEME: Grow and sustain strong community practice within the Cluster***

***THEME: Professional development***

- Weekly professional development opportunities open to division
- Ongoing professional development of staff. Weekly professional development session that happens.
- We don't have a professional development requirement
- Investing in staff via professional development, obtain knowledge from other places
- Adequate training
- Cross-training – VC Office of Administration should streamline the administrative processes to make things easier across clusters

# Maximize Effectiveness: What We Need to Do Collectively

## **MAJOR THEME: Grow and sustain strong community practice within the Cluster (cont.)**

### **THEME: Collaborating**

- Creating structures to help us be as effective as possible – collaborative meetings
- Structures that allow for collaboration, discussion
- Create systematic collaborations
- Regular meeting schedule to share/collaborate more effectively
- For all staff, give them tasks that require collaboration, and hold them accountable

### **THEME: Engaging & Networking**

- Well oiled machine: know exactly who to call and when
- What you bring to the table: capitalize on individual strengths
- Networking, promoting creative energy
- Clear and many opportunities to engage with each other and with students, student programs
- Less siloing, more engagement
- Consistent cluster-wide meetings: create community and mirror this behavior for students

# Maximize Effectiveness: What We Need to Do Collectively

## ***THEME: Assess our work***

- Be more critical of our work – how to make it better, but at the right time and right place
- Bi-lateral (360o) evaluations
- Needs assessment
- Rather than reactionary – go back to data
- Use the data to inform decisions
- Take a critical look at staffing

## ***THEME: Manage our processes***

### ***SUB-THEME: Communication***

- Clear communication/transparency
- Communicate often
- Communication: design, develop and implement a communication plan
- Using social media and technology to direct people to information to prevent duplication of the same resources
- Website priority – what to change and when

### *Also mentioned:*

- Follow-through
- Ways to navigate/decrease bureaucratic layers to get what we need
- Changing infrastructure/technology to better meet the needs of office and students

# Maximize Effectiveness: What We Need to Do Collectively

## ***THEME: Manage our work***

### ***SUB-THEME: Accountability***

- Accountability for office and program effectiveness
- Accountability especially from leadership
- Be accountable – keep at this process, keep it

### ***SUB-THEME: Planning & priorities***

- Commitment to one or two plan that limits us to managing priorities and not taking on too many new things
- Determine and stick with priorities for when the times get busy – easy to give it up

## Maximize Effectiveness: What We Need to Do for Students

*We also identified what we need to do to maximize our effectiveness for **Students**.*

- Training the trainers
- Expand our audience – e.g., sharing, listen, events, etc.
- Be proactive (work towards prevention)
- Use efficiency to help students
- Create vibrant Alumni Networks

## Maximize Effectiveness: Our Cluster Needs

*While discussing how to maximize our effectiveness, we identified some related Cluster needs*

### ***THEME: Resources***

- Resources & tools
  - Facilities
  - Space
  - Physical location
- Funding
  - Development support/grant support
  - Institutional infrastructure for grant support

### ***THEME: Strong leadership at the top***

- Strong leadership to harness potential (top positions)
- Strong leadership, vision, and direction on the senior levels of the cluster
- Vision, direction
- Direct reporting line to Chancellor & other upper administration

*Also mentioned:*

- Institutional acknowledgement of our value

### ***For further Cluster deliberation:***

- *Where do we need staff?*
- *Too much? Where is time going within our positions?*
- *What is needed? Focus groups, etc. so what we do is more intentional*