“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
Introduction & Overview

This report is a summary of the information generated during the Student Engagement Cluster retreat on May 13, 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.
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 in terms of either **Staff actions** or **Student actions**

2. **What our Cluster PROVIDES** (aka: what students will FIND here)
   - The ways we describe what students will find in our cluster primarily fall into 3 broad themes: **Opportunities, Autonomy, and Staff Expertise**

3. **Our INTENDED GOALS**
   - We identified 2 types of intended goals: **Student-centered** and **Campus-centered**
Purpose: What We Do

What STAFF MEMBERS Do

- **THEME: Connecting**
  - Connect students
  - Bringing in students
  - Build relationships
  - Break down barriers
- Help, facilitate, enable students (e.g., with entrepreneurial skills, Innovate)
- Support & promote
- Teach, educate (e.g., advocacy)
- Incorporate
- Develop
- Guide & advise
- Creating
- Enhancing
- Gate keeping

What STUDENTS Do

- Experiment
- Personalize
- Come with an idea & make it happen
- Innovate
- Create
- Take the lead
- Make decisions
- Make mistakes; “failure is encouraged”
- Engage
- Leading themselves
- Learning
Purpose: What Our Cluster Provides (aka What Students Will Find Here)

**THEME: Opportunities**
- Extra/co-curricular opportunities
- Leadership opportunities & leadership development opportunities
- Engagement
- Fellowship
- For us to work with students
- For students to
  - Gain marketable skills, life skills
  - Learn
  - Be creative
  - Realize ideas

**THEME: Autonomy**
- Student agency ownership, voice
  - “Own your experience”
  - Student-led
  - Student-run (e.g., WMUA)

*The Student Engagement Cluster is the place where students put theory into practice: “Here’s where you can make it yours.”*
Purpose: What Our Cluster Provides
(aka What Students Will Find Here)

**THEME: Staff Expertise**

- To help inform student decisions
- Resources
- Advising
- Guidance
- Feedback
- Tough love
- Assurance

*Also mentioned:*
- Student programming
- Open to all

“*The grass roots of our cluster are the students.*”

“We are facilitators of student voice.”
Purpose: Our Intended Goals

We identified 2 types of intended goals: **Student-centered** and **Campus-centered**

**Student-centered learning goals for active participants**
- Learning
- Development
- Develop practical, real-world skills
- Accountability

**Student-centered program or operational goals for active participants**
- Engage & connect students
- Outlets for their ideas
- Real-life application of concepts; go beyond the classroom experience

**Campus-centered goals (i.e., climate)**
- Student-centered programming
- Campus pride, spirit
- Bonding
- Social
- Open, inclusive, engaging
- Enhance & enrich
- Exposure to people & cultures that are new/different to them
- Positive campus culture
We described our Cluster core values in the following ways:

1. **Our core value DEFINITIONS are Student-focused**
2. **We described the ways that we ENACT or DELIVER on our core values**
3. **Current key CONTEXT features**
4. **Topics for further Cluster DELIBERATION**
Core Values: Our Definitions

STUDENT-FOCUSED

**MAJOR THEME: Student agency**
- Empowerment
- Fiscal responsibility
- Self-sufficiency (aspirational)
- Self-governance (aspirational) through council/advisory boards
- Student engagement – more appropriate to have student drive – initiate

**MAJOR THEME: Create/Build campus community**
- Identify with something (i.e. RSO stoles from commencement)
- Creating community, including community standards

**MAJOR THEME: Institutional pride, school spirit**
- Support UMass pride
- Each agency’s definition of pride (UVC)
Core Values: Our Definitions

STUDENT-FOCUSED

**THEME: Open communication & transparency**
- Creativity
  - Creativity (promote it in our students)
  - Connecting the picture of all the creative artists with their part

**THEME: Professionalism**
- Skill-building/how we act as professional

**THEME: Campus environment & culture**
- Fostering a campus environment that is open and inclusive
- Respect
- Diversity
  - Diversity - supporting and harvesting benefits
  - Develop global citizens
- Happy social life

Also mentioned:
- Student development
- Sustainability – many of our events are wasteful
Core Values: How We Enact Our Values

**Advising**
- Students should drive the train – we are there to advise and facilitate with them
- We provide the advice – cultivating ideas generated by students

**Create/Build community**
- Building community starts with us

*Also mentioned:*
- Support UMass pride
- Modeling professionalism
- Promote creativity with students
- Structure – create/develop a structure that enhances our work with students
Core Values: Current Key Context Features

While discussing our Cluster core values, we identified key context features that currently shape and define our Cluster’s work. These features are central to understanding our work.

**Key context features central to our cluster’s work**

- Students are changing, we need to change with them
- Upper administrators making the decision more for weekends and the students aren’t really able to make this decision themselves
- There are so many RSOs now
- Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3 = the thought is this would work
While discussing Cluster core values, we also identified a number of related questions and topics that need further deliberation within our Cluster.

**FOR FURTHER CLUSTER DELIBERATION**

**What does/should school pride look like?**
- CEPA and how have they defined school pride
- Each agency’s definition of pride (UVC)
- Collaboration (aspirational)
- Identify with something (i.e. RSO stoles from commencement)
- Creating community (community standards)

**Who is generating ideas – staff initiating student programming?**
- Back in the day – they were doing it, but is portrayed that UPC does
- Today UPC – not calling the shots – not student initiated – their agenda set by staff
- UPC – past – very different purpose, programming
- UPC – set by staff and various roles that play out
- Less student initiated – admin tells cluster – what we need to keep
- Upper administrators making the decision more for weekends and the students aren’t really able to make this decision themselves
While discussing Cluster core values, we also identified a number of related questions and topics that need further deliberation within our Cluster.

FOR FURTHER CLUSTER DELIBERATION

- What do we practice or follow on a daily basis?
- Who defines/creates community?
  - Imposed community vs. self-created community
- Is it valuable to train students: to run a meeting? Should we train them – how we do already and we still can’t reach all of the students.
- Can students articulate their values – they have a different focus than we do
- How much oversight does GSS need?
- How do you deal with difficulties and challenges?
We discussed our Cluster’s roles and responsibilities in the following ways:

1. **We described our cluster roles and responsibilities in 3 ways:**
   - **Student-specific**
   - **Cluster-specific**
   - **Individual**

2. **CHANGES we envision in the Cluster**

3. **Our Cluster NEEDS**

4. **Topics for further Cluster DELIBERATION**
MAJOR THEME: Train students that are in positions of responsibility

- Adequate, effective training of student leaders
- Effective training – hand-holding – get students to listen
- New role – TRAINING – students of responsibilities to navigate all systems, organization development – meetings/events
- The former officers need to train the new officers and someone needs to make sure this is done
- Timeline – outgoing officer – not training – passing on
- Training students that are positions of responsibilities. Why are defined as group. Why should we.
- Watch the instruction process
Roles & Responsibilities: Student-Specific

**THEME: Provide events**
- Providing events for students especially nights and weekends
- Engaging students on nights/weekends
- Campus wide programming – all of campus invited – example – UMass Night Out
- Campus wide programming – some targeted interest and some general
- GSS – different types of programming - events

**THEME: Assess RSO tier system and student/group needs**
- Tier one, two, three – needs to be assessed
- What type of service to provide – new RSOs came in – not confining themselves to what is expected in that specific tier.
- Assessment - kinds of conversations to determine needs of groups – how solid are they

*Also mentioned:*
- Advise students
- Engage students
- Connect the student to leading in this cluster
Roles & Responsibilities: Cluster-Specific & Individual

CLUSTER-SPECIFIC

**MAJOR THEME: Cross-trained and/or partnered staff, to serve multiple student populations**

- Spread out advising across the cluster
- Efficient meetings, including sharing information
- Break down silos
- Partner
- Be at parties, concerts
- Make sure that former offices train the new offices

Also mentioned:
- More cluster-wide, division-wide, town-gown relationships

INDIVIDUAL

- Collaborate
- Cross-train
- Partner
- Serve more than just our individual role
- The former offices need to train the new offices
While discussing Cluster roles & responsibilities, we described changes that we envision in the Cluster.

**Envisioned Changes**

- Creating new, better systems
- Increasing communication across lines, via
  - Cluster meetings
  - Supervisor training
- Breaking down silos
- Becoming student engagement:
  - No one-person offices; replace individual offices
Roles & Responsibilities: Our Cluster Needs

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

**THEME: More staffing**

- Additional full-time person for Fraternities and sororities or restructure advising: Fraternities and sororities advised by other staff, different people or fraternities and sororities staff advise councils
- Additional staff for fraternities and sororities
- We need more outside advisors they staff events/campus center, students union staff are at the events

Also mentioned:
- Division-wide for campus-wide programming/everyone needs to be at the table
- Step out of silo thinking
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**

**KEY CHALLENGES FOR US TO ADDRESS**
- Negativity around activities
- Capacity of space
- The presence and influence of off-campus people at events
- Strengthen/Enhance fraternity & sorority advising: additional staff and/or restructure advising model
- Daily Collegian advisor
- Tier system

**THEME: “New Rules”**
- Cluster engagement with student governments
- How does SGA look now?
Roles & Responsibilities: Our Cluster Needs

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

FOR FURTHER CLUSTER DELIBERATION

- When did it become the responsibility of SAI to do all of this programming (campus-wide)/increase in demand?
- Are we more than just weekend babysitters?
- Are old roles old rule changing? – Thought is we are newly defined (Teaching students)
- What would our dream cluster look like?
- Do we have a mission? Who will define? Is the mission of student affairs changing who is going to write the mission – or will they be one. A common goal
- Do student groups feel abandoned since we have to focus on our own work as well.
- Identifying Greek-lettered RSOs service were advised under SAI and other non-affiliated. How did advising operate under students activities and fraternities/sororities when we were separate?
- How many students can attend RSO programmed events? Which events will students go to?
- Can students define their core values?
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 INDIVIDUALLY

3. Our Cluster NEEDS
Maximize Effectiveness: What We Need to Do Collectively

**MAJOR THEME: Assess our effectiveness**

- **Manage our processes effectively:** Analyze, strengthen & create efficiencies within our systems
  - Business/finances
  - Training, cluster & division wide
  - Policies & practices
  - Clear communication re system changes
- Staffing – examine current staffing patterns; identify what it could look like
- Benchmarking & comparisons
- Student input

**MAJOR THEME: Manage our work effectively**

- Aggregate our work
- Collaborate – including readjusting negative attitudes around it (i.e., viewing collaboration as a zero-sum game)
- Prioritize across the Division
- Regular conversations regarding mission, vision & goals
Maximize Effectiveness: What We Need to Do Collectively

**MAJOR THEME: Manage our work relationships within the cluster**

- Address identity-based tensions
- Enhance relationship -- Create opportunities to gather
  - Formally: Cluster meetings
  - Informally: random gatherings, purposeful gatherings
- Define & identify supportive practices for staff
  - Communication
  - Access to colleagues
  - Development activities

**MAJOR THEME: Provide cluster-wide cross-training for staff**

- Cluster-wide/division-wide: Adapting trainings or same training for all
- Cross-training of staff
- Effective cluster-wide trainings (required)
- Thinking beyond titles and responsibilities – cross-training: The work isn’t stalled because someone is out
Maximize Effectiveness: What We Need to Do Collectively

**THEME: Enhance students’ effectiveness**

- Enhance support for new RSOs: training, support sessions, focus groups
- Find ways to have ongoing, engaged dialogues with students (leaders, general student body) outside of existing “formal” structures
- Help students find their voice & navigate the structure/organization/university in more positive manners
- Measure – promote student input

*Also mentioned:*

- **Focus on activities that will contribute toward getting a new Student Center**
- Share unit presentations at Cluster meetings
- Identify gaps and how we can assist
Maximize Effectiveness: What We Need to Do Individually

- Think beyond our staff titles and be open to cross-training
- Be fearless about change
- Be open to new opportunities
- Cross-cluster knowledge of roles & offices
- Have familiarity
- Break down silos
- Step outside of my box
- Have empathy – know & experience others’ perspectives
While discussing how to maximize our effectiveness, we also identified some related Cluster needs

- **Tools**
  - Template for student engagement
  - Template/Road map for student organizations, student leaders

- **Role clarification**
  - Clear mission, vision, goals
  - Cluster-wide/Division-wide training
  - System consistency
  - New & better facilities: New Student Center
  - Mechanisms to engage with students, both electronically & face-to-face
  - Transparent leadership & supervision
  - Access to use space