Advocacy, Inclusion & Support
Cluster Retreat Summary Report

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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
SAACL – New Model
Introduction & Overview

This report is a summary of the information generated during the Advocacy, Inclusion and Support 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 either student-focused or colleague-focused.

2. **What our Cluster PROVIDES**
Purpose: What We Do

STUDENT-FOCUSED
How we currently engage or should engage with students, and/or on their behalf

**THEME: Think & act proactively and systemically to…**
- Develop policy
- Set a tone
- Create & present a united plan *that is intended to…*
- Reduce isolation
- Reduce repetition
- Increase access

- Bridge & support students on issues of equity
- Understand & honor identity development
- Advocate inclusion & social justice
- Remove silos around identity and identify successful models to facilitate the whole student
- Be responsive & proactive
- Ensure innovation
Purpose: What We Do

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

**THEME: Collaborate, cross-train & cross-promote to best support intersectionality & holistic development**

**THEME: Stand together to change the campus climate, on macro & micro levels**
- Overcome institutional marginalization
- Break down barriers
- Expand the conversations

**THEME: Offer social justice expertise, including conducting, doing & offering research**

“Students can go to any of us and feel resourced.”

“Community of offices whose work is parallel in order to support a larger ecology of social justice.”

“Help set a tone for the division and beyond.”
Purpose: What Our Cluster Provides

- Similar goals and like missions
- The intersections of identity
- Empowerment
- Encouragement
- Shared responsibility for the health and growth of each of our units

The Advocacy, Inclusion and Support Cluster is “a place to feel understood & connected to like groups.”
Core Values

We described our Cluster core values in the following ways:

1. **Our grounding PHILOSOPHIES & PREMISES**

2. **Our core value DEFINITIONS**

3. **How we ENACT or DELIVER on our core values**
   - We described the ways we enact or deliver on our core values in 3 ways: **toward Students, as Individuals, and as a Cluster.**

4. **Our Cluster NEEDS, including topics for further Cluster DELIBERATION**
Core Values: Our Philosophies & Premises

We offered statements that can serve as the guiding philosophies and grounding premises for our work.

- Identity impacts experience
- Issues that we address protect all of us
- Thinking about oppression and how to eradicate it
  - Identity politics are limiting
- The commonality of differences
- “Diversified unity”
Core Values: Our Definitions

We identified a long list of values, expressed in single words or short phrases. Values mentioned by 2+ members appear in red; the rest follow in alphabetical order.

- **Collaboration, collaborative relationships**
- **Social justice**
- **Transformative learning**
- Access
- Advocacy
- Agents of change
- Celebration
- Community engagement
- Diverse leadership
- Education
- Empowerment
  - Welcoming systems/policy
- Enhance strengths of the student
- Equity
- Identity development
- Inclusion
- Intentionality
- Outreach
- Social transformation
- Student-centered and connected

Our values also define our approach toward working with students:

- **Intersectional**
- Asset-based
- Strength-based
- Whole student, holistic
Core Values: How We Enact Our Values

TOWARD STUDENTS

- Knowing our students’ diverse strengths-their backgrounds and what they bring while also knowing & acknowledging the barriers students face
  - We recognize the struggle that they do
  - We highlight their success
- Holding students accountable for being active in their educational process: “owning your own education”
- Active listening

AS INDIVIDUALS

- Staying informed on best practices and model programs
- Take care of self & others
- Valuing all people
Core Values: How We Enact Our Values

AS A CLUSTER

**THEME: Continually engage in change, education, assessment, reevaluation**
- Collectively working on data to enhance our impact
- The cluster working to advocate for collectively using our data to showcase our impact
- Summit/Showcase of our accomplishments
- Reflexive and adapting to change while informed by strong assessment and student voice

**THEME: Collaborate and share resources**
- Collaboration with on- and off-campus partners
- Cross-collaboration
- Collaborating and sharing, not buying “scarce resource” mythology

*Also mentioned:*
- Expand beyond the borders of the university
- Recognizing the micro-processes that lead to positive outcome
While discussing core values, we also began to identify some of our Cluster needs.

**THEME: The right leadership**

- "A leader that gets it"
- Leadership that values our work as necessary for the whole campus to grow/learn exponentially
- Diverse leadership
- For institution and students – division leadership

Also mentioned:
- Sharing and cross training to accomplish some of this (core values)

**For further Cluster deliberation:**

- Facilities: Question about location
- What will we need to do to maximize the effectiveness of our cluster?
We discussed our Cluster’s roles and responsibilities in the following ways:

1. **We identified 3 types of Cluster roles and responsibilities:**
   - General
   - Cluster-specific
   - Institution-specific

2. **Our Cluster NEEDS, including topics for further Cluster DELIBERATION**
Roles & Responsibilities: General

- Resources, experts, & leaders on how to incorporate and infuse the values around SJE diversity and equity throughout campus
- Training, building capacity, educating others
- “Creating agents of change”
- Communicating & information sharing
- Utilize momentum
- Identify success
- Leverage expertise
- Learn from past mistakes
- Anticipating and planning proactively
- Resource to campus constituencies
MAJOR THEME: Function as a collective

- New roles and responsibilities allow us to work on multiple approaches – there are multiple ways that we can be working on
- Increase connection between each other
  - Break down our own departmental isolation, marginalization
  - Space of connection to give “airtime” to each other
- Create a “unified voice of advocacy”
- Communities of practice: Work groups across offices to look at larger issues

SUB-THEME: Support each other

- Learn from each other’s good work
- More aware of each other’s work, to better build connections for students
- Share our practices, best practices and intersections
- Cross-promotions
- Cross collaboration
- Learn from past mistakes

Also mentioned:

- An organizational “home” that’s the right fit for our work; no more restructuring/replacement
- Build the type of positive experience at UMass so our alumni base wants to give back
- Build the database info resources to our support our constituencies when they are alumni
MAJOR THEME: Provide leadership & leverage expertise

- Input on university planning & practices
- Policy change
- Influence how we recruit & admit diverse students, how we retain them in a way they feel included and at home - happy, even
- To bring authority to the institutional commitment to our shared goals
- Help university move forward
- Institutionalize and link through strategic plan the best practices for supporting and including under represented and marginalized students

MAJOR THEME: Institution-wide advocacy and accountability

- Strength in numbers to get what we need in a reasonable time (not 5 years later)
- Hold & keep university accountable re equity/inclusion, to its constituents
- Get someone at the table promoting and understanding our missions, advocating for all of our needs
- “Become a voice that keeps the campus accountable”
- Advocate for facilities and resources for our students, our buildings

Also mentioned:

- Build the bridge between academic affairs and student affairs
Roles & Responsibilities: Our Cluster Needs

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

**THEME: Respect across campus, for them to see that this service is valuable**
- To be recognized for our value not just our students but for all students
- Change RSO perception of my cluster

**Also mentioned:**
- Direct line to Chancellor
- Leadership that gets our mission
- Somebody advocating for our cluster
- Facilities, supports, resources - e.g., wi-fi for our students in our buildings

**THEME: Be included in the larger institution’s work of data collection, coding, so we can study/access our impact**
- Stonewall – not having access to data – for the process of graduation and retention

For further Cluster deliberation:
- Can this Cluster have a voice in the impact of campus policies?
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. Our Cluster NEEDS
Maximize Effectiveness: What We Need to Do

To maximize our effectiveness, we focused primarily on what we need to do collectively, as a Cluster.

**THEME: Professional support & development**

- Understand each other’s work
  - Understand what each does
  - Better understanding of what each of us do – “OUR” students not “my” students
- Cross cluster and cultural training
- On-going professional development
- Work life balance
- Structured conflict resolution
- Respect and acknowledgement

**THEME: Manage our work and our processes**

- Seamless delivery of services to our constituents
- Cohesive evaluation plan
- Effective and transparent communication

Also mentioned:

- Maximizing resources for our students
Maximize Effectiveness: Our Cluster Needs

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

**THEME: Equitable and secure resources**
- Access to information
- University data on our populations
- Financial and human resources that are equitable
- Technical resources.... Databases, common drive that are secure
- Tools needed

**THEME: University-level relationships**
- Strong relationship with academic side
- University administration "buy in"
- We need to be systematized and valued -- we are educators

Also mentioned:
- Better defined opportunities for student engagement
- Strong leadership that matches our vision mission and goals
- Free gym memberships