**College Student Service Administration (CSSA) Program**

Adult Education & Higher Education Leadership, College of Education, Oregon State University

**REVIEW PANEL REPORT**
Submitted December 2013; Revised January 2014

1. Overall Recommendation:
   Based on our review, our recommendation is to **restructure** and **expand** the College Student Service Administration (CSSA) program.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations
The Oregon State University (OSU) CSSA program is a nationally known and highly regarded graduate preparation program and one of a few graduate programs in student services administration in the Pacific Northwest. The program is nearly 50 years old and has 500 alumni in various positions in higher education, many of whom have served as national leaders in the student affairs field. The program delivers quality graduate education experiences to enrolled students, indeed the review panel heard pride about program quality and that faculty members “do it exceptionally well”. The program is notably successful in graduation rates and job placement success of matriculated students. The program provides a substantial contribution to OSU campus life through graduate assistant work, internship service, and through professional development opportunities for the practitioners who serve as faculty members. Enabling scholar-practitioners to serve as faculty members in this program is a major program asset. As one faculty member noted, “we are seamless, the [relationship] is woven into the fabric of the institution”; indeed, another faculty member observed, “Campus would be fundamentally different if the program went away”.

The CSSA program aptly used the phrase, “A Timely Opportunity”, in their self-study. The convergence of the appointment of a new VPSA, a new strategic plan for the College of Education, and the emergence of the ECampus concept make it timely to address critical questions in this review. As noted in the self-study, the CSSA program must be stabilized, while continuing to build on its strengths, including the ability to attract a well-qualified cohort of students and a strong adjunct faculty of practitioner-scholars.

Introductory needs are framed here by the goals of the CSSA program from the self-study and specific recommendations follow in the report.

1. The CSSA program must affirm and commit to an academic home that would include identifying a sustainable funding source(s) for the program.

2. The home for the CSSA program should hire at least one full-time faculty member to provide a stable base of teaching, advising, theoretical perspective and scholarship— to complement existing adjunct faculty.

3. The CSSA program should develop a parallel ECampus/online program— to complement the on-campus program and extend the reach of CSSA nationally/internationally.

4. The CSSA program should continue to update the current on-campus program to maintain a robust and cutting-edge approach to pedagogy, practice, and encourage faculty scholarship.

5. The CSSA program seeks to continually improve and update its curriculum and practices. The CSSA program should build on its current commitment and strengthen the social justice focus or orientation in the program. The program graduation requirements should remain 60-72 quarter credit hours or two academic years in compliance with the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) statement on master’s graduate preparation. Other recommendations appear later in this report.
3. Detailed Findings

This section will briefly identify the strengths and weaknesses of the CSSA program or its context. They provide a basis of rationale for the recommendations that appear in the remainder of the report.

Strengths. The CSSA program has numerous strengths. It is a testament to the quality of the professional student affairs staff members who serve as faculty members in the program that the program has maintained these strengths in the face of diminishing academic and non-academic resources.

a. The student affairs division, colleagues from area institutions, and the VPSA have maintained strong, consistent, quality support of the program evidenced by their teaching, advising, hiring GAs, and supervising internships. Those student affairs professionals who serve as faculty members in the program manage all program dynamics from recruitment and admission to internships, placement and thesis supervision. These faculty members are practitioner-scholars who are active in their field evidenced by their publication, refereed presentations, and national leadership roles.

b. The curriculum (i.e., program of study) is in voluntary compliance with the CAS standards evidenced by attention to (a) foundational studies, (b) professional studies, and (c) supervised practice.

c. The CSSA program is organized around guiding values and competency areas. Students demonstrate evidence of these competencies throughout the program resulting in a capstone e-portfolio and/or thesis.

d. The program allows appropriate flexibility for students in key choices such as areas of specialization or minor, sites for internships, and capstone experience.

e. The program is appropriately selective enrolling approximately 20 students in each new cohort admitted from an applicant pool that averaged 72 in the last 5 years.

f. The cohort model that begins with the social justice immersion retreat builds a cohort that trusts each other, creates a safe space community, and is open to learning and growing together. Students recognize that they learn from each other.

g. Students demonstrate successful completion of the program with 85%-100% graduation rates and 100% job placement of those who graduate.

h. Student affairs and academic affairs offices across campus hire CSSA students into graduate assistantships.

i. The opportunity to be a graduate faculty member is excellent professional service to OSU, professional development for the faculty involved, and is a strength of a practitioner-based graduate program. The opportunity to have professional masters students in OSU offices as GAs or interns brings the latest of research, theory, and practice to benefit OSU students.

j. The CSSA program addresses its own needs. At the time of this review faculty members were meeting to resolve issues with GA placement and funding of graduate students as well as holding preliminary discussions on the nature/role of an Ecampus program.

Weaknesses. Changes in the administrative structure and support have led to areas that we viewed as program weaknesses. These are addressed in more detail later in this report.

a. The program needs financial stability from academic support and should not be dependent on student affairs for all funding. Student affairs will always be a partner in graduate preparation and any academic home has to both support and advocate for this program.
b. The current CSSA faculty is comprised of one part time (.3FTE) Instructor (as of Jan. 1) who teaches three courses per year and co-ordinates the program, one Student Affairs administrator who devotes .5 of her full time administrative position FTE to co-coordinating the program and teaching in CSSA, and twelve adjunct faculty members. The program faculty members who are adjuncts typically teach one course per year and sometimes advise CSSA students and/or serve on their committees. These adjunct faculty members hold positions in student affairs or academic affairs at OSU, and are classified as "professional faculty" members. They receive no additional compensation for their CSSA work, although their teaching/advising responsibilities are expected to be included in their position descriptions. In addition, there are currently two adjuncts who hold positions outside OSU; they each receive a stipend for teaching one CSSA course per year.

c. There is no full-time core faculty member aligned with an academic home and no budgeted administrative support from academic affairs. The evolution from two budgeted full-time faculty in the last ten year review was not clear to us particularly when one of those faculty lines was paid out of the VPSA budget. The program seeks to be CAS compliant as are other nationally known programs and the CAS standards assert: “At least one faculty member must be designated full-time to the program. Faculty must be adequate for the student enrollment and nature of the program requirements.”

d. Although there is an assessment and research course in the curriculum, students completing a thesis should be required also to take an appropriate research methods course prior to engaging with their thesis research.

e. Obtaining a GA position is critical to the professional development of master’s students and to the funding of their graduate study. The GA process is hard to navigate for prospective students. The funding levels are prohibitive of many offices offering a GA position that might like to do so.

4. Introduction:
This was a regularly scheduled ten-year review. The reviewers studied the CSSA self-study, the CSSA website, program faculty CVs, course syllabi, materials on professional association directories, and held meetings on the site visit day. We met with Graduate School Dean, Brenda McComb, on December 1 and were accompanied by her on our campus site visit on December 2. We met with program co-coordinators, Tom Scheuermann and Kim McAloney, Dean Larry Flick and Associate Dean Randy Bell of the College of Education, VPSA Larry Roper, a group of a fourteen (14) program faculty members, and nineteen (19) masters graduate students across several years in the program. Comments were welcomed after the review and several were received.

Reviewers. Internal reviewers were Dr. Michael Lerner, Professor of Chemistry, representing the OSU Graduate Council and Dr. Jack Higginbotham, Professor, Director of Space Science, representing the OSU Graduate Council. External reviewers were Dr. Leslie Webb, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs at Boise State University, representing student affairs employers and Dr. Susan R. Komives, Professor Emerita from the student affairs graduate program at the University of Maryland and past president of CAS.

Organization of the report. This report includes an overview that explains the national context of graduate programs such as this one under review. The report then addresses elements in the guidebook for program reviews. After a summary of key findings in critical areas, specific recommendations follow in that same section in a boxed format for ease in reading.
Context. Graduate Programs in Student Affairs/College Student Services

It was apparent from our review that readers would benefit from some perspective on the role of student affairs and the nature of graduate preparation in this field. The Student Affairs field is distinct in several regards: (1) it is a unique American pedagogical and administrative practice developed in the late 1800s now adopted world wide to use both the curriculum and co-curriculum to advance student learning, development, and success; and (2) it is unique in being a field of study embedded in the context that it studies (i.e., most fields prepare professionals for fields outside the academy or to teach a discipline in the academy). The Student Affairs profession encompasses administrative, educational, and counseling staff on over 5,000 college and university campuses in the USA (and others around the world) who engage in the educational and development experience of college students. The profession provides education programs and services to college students in the co-curriculum and supports the work of faculty in the curriculum. Student Affairs professionals contribute to institutional learning and developmental outcomes and promote retention, develop a campus community supportive of diversity, and enrich the learning of students through their involvement in campus life. Guided by professional values and ethical practices, student affairs professionals design programs and services based on developmental theory and data-based evidence from research and assessment of student outcomes. Developmental approaches refer to the concept that students move from simple, dualistic, less-complex thinking to complex, critical perspectives recognizing diverse frameworks. Developmental theory includes such domains as cognitive, psychosocial, social identities, moral, and spiritual. Student Affairs professionals work in departments such as career centers, academic advising offices, residence life, counseling centers, student activities, service-learning, leadership, health centers, recreation and intramurals, multicultural programs offices, admissions offices, or serve as Deans of Students or Vice Presidents for Student Affairs.

Graduate Programs. Just over 100 Student Affairs graduate preparation programs exist and are found predominantly at regional public state colleges and universities. With few exceptions, these programs are not found at Carnegie Doctoral/Research Extensive Universities. CSSA graduate programs are not ranked; however, they may be located in counseling departments or higher education departments and be part of those rankings. Occasional studies of program reputations among various stakeholders (e.g. senior student affairs officers) typically identify such nationally recognized programs as Bowling Green State University, The Ohio State University, University of Vermont, the University of Georgia, Indiana University, Iowa State University, the University of Maryland, and Miami University of Ohio. Other nationally recognized programs can be found at Colorado State University, Florida State University, the University of Arizona, California State University Long Beach, and Michigan State University. OSU indicates their peer competitive programs in the region are Seattle University and Colorado State University. There is no program accreditation and most programs are in voluntary compliance with the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) standard on graduate preparation.

Focus of Graduate Programs. Student Affairs graduate programs may be found as a specialty within Higher Education Programs, within Counseling programs and as stand-alone departments usually within a College of Education. No particular undergraduate degree leads to graduate study in CSP although many students come from the behavioral or social sciences. The Master’s degree is largely focused on foundational knowledge and skills for entry-level professional practice. The Doctoral degree is focused on advanced scholarship and research on college students, advanced developmental theory, and the student experience in higher education.

Faculty and Practitioners Linked. In this field, full-time graduate faculty are active members of practitioner associations; likewise, full-time practitioners with terminal degrees are often affiliate or adjunct faculty in the graduate program. The American College Personnel Association (ACPA) has a
Commission on Graduate Preparation that includes most graduate faculty in Student Affairs programs in the United States. Likewise, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) also involves graduate faculty as active members. Graduate faculty members regularly serve in leadership roles in these associations including President of the associations. Full-time CSSA faculty members are often also members of educational research associations such as the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE). Faculty scholarship values practitioner–oriented books, chapters of books, and national convention presentations and papers that influence practice as well as research in refereed scholarly journals.

5. Inputs:

**Mission.** The first and most fundamental question raised during the program review is whether the CSSA program aligns with the strategic mission of Oregon State University:

*As a land grant institution committed to teaching, research, and outreach and engagement, Oregon State University promotes economic, social, cultural and environmental progress for the people of Oregon, the nation and the world. This mission is achieved by producing graduates competitive in the global economy, supporting a continuous search for new knowledge and solutions, and maintaining a rigorous focus on academic excellence, particularly in the three Signature Areas: Advancing the Science of Sustainable Earth Ecosystems; Improving Human Health and Wellness; and Promoting Economic Growth and Social Progress.*

As currently configured, the CSSA mission is:

“... to prepare individuals for professional leadership and administrative positions in student services and academic affairs units/departments at four-year colleges and universities and –with limited specific focus in this area – community colleges.

However in the self-study, the CSSA faculty listed a goal to contemplate moving the academic focus to social justice. Accepting the shift of emphasis to social justice would the modified mission appears to align the program with the University’s mission phrase: “... social progress.” We conclude the mission is consistent with objectives of this profession and is in concert with the OSU mission.

**Recruitment and enrollment trends of students.** The applicant pool has been steady over the past 10 years with about 70 total applicants for about 15-20 positions, with the number of minority applicants rising steadily to about 1/3 of the 2012 total. Approximately 30 applicants are admitted to yield the 15-20 matriculated students. A high percentage of accepted students do matriculate at OSU. Although the original pool is modest for the number of slots, the matriculation rate for admitted candidates seems high relative to other programs at OSU.

Recruitment efforts largely focus on being in the NASPA and ACPA Graduate Directories, participating in the national NASPA Annual Conference graduate fair, and OSU Campus Days, which involves activities for visiting invited applicants. Students indicated that attractions to the program included the evident interest and attention provided by faculty, flexibility (as perceived in selecting an area of specialization and the thesis/project track option), no GRE requirement, and location in the Pacific NW. The admission committee consistently hears that location is the #1 motivator to apply; students also shared the commitment and quality of the faculty members as practitioners was a substantial reason in their decision to accept the admission offer. The program website is current and generally complete. The CSSA program is considering adding an Ecampus on-line program.

It is of note that CSSA participates, and indeed is a national leader, in the NASPA Undergraduate Fellows Program (NUFP) that provides mentoring to historically underrepresented and disenfranchised undergraduate students at OSU. CSSA has a very large NUFP population, with 10+ undergraduate students, and the graduate program benefits by matriculating several of these fellows (3-5) each year.
from this pool. The program has national recognition for this commitment. This brings strong diversity to the program and appears to be a real strength of the program.

Recommendation: The Ecampus online program marketing should be integrated with the current campus-based program marketing.

Recommendation: The web site should include information on the credentials of faculty members who teach/advise in the program including such information as their graduate degrees and offices in which they work. Further, the website should contain a clear statement on courses required in the program and those that are offered as electives.

**Admissions selectivity and other indications of selecting high quality students.** CSSA students meet OSU graduate requirements for admission. We note again that the GRE is not required, and this was an attraction to some applicants. GPA and consistent GRE data were not available for accepted and matriculated students. These or other student academic metrics are important in evaluating the academic strength of student cohorts and the trends. Data should be available from the graduate school and collected and analyzed by the program annually to help guide and assess program recruitment changes. The rubric used in admissions decisions does take life experiences into account in making admissions decisions.

**Level of financial support of students compared to peers.** Most, but not all, students in the program receive graduate assistantships (GAs). Assistantships are offered in both student affairs and academic affairs departments. The GA remuneration package is highly competitive among peers (e.g. tuition remission, stipend, medical benefits).

CSSA students and faculty/staff both noted challenges with the assignment of these assistantships. The GAs are not guaranteed or coupled with the offer of admission, and most students apply for GA openings multiple times (in a process that parallels a typical job application) to obtain a GA position weeks or months after acceptance into the program. The problems with such processes are multiple: the process appears very stressful for applicants, the lack of an upfront assistantship policy probably discourages some top tier students from applying, and the delayed process forces some students to matriculate without clarity about support. That latter point has resulted in occasional students expecting, but not finding a placement, which is especially problematic for those required to pay out-of-state tuition. Finally, it seems that the process results in students accepting GAs that may be less relevant to their interests simply to ensure support.

On the other hand, it should be noted that support for Master’s students is more the exception than the rule in OSU programs, so that CSSA is doing very well to find support for most of its students. We further note that the program faculty members were meeting even during our visit to realign the assistantship process and seeking avenues to address both the cost to sponsoring departments and the method of placement.

It cannot be overstated how important the role of the assistantship is to the success of the program. The number of offered/available assistantships has decreased over the past few years. In addition to internships for credit, the assistantship provides a practitioner experience that allows the student to experience and demonstrate the theoretical concepts learned in the classroom. Although students are encouraged to reflect the learning they achieve in their assistantships through their portfolios, there currently exists no evaluative link between program content and what is learned through the assistantship experience.
Recommendation: Because students successfully complete their academic requirements and graduate in large numbers, we recommend CSSA keep the GRE as optional, but obtain and evaluate GPA or other metrics for applicants and incoming classes.

Recommendation: CSSA should identify a mechanism to coordinate admissions with assistantship offers. At a minimum, the process should be streamlined for students so that the issue of support is resolved earlier in the process.

Recommendation: Explore and create a sustainable plan to stabilize the number of assistantships offered. This work is underway and it should be finalized for the 2014 cohort.

Recommendation: Articulate clearly the role of the assistantship in student learning and competency development and develop an evaluative component linked to the mission of the program. We are pleased that a draft rubric on goal setting for assistantships has been developed and a process to use it should be implemented.

Curriculum strength. The CAS standard on graduate preparation states “All programs of study must include (a) foundational studies, (b) professional studies, and (c) supervised practice. Demonstration of necessary knowledge and skill in each area is required of all program graduates.” The program is lauded for identifying a solid set of core values and identifying competencies reflective of good practices as enumerated by a joint NASPA and ACPA project. The e-portfolio requirement is an effective tool to help students assess their progress on those competencies and provides a useful tool for faculty advising.

The CSSA program clearly and appropriately identifies itself as a practitioner-focused degree program and requires 54 quarter credits for graduation spread over two years for a full-time student. This focus is appreciated by students and builds on the strengths of the faculty members and quality functional areas in student affairs that host their assistantships and internships. The CSSA program offers numerous internships and requires an appropriate number of credits hours as per CAS standards. Special topics courses and electives are regularly offered. Credit is offered for portfolio development, projects, and transition seminars. Students have numerous learning opportunities such as the opportunity to teach undergraduate courses through their GA role or as volunteers.

Currently there is one assessment and research methods course required of students. This may be adequate for a practitioner-based program. The review team finds it is insufficient however for those seeking an M. S. degree who need more foundation in their chosen research methodology to engage in their original research. It is too much to expect this one current course to cover such extensive material or for advisors to handle methodology as a tutorial.

The current degree program requires a minor or an area of specialization. Some intensive study (i.e., minors or specializations) is desirable and an attractive feature of the program. Students reported difficulty finding minors in which they could enroll. Most students seek an area of specialization. Areas of specialization are typically well-conceived, but some were “packaged” retrospectively and should be more intentionally designed with the faculty advisor as part of the degree requirements.

Syllabi show evidence of timely readings and effective assignments. The CSSA self-study indicated faculty member’s interest in creative pedagogies and appropriate hybrid course platforms.
The CSSA self-report indicated a commitment to social justice in the curriculum. Students and faculty members alike strongly supported this direction and it is congruent with good practices in the student affairs field and in graduate preparation. This focus is evident in the fall orientation retreats, program values/competencies, curriculum, and thesis topics. We applaud the CSSA community for articulating and enacting this commitment.

The CSSA program is investigating the market for expanding into an Ecampus on-line degree program. This program would appeal to and meet the needs of full-time professionals who currently lack a professional degree particularly those in international settings. There are very few on-line degree programs in this field and a great demand for them for those in remote regions, those not moveable, and those in developing countries whose institutions are expanding their expectations of co-curricular learning and student services. Funding structures at OSU also provide an incentive for programs to expand in the on-line environment with program support, faculty, stipends, and support in marketing and recruitment.

Recommendation: We recommend consideration be given to requiring a research methods course in the methodology planned for the thesis project. This course should be taken spring or summer of the first year. Ideally this would be a course already offered in the College of Education or one of the behavioral or social science fields and not drain current faculty resources.

Recommendation: We support and applaud the focused inclusion of a social justice perspective in curriculum, pedagogy, and program practices. Consideration should be given to audit program practices (e.g., admission decisions, internship placements) to modify those that may not currently uphold those social justice principles so the program is congruent in this message and in the lived student experience.

Recommendations: CSSA coordinators should work with the graduate school on (1) accessibility of existing minors to CSSA students and (2) transcript visible options for the chosen areas of specialization.

Recommendation: We support the Ecampus program development currently underway. As CAS requires, it is essential that an on-line CSSA program provide the quality of a similar curriculum and supervision as the campus-based program. Appropriate on-line courses should be available to campus-based students as well. Campus-based students should be encouraged to completed at least one course on-line to experience that environment and prepare them for supporting on-line learners in their professional positions.

**Organizational Supports.** The review panel examined the question of where does the CSSA program fit within the organizational structure of OSU? Four possibilities were identified through the process of the review – the Office of Student Affairs, the OSU Graduate School, the College of Education, or the School of Language, Culture, and Society in the College of Liberal Arts.

Despite the fact that the majority of the CSSA instructional faculty hold their primary OSU positions within the Office of Student Affairs and CSSA office space and resources are provided by this unit, it is OSU policy that administrative units cannot be organizationally responsible for academic programs. Hence, short of a waiver from the Provost, the Office of Student Affairs cannot serve as the
primary administrative home for CSSA. The review has revealed that the strong support for CSSA from the position of the Vice Provost for Student Affairs and his organization is the root cause for the program’s success over the past decade. The CSSA program has been an invaluable pathway for professional development for staff within his organization and has led to national recognition for the program. While undeniably successful from the point of view of the students and faculty of the program, this type of “unofficial” administrative support is a systemic organizational problem for CSSA. With the upcoming change of leadership in this Vice Provost position, there is the additional concern that the priorities of the new leader may not include the historical depth of support for the CSSA program. Further, it is of grave concern that there is no longer a full time faculty member in the CSSA program.

Recommendation: The Provost and Vice Provost for Student Affairs affirm support for the continuation of the CSSA program and that the Provost identify an organizational home for the College Student Services Administration program (see more in the next section).

We suggest the Provost appoint a workgroup with the charge to conduct an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of the CSSA being assigned to one of the following options:

i. The College of Education
ii. The School of Language, Culture, and Society within the College of Liberal Arts
iii. The Graduate School and Vice Provost of Student Affairs partnership.

Based on this introspective review of the CSSA program, some issues and topics came to light that could assist the workgroup with its focused work.

*College of Education.* It appears that the CSSA program is not considered a core focus for the College although the CSSA mission does align several emergent themes in the new college strategic plan including free choice learning (e.g. experiential learning and life long learning) and in social justice. Examination of the College of Education Performance Metrics¹ from the present back to 2002 reveals a unit undergoing transition. A number of significant reorganizations have occurred during that period; most recently elimination of the department organization structure to a College consisting of the faculty of the whole. The performance metrics provide insight into the significance of the CSSA program within the College of Education and whether organization changes impacted the CSSA program. The data indicate the College of Education Graduate student enrollment averaged 371 +/- 9% over the ten year period 2003 – 2013, with a high of 409 in academic year 2005-06 and a low of 287 in 2011-2012. The self- study shows CSSA student enrollment steady with annual cohort of 15-20 matriculated students. Assuming any year will have two cohorts in the pipeline and an average cohort size of 18 students then the CSSA program represents 10% of the graduate student enrollment in the college. What is unclear is whether the CSSA students are included in each of these years because the self-study mentions a period during which the program was administered out of the Graduate School.

What was the contribution of the CSSA faculty to the College of Education? Are they counted as Non-Professorial faculty? The College Performance metrics show the faculty headcount widely varying during the past decade – averaging 94 +/- 41% with a high a high of 160 in 2005 and a low of 47 in 2011-2012. For the past three years the faculty headcount has stabilized: 53, 47 and 56. What is unclear is whether the CSSA faculty, while members of the College of Education Graduate Faculty, roll up in the records of the Office of Institutional Research as Non-Professorial faculty. Assuming the dozen CSSA faculty members are included as Non-Professorial faculty, then CSSA represents 27% of the faculty resources for the College. Although, for a brief period of 2-3 years, the College paid the salary of a 1.0

FTE, assistant professor, tenure track position, but the position is currently vacant with no plans to refill it. In summary, the CSSA graduate students account for about 10% of the College graduate student population over past decade, and contribute to the graduate student credit hours earned by the College, but the CSSA program currently receives little direct support from the College.

College of Liberal Arts. The second organizational option of moving the CSSA program to the School of Language, Culture, and Society within the College of Liberal Arts is based on the CSSA faculty’s expressed desire to move towards a focus on social justice and the pragmatic opportunity afforded the College of Liberal Arts with the return of the current Vice Provost for Student Affairs to his tenured, professor position. The question of alignment of the CSSA social justice mission with the School’s mission was not examined by this review panel. One pragmatic solution to the CSSA organizational issue is to reassign the CSSA to the tenure home of the most senior and highly regarded (and only tenured) member of the CSSA faculty and task him with growing support from his colleagues in the School and growing the program within the administrative structure of the College of Liberal Arts. As in the case of option 1, is the College of Liberal Arts School of Language, Culture, and Society sufficiently stable to accommodate the infusion of a new graduate program? The data for College Performance Metrics does not report down to the School level, so examination is made at level of the College of Liberal Arts. Graduate student enrollment has been steadily increasing the ten year period from a low of 93 to the current high of 220. Using the same CSSA annual enrollment figure of 36 means that should CSSA move to CLA then represent 16% of the College’s graduate enrollment. The CLA Performance metrics show the faculty headcount flat between 2003 and 2010 averaging 280 +/- 16%. But significant institutional investment by the University has grown the CLA faculty ranks to 331 in 2011 and 383 in 2012.

Graduate School. The third organization option – a Graduate School and Vice Provost of Student Affairs partnership would require the Graduate School to take an active management role for the program by hiring a Director and appointing faculty to administer the program. The advantage of this structure is it acknowledges the practitioner focus of the program does not align well with historic academic infrastructure but that it serves the training need for development of professionals in student affairs. This fits within the Land Grant university mission and consideration could be given to appointing the faculty of the CSSA program to the newly created positions of Professor of Practice. In the case of CSSA these would be partial FTE appointments, with workload expectations, would be budget visible and provide professional recognition to these faculty. The Professor of Practice position provides promotion opportunities given it carries the designators of Assistant, Associate and Full but are not tenure track. The review panel did not thoroughly investigate this option as part of our review.

In addition we would note that students are highly engaged in the life of the program including having a student organization. However, there is no current representation of students in faculty meetings.

Recommendation: Final thoughts regarding organizational support for CSSA, whichever administrative model is implemented in order for the program fully realize its potential; the issue of place needs to be addressed. A dedicated office for the Director and Administrative support position needs to be identified as the unique academic home of the program.

Recommendation: As per the CAS standards, the program must have a full-time faculty member (preferably a senior faculty member) as a core to the program. Hiring two faculty members would be preferred with one being a senior faculty member and one a junior faculty member. We caution that if only one faculty member is hired and that person as an untenured assistant professor, then the academic home must provide sufficient administrative support that the person can be successful in a research and scholarly agenda sufficient to earn tenure and promotion.
Recommendation: There must continue to be a half time administrative support for the program.

Recommendation: The student organization should be brought into the governance structure of the program by inviting their leadership to participate in regular faculty meetings where personnel and specific student issues are not being addressed.

6. Productivity, outcomes and Impacts. The program has a high graduation rate ranging from 83-100% in recent years. All students graduate having completed a portfolio or a thesis. Graduation rates range between 100% and 83%, with a ten-year average of 93%. Students report a high degree of personalization, encouragement, and a feeling of belonging. Placement services are not offered, however a focus in the second year, spring semester, includes navigating the job search, transition issues, and application of knowledge and skills to post-graduate positions.

Since 2006, there have been 23 theses uploaded to Scholars Archive showing large numbers of downloads for use in other research. Topics are appropriate for the student affairs field and reflect the social justice interest in the curriculum. We did not expect the practitioners who serve as faculty-members to have substantial scholarship yet several do regularly publish their work. Most faculty members engaged in refereed conference presentations and serve as good models for students in promoting good practices and in scholarly inquiry. There are no grants among these scholar-practitioners. This can be addressed further in the staffing needs of core full-time faculty to provide this role.

Recommendation: When a full-time faculty member is added to the program, data is needed to track cohort success in the field. Minimally, it would be helpful to track how long it takes graduates to obtain full time employment, in what types of functional areas and in what job titles they are hired, institutional type and location, and if possible entry salary ranges. Periodic data should be gathered to address alumni satisfaction and preparedness for post-graduation employment.

Recommendation: When a full-time faculty member is added to the program, consideration should be given to creating an alumni database and an electronic program alumni newsletter that would share program news and accomplishments and alumni updates. Alumni are a critical recruiting tool for the program and also bring the potential of gifting to support program goals.

Conclusion

The College Student Services Administration graduate program at OSU is well-designed and offers a quality graduate education and graduate preparation to matriculated students. This is indeed a time of “timely opportunity” for the program. The program should be restructured and enhanced. The CSSA program exists in dynamic reciprocity with the student affairs division making a substantial contribution to the quality of OSU undergraduate life. The program is in transition and must establish an academic home that will support the program including hiring a full-time core faculty member as it continues to rely on resources from practitioners in student affairs who serve as faculty members in the program. Our recommendations were designed to aid in achieving that goal.

* note that portions of this report were taken directly from the CSSA self-study.