

Two of the 1990 issues of *Metropolitan Universities* addressed topics particularly relevant to student life: diversity and community interaction. The articles in both issues raised important questions and outlined challenges for all campuses as they strive to respond to the increasing demands of multiculturalism and to the need to support and develop community. Building on that foundation, in this issue we seek to address in a more specific way the challenges raised by certain student populations and the role of organizational change as student affairs professionals respond to these challenges. In addition, this issue extends the theoretical discussions of institutional approaches to multiculturalism.

These articles are not only an extension of earlier topics presented in this journal. The content is also a reflection of the times. The national agenda has included discussions of new financial aid policies and alternative ways to manage student loan programs. The recent implementation of ADA legislation has emphasized institutional responses to those with disabilities. Considerable publicity has been given to President Clinton's desire to increase community service and to link those activities to colleges and universities. The national context for these issues heightens the challenges to administrators at urban institutions as we seek to respond to these external pressures. In addition, budget cuts and downsizing, from which no college or university has been spared, have forced all administrators and academic leaders to examine priorities and stretch resources. Changes in structures and roles are a natural by-product of such struggles; yet it is not clear that out of largely fiscal agendas has come good thinking about organizational change. Multiculturalism has continued to create opportunities for dialogue and growth but not without divisiveness and frustration.

Metropolitan universities face a future in which budget considerations will continue to impact decision making. They face a future in which the numbers of students will increase who are older, from single-parent homes, of a variety of cultural backgrounds, transferring from other institutions, and with significant financial need. In this climate the strategies for responsiveness fall heavily on the shoulders of the student affairs staff. The developmental approach, common to student affairs professionals, takes time and patience under the best of circumstances. With the current issues, that approach is probably more important than ever, yet harder than ever to maintain. Consequently, we believe that it is important to underscore the student affairs staff role in setting the agenda for the institution and defining the challenges that must be met.

The range of possible topics for an issue on student life was enormous. The selections presented here represent a sample of topics and not an exhaustive collection of challenges facing student affairs professionals on campuses. All of these topics deserve more discussion and analysis than these few pages allow, but we believe they extend the discussion of student life issues and raise thoughtful considerations for all institutional personnel who care about the quality of campus life.

This issue begins with two articles that focus on organizational change and student affairs professionals as change masters. The first article is a dialogue that grew out of ongoing discussions held by the New England Student Affairs Think Tank, a group of senior student affairs administrators from a wide variety of colleges and universities in New England who meet regularly under the auspices of the New England Resource Center for Higher Education at the University of Massachusetts at Boston. The six participants discuss the need for organizational change in today's higher education arena and, from a student affairs point of view, highlight the skills and insights that chief student affairs officers can bring to institutional challenges. In a climate of competition for resources, the article underscores the importance of caring about structure and accountability. This is juxtaposed against a backdrop of values clarification on the part of staff and institutions and the attributes of the developmental approach that typically guide student services.

This article is followed by a discussion of two institutions' efforts at organizational change in student services. The experiences at a small private campus, Hampshire College, and those at a larger, more metropolitan, state institution, Keene State College, provide useful case studies in both the theoretical and practical elements of restructuring operations and of redefining staff roles in an attempt to better serve students.

Two articles extend the discussion of organizational change to the area of multiculturalism. Jane Fried presents the concepts of milieu management/campus ecology as viable and useful for institutions struggling with community development and conflict resolution. She emphasizes the need for student affairs professionals to be leaders in recognizing learning opportunities but cautions against using traditional programs and policies to respond to intergroup conflict. She explains the necessity for senior administrators and the president to be committed to creating an environment that affirms the value of many cultures and perspectives. Annamarie Melodia and J. Herman Blake raise the need for curriculum reform in liberal education as a means to create a sense of belonging and comfort within a multicultural community. They assert the need for students not only to identify with the curriculum, professors, and their peers but to develop a sense of comfort that allows them to be actively involved in their education. Through that active involvement comes a redefinition and re-evaluation of values and perspectives—student growth.

Financial aid and community service are discussed in articles that examine two institutions' approaches to expanding institutional goals and meeting student needs. Patricia Somers describes research on financial aid, which suggests that financial aid awards significantly influence enrollment and persistence in urban institutions. She proposes a formula for determining this impact. Her findings indicate that, once an institutional assessment is completed, redirecting financial aid may have a positive effect on institutional goals. Dennis Golden, Bridgette Pregliasco, and Michelle Clemons focus on the importance of community service for the contemporary metropolitan university. They examine both the

philosophical and practical underpinnings of such programs and then go on to discuss the benefits that accrue to the students involved in such outreach efforts and to the institution itself, as well as discuss the contributions such efforts make to the local community. Citing a variety of programs and initiatives at the University of Louisville, the authors illustrate how a metropolitan university can create opportunities for volunteer service at all levels of the institution, in both the academic and co-curricular spheres, thereby enhancing student development, promoting an ethic of care within students, and adding to the quality of life in the community.

The final two articles bring the discussion about student life issues to specific student populations. The two student groups—disabled students and community college transfers—comprise important portions of most metropolitan university student populations, and, as such, these institutions have the opportunity to be leaders and role models in the student service provided.

Richard Harris, who has spent most of his professional life working with disabled-student services, identifies the challenges of serving students with both physical and learning disabilities. He particularly notes the areas in which institutions need to educate their community and to proactively plan for the inclusion and full participation of these students. He provides useful examples of the ways in which meeting the letter and spirit of the ADA legislation provides both access and opportunity for students and the institution. Barbara Townsend presents research illuminating the difficulties community college students experience when they transfer to metropolitan four-year institutions. She references academic practices and describes the academic culture of universities that may hinder these transfer students as they strive to succeed in a four-year institution. Her research offers suggestions for changes in practice by highlighting the need for both academic and student affairs administrators to consciously and consistently focus on the financial, social, and psychological needs of these students.

The environment of higher education becomes ever more complex. This issue of *Metropolitan Universities* shows the changing nature of higher education institutions, focusing in many ways on issues that were not even items on the agenda ten years ago. The need for constant vigilance, ongoing reflection, and flexibility is demonstrated time and again in these articles. The successful practitioner needs to be able to recreate herself or himself on an ongoing basis and to be prepared to act quickly and creatively as new challenges arise. The experiences, wisdom, and insight demonstrated throughout this issue will hopefully inform such practice.