High Impact Educational Practices in Student Affairs

Much of the research on High Impact Practices (HIPs) has been related to academic led initiatives in the curriculum and co-curriculum. HIPs are also achieved through co-curricular program initiatives led by student affairs practitioners. HIPs in student affairs vary in terms of the type of initiative, as well as in scope. Examples may include the following: a program with a four-year/year/semester cohort model, student employee training and service, peer education, week-long immersion experiences, key leadership positions, participation in Student Affairs courses, etc.

What is a high impact practice?

Effective educational practices that promote -

• Active student engagement
• Deep integrative learning
• Gains across a range of desired outcomes
• Grades, persiste nce, student satisfaction, graduation

Key Elements of a High Impact Practice

• Performance expectations set at appropriately high levels (clear goals and outcomes established and shared with participants, participants may establish goals in conjunction with the program coordinator at the start of a program or training, expectations are included in promotional material)

• Significant investment of time and effort by students over an extended period of time (participation requires significant time and effort on purposeful tasks)
• Interactions with faculty, staff and peers about substantive matters (provides opportunities for students to engage with faculty, staff and peers in substantive matters over an extended period of time)

• Experiences with diversity, where students are exposed to and must contend with people and circumstances/perspectives that differ from those with which students are familiar (intentionality if key, create opportunities for participants to interact with peers who are different from themselves with regard to social identity, political ideology, and other issues of inclusion)

• Frequent, timely, and constructive feedback is given to students regarding their own learning and/or development (opportunities for feedback during and after the program or training; feedback can be peer to peer, as well as practitioner to student)

• Periodic, structured opportunities to reflect, synthesize and integrate learning (can be accomplished through self-reflection individually or in small groups, one-minute papers, blogs, journaling, etc.)

• Opportunities to discover relevance of learning through real-world applications (opportunities to apply what participants have learned or developed within their various co-curricular experiences on campus and beyond)

• Public demonstration of competence (assess the achievement of core competencies and/or other outcomes by an accomplished practitioner that demonstrates student learning and the application of skills through direct measures, performance evaluations, program evaluations, self-assessments, reflections, portfolios, etc.)