

## Guest Column: Student Affairs Transforms, Too

Vice President of Student Affairs  
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Amid the maelstrom of white papers, some wonder how the nonacademic units of the University are addressing the transformation process and looming budget cuts. I'd like to offer the process we are using in Student Affairs as one example.

Student Affairs is a division that employs more than 3,500 people, operates more than 40 facilities and provides hundreds of student and faculty programs. Central to our vision is to provide a positive and transformative student experience. Underpinning this vision are our values of entrepreneurship, expertise, partnership and centrality of our staff as our greatest resource.

I am proud of the people, programs and facilities in Student Affairs. But regardless of the gathering budget storm, we realize this is not a time to rest on our laurels. To be world-class, we must continually strive to be more on the cutting edge of student life, more connected to our academic community, more efficient and more nimble in responding to the changing budgetary landscape.

In August, a small group of Student Affairs staff gathered for an "innovative thinking session" to consider how to accomplish the above goals. This meeting led to the formation of teams to develop ideas to strengthen our infrastructure, streamline and focus our service delivery to students and develop innovative programming that will distinguish us from our peers.

The teams' recommendations are currently being shared with the entire division and with students. With their feedback and involvement, we will move to the next stage of further refining and ultimately implementing these ideas.

The pending changes will require that we think and do things in dramatically different ways. We will eliminate old silos of budgets, program structures and facilities. We will emphasize that Student Affairs is a resource-full division, if we are only willing to think differently.

This is a time of uncertainty and change felt by the entire University community. No staff member in Student Affairs enjoys the protection of tenure, so we have been honest that our jobs may change soon. Some positions may not continue. Amid these changes, we know the University will continue to have high expectations of our division. Among them are that we bring in high quality and ever-expanding classes, contribute to improved retention rates and manage crises in sharp and proactive ways.

While I acknowledge the sense of fear that change can engender, I also see how many of us are embracing the sense of possibility it brings. This has become a process where staff members in Student Affairs are able to roll up their sleeves, share good ideas they have been thinking about for years, acknowledge our best practices and critique those that could be better.

We try to facilitate this sense of possibility in several ways: by implementing a clear timeline for transformation, involving our staff as broadly as possible, [communicating weekly](#) <sup>[1]</sup> and candidly, and providing regular opportunities to explore the elements of change and innovation.

We are a division whose vision and values are about people, growth and creativity. The current [Transformation](#) <sup>[2]</sup> is providing us with an opportunity to put that vision and those values to the test.

So, as the process of transformation at the UA progresses, stay tuned to [Student Affairs](#) <sup>[3]</sup>. Hopefully, the work we have taken on will have value beyond our realm, as every unit at the UA looks for new and innovative ways to accomplish more with the same or fewer resources.

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### Links

[1] [http://studentaffairs.arizona.edu/comm\\_DB.php?ID=4](http://studentaffairs.arizona.edu/comm_DB.php?ID=4) [2] [http://provost.arizona.edu/transformation\\_information](http://provost.arizona.edu/transformation_information) [3] <http://www.studentaffairs.arizona.edu/>