Consolidating Student Development Services Within One-Stop Shops

Operations, Resources, and Evaluations
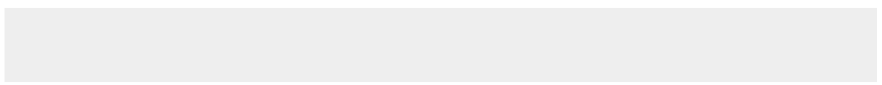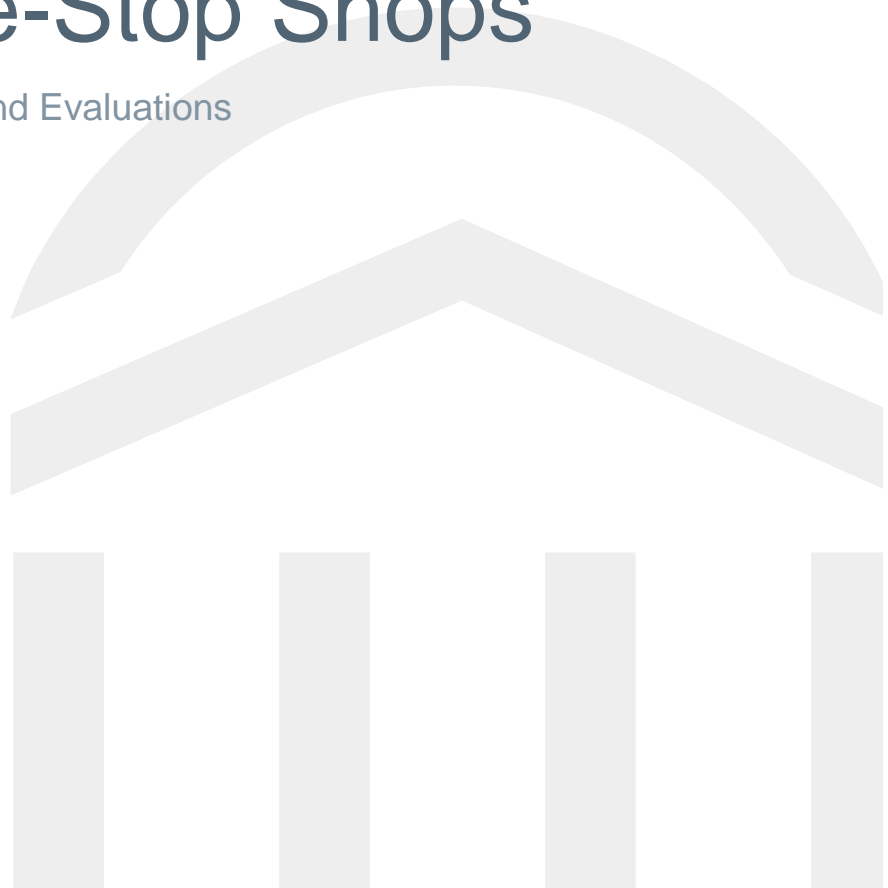
Student Affairs Forum

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1) Executive Overview

Key Observations

Consolidated service centers combine student development services that students frequently use in conjunction with one another (e.g. career services and leadership training, health services and counseling) and that one administrator can effectively manage. Student development departments at other institutions often include: services for aboriginal students, services for students with disabilities, counseling, academic and career advising, and community involvement. Administrators often exclude services that do not easily relocate, such as health services and recreation centers. Consolidating services that have previously collaborated eases transitional difficulties. Directors use end of term reviews to discuss budgeting and duplication of effort between units with staff; directors then streamline services and reduce spending at the beginning of the next semester.

Familiarity among units' staff and shared student information create welcoming and navigable environments for students. Describe each unit's services and identify each unit's "point person" to new staff during their orientation to encourage cross-unit collaboration. Student development staff in shared spaces use weekly meetings and informal interactions (e.g., birthday celebrations, team building activities) to increase familiarity with related services. Staff record student interactions and referrals on campus-wide software to ensure students attend appointments and to provide staff with useful background information. Students benefit when they do not have to repeat background information to access multiple services and staff can reference past conversations and referrals.

Hospitable and knowledgeable generalists in student intake areas answer student questions or direct students to specialized assistance. Generalists do not require master's degrees, but receive specialist-led professional development on referrals and student-needs prioritization. Generalists refer students to relevant specialists unless the concern has been definitively answered to ensure full resolution of students' concerns. Contacts also employ campus resource coordinators who meet with irresolute students, connect them to advisors, and assign action items for other staff. Consolidated student development services employ generalists with exemplary social skills to ensure student satisfaction and willingness to discuss issues.

Websites prevent unnecessary student trips to service centers and facilitate student self-help. Many student concerns, such as requests for applications or campus life information, do not require professional assistance. Students use websites to download applications, request forms, view resume and cover letter examples, and explore campus activity options. Directors incorporate website and call center usage statistics into decision-making about which services to feature in consolidated service offices.

2) Consolidated Service Center Operations

Services Offered

Offer Services Most Frequently Requested by Students and with Highest Potential for Collaboration in Consolidated Service Centers

Vice presidents of student affairs decide which services to include in consolidated centers. Contacts move and consolidate student services when space becomes available for multiple units. Consolidated centers increase student access to developmental resources and promote departmental cohesion.

Determine Which Services to Include in Consolidated Service Centers

Use service center creation to consolidate fragmented student development services, such as a single unit with multiple locations.

Which services can administrators physically relocate?

Consolidate services that require office space, but do not require large equipment (e.g., medical devices).

- Counseling
- International student services

Do not include services with high equipment needs.

- Health services
- Recreation center

Which services can a single administrator effectively manage?

Consolidate services a single administrator can likely manage based on administrator's past experience.

- Disability accommodations and learning skills
- Career services and internship placement

Do not include services with which a student development administrator has no familiarity.

- Health services

| Which services do students frequently require in conjunction or consecutively? | Consolidate services to which students receive joint referrals. | ▪ International student services
▪ Career services
▪ Counseling |
| | Do not include services that students typically use separately. | ▪ Community service |

Contacts recommend adopting a student's perspective to decide which units function best in a shared location. Administrators hold forums with student organization leaders and service unit stakeholders (e.g., students with disabilities) to determine maximum utility. Contacts at **Institution E** recommend limiting forums to a dozen students to ensure all attendees participate.

Staffing

Seek Staff Input to Identify and Eliminate Duplication of Effort Among Units

Shared student service spaces expose which units perform the same tasks. Contacts at **Institution E** suggest administrators discuss redundancies with mid-level professionals. Mid-level staff notice which tasks multiple departments perform, and are less protective of their department than senior-level managers. Contacts reassign redundant administrative staff to other units on campus after consolidation.

Over time, contacts aim to consolidate relevant departments (e.g., learning strategies and writing skills) within service centers by promoting some unit directors to oversee other units. Senior level administrators aim to shape larger units; too many small units restrict cooperative decision making.

Staffing structures at **Institution F** demonstrate that consolidated services need few employees for the reception area. Some services require differentiated staff; disability services uses different staff for testing and counseling. Other services do not differentiate among staff; all learning skills staff perform the same advisory role.

Staffing at *Institution F's* Student Development Center

Institution F serves 20,000 undergraduates.

Office	Staff
Reception and Enquiries	3 Staff (including 1 Intake Counselor)
Psychological Services	6 Psychologists 4 Counselors
Learning Skills Services	7 Counselors
Writing Support Center	3 Writing Counselors
International and Exchange Student Centre	6 Coordinators
Services for Students with Disabilities	1 Department Coordinator 4 Counselors 1 Psychologist (for testing) 1 Learning Opportunities Lab Tech 2 Administrative Staff
Indigenous Services	3 Staff
Community Service Program	1 Coordinator

Select Generalists for Customer Service Capability and Provide Institutional Professional Development

Generalists are frequently students' first contact at the one-stop shop. Contacts emphasize that generalists must be service-focused and friendly. Administrators at **Institution G** recommend that shop directors avoid assigning generalists based on seniority within consolidated units and focus on customer service ability. Generalists do not require masters or advanced degrees.

Generalists:
- Answer student questions,
- Provide relevant self-help material,
- Direct students-in-need to appropriate specialized assistance; and
- Schedule student appointments with specialists.

Contacts use institutional professional development and training to ensure that generalists can prioritize student needs and assign ideal referrals. Many contacts refer to this function as "triage."

Generalists' Professional Development

- **Orientation.** At **Institution F**, psychologists in the Student Development Center create and deliver orientation sessions for generalist staff that describe unit functions and corresponding student needs to increase front-end staff members' resourcefulness.

- **Job shadowing.** Front-end generalist staff shadow specialists in other units as part of professional development programs.

Generalists refer students with multiple concerns (e.g., an international student struggling with career choices) to one relevant office at a time; generalists do not attempt to substitute for the specialized expertise of multiple offices.

Resource Coordinators Guide Students with Multiple Concerns

At **Institution A**, students unsure of which unit addresses their concerns (e.g., a student concerned about time management but unsure if problems stem from class comprehension or study skills) schedule appointments with a "resource coordinator" in the academic support office. The resource coordinator provides initial action items for students and connects them to specific units that best address students' needs.

Students Relate to Peer Advisors for Non-Urgent Concerns (e.g., Resume Help)

Peer programs allow students to receive advice from their age cohort and build relationships with upperclass students. Administrators create peer-led programs for students to discuss relevant young adult topics such as sexual relations and alcohol safety. Administrators also assign peer advisors to work in larger service units to help students develop long-term career skills.

Institution E has over 200 students in its peer helper program. Unit staff determine their number of desired peer helpers based on available work and on what tasks students can perform. Since counseling necessitates professionals with advanced degrees, the counseling unit has zero peer helpers; career services uses peer helpers for resume and cover letter review and recruits approximately 30 students. Institution E has senior and junior peers; students receive promotions through experience and additional training. Peers gain skills and a zero-credit course on their transcript as compensation. Senior peers gain leadership experience.

Peer advisors receive core training through classes in diversity, leadership, conflict resolution, and effective use of campus resources. Students then participate in specific modules based on their assigned unit; peer advisors assigned to indigenous services enroll in modules called "Understanding Aboriginal Culture."

Peer Helpers

200+

Institution E involves over 200 peer helpers in its 30-year old campus-wide program.

Train Peers to Determine When to "Refer Up"

Training teaches peer advisors which situations necessitate a professional with extra experience and specialized training (e.g., concerns about relationship or substance abuse). Peers practice referring cases during their training. Contacts report peers' willingness to refer students and not involve themselves in overly complex situations.

Information Sharing

Office Culture and Software Facilitate Student Referrals for Multiple Concerns

Office Culture

Contacts develop inter-office relationships to create staff members' familiarity with services included in consolidated service centers. In shared spaces, staff become acquainted with each other through weekly meetings, informal meals, monthly birthday celebrations, and conversations in the hallway. Relationships improve student referrals because inter-office relationships prevent creation of siloes among departments and improve collaboration.

Students sign confidentiality agreements to allow staff to discuss student needs; for example, counseling and disability services staff at **Institution B** share information to provide more precise services.

Always consult with legal counsel about FIPA compliance regarding student information sharing.

Software

Referral software improves communication, eliminates need for background information repetition, and provides consistency in recommendations. Contacts at **Institution A** and **Institution F** use institutionally-developed systems. Institution A advisors view students' degree audits and enter notes on each advisee. Institution A staff also use MAP-Works™ to connect advising information and staff to student and residential life. Institution F advisors track and coordinate student use of services in the University's system.

The Online Advising Management System at Institution D

Institution D is piloting the Online Advising Management System (OAMS). Advisors and faculty members enter notes on students and make inter-unit referrals with OAMS. OAMS grants different levels of access to advisors and faculty members. Advisors can see notes from multiple sources, while faculty only see their own entries to avoid potential conflicts of interests. OAMS users undergo training about appropriate information and level of detail to include in shared notes.

Case Managers Respond to High-Risk Concerns for Individual Students

Contacts employ case managers for high-risk students (e.g., students with severe depression or mania) who demonstrate risk to themselves or others. Professors and staff use early-alert systems, including Report It! and Symplicity, to register concerns. Case managers can access confidential material about students, including quoted statements.

Student affairs administrators at **Institution C** bring together counseling staff, disability services staff, risk managers, and campus safety officers to provide subject expertise for each case. This group typically meets in response to a specific high-risk student action, but occasionally holds general meetings at the end of a semester to review lessons learned.
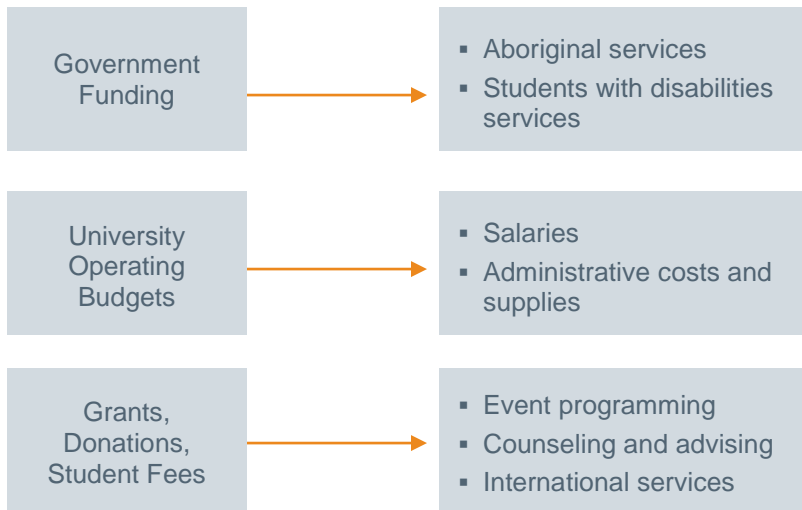
3) Consolidated Service Center Resources

Budget

Government Aid, Student Fees, and Operating Budgets Fund Student Service Centers

Student development service centers combine multiple funding sources. Certain protected groups (e.g., aboriginal students, students with disabilities) receive direct funding from government ministries. University administrators promote specific units to private donors (e.g., international services), and student governments use fees to fund high-demand programs.

Dedicated Funding for Specific Units

Government Funding	→	▪ Aboriginal services ▪ Students with disabilities services
University Operating Budgets	→	▪ Salaries ▪ Administrative costs and supplies
Grants, Donations, Student Fees	→	▪ Event programming ▪ Counseling and advising ▪ International services

Maintain Unit Director Spending Authority Under Consolidated Budgets

Contacts at **Institution E** recommend the creation of "cost centers" for each unit in the consolidated service center. Unit directors fully control spending within their cost center, and adjust spending after center-wide budget cuts. The senior administrator allocates money for building and administrative costs. This change management tactic assuages concerns about lost responsibility under consolidated budgets.

Space Configuration

Separate Administrative Work from Student Areas and Develop Programming Space

Contacts recommend separating student space from administrative areas to emphasize student focus and remove distractions. Contacts also emphasize the importance of programming space. Hold workshops and seminars in mid-sized spaces and career and volunteer fairs, as well as major international festivals, in larger spaces.

Programming attracts students to student services buildings and encourages student participation. Student development centers also include affinity group lounges and study spaces to create a comfortable space and encourage student presence.

Stylized Sample Floor Plan

Student Lounge and Study Space	Front Entrance		Student Lounge and Study Space
Large Programming Space (100 Students)	**Waiting Area** Include student self-help resources, relevant brochures, books, commonly requested forms		**Medium Programming Space A** (40 students)
	Intake Desk Generalists and administrative assistants schedule and triage appointments		
	Advising Cubicles Advisors help students with career searches, campus involvement, and other non-confidential issues		**Medium Programming Space B** (40 students)
	Counselor Offices Specialists assist students with complex, private concerns		
Administrative Area Non-student facing staff and backroom record keeping			

Virtual Presence

Offer Websites for Student Self-Help to Reduce In-Person Requests

Contacts provide students with self-help resources through websites and call centers. The best websites prioritize user-friendliness and represent student needs through straightforward organization. Easily accessible campus maps, application forms, and calendars save students time and allow service center staff to focus on students who need personal attention.

The success center website at Institution A has three drop-down lists for different student questions, with links to probable answers. Students select their needs to view the webpages with relevant solutions.

Success Center Website Mock-Up from *Institution A*

I Need Help With…	I Need to Find…	I Need to Learn About…
Academic Planning	A Career Development Timeline	Academic Probation
Accommodations in Class	A Place to Study	Class Registration
Choosing Appropriate Classes	Career Fairs	Degree Audits
Choosing a Major	Career Management Workshops	Disability Services
Creating or Enhancing a Resume	Degree Requirement Guide	Doing Undergraduate Research
Finding a Job or Internship	Disability Services	Going to Graduate School
My Classes: Study Strategies Instruction	GPA Calculator	MAP-Works
My Classes: Tutoring	Mock Interviews	Credit Transfer
	Where to be Advised	

Institution D's website shows six common student requests and lists relevant topics for each. Topics typically correspond with one campus office.

Students Services Website Mock-Up from *Institution D*

Know My Campus:	Plan for Success:	Live Well to Learn Well:
▪ Academic Calendar	▪ Class Booklists	▪ Drugs and Alcohol
▪ Campus Maps	▪ How to Cite	▪ Relationships
▪ Orientation Programs	▪ Find Study Spaces	▪ Sleep, Nutrition, and Exercise
Have Some Fun:	**Build My Career:**	**Manage My Courses, Money, and Enrollment:**
▪ Centre for Student Involvement	▪ Career Fairs	▪ Registration
▪ Athletics	▪ Resume Help	▪ Loans
▪ Greek Life	▪ International Projects Funding	▪ Grades

4) Evaluations and Outcomes

Measurement

Monitor Student Requests to Improve Service Center Responsiveness

Internet and phone technology tools record which services students request most. At **Institution G**, administrators use phone coding from interactive voice response technology to expedite and track which questions students want answered. This information helps contacts determine how to train staff, what to post on the website, and when to redirect students for in-person visits.

Create Development Outcomes and Goals for Departments

Institution E evaluates its student affairs department by student progress towards seven learning outcomes:

- Cognitive complexity;
- Knowledge acquisition, integration, and application;
- Humanitarianism;
- Civic engagement;
- Interpersonal and intrapersonal competence;
- Practical competence; and
- Persistence and academic achievement.

The Student Affairs Learning Outcomes Committee determines these outcomes. This group includes one representative from each student affairs department; departmental directors and the provost ultimately approve outcomes.

Student development services use national surveys, such as the Student Wellness Survey and the Globe and Mail Report, to compare institutional services to other schools; relevant categories include most satisfied students, career preparation, and academic counseling.

Administrators use internally developed surveys to measure demand from their campus and satisfaction from student services participants. Units that serve under-resourced groups focus on how targeted groups compare to the campus average (e.g., aboriginal students' four-year graduation rate). At **Institution G**, administrators convene student leadership and service unit stakeholders (e.g., aboriginal students, students with disabilities) to collect feedback.

5) Research Methodology

Project Challenge

Leadership at a member institution approached the Forum with the following questions:

- Which services do contacts include in consolidated service centers? Which student development services do contacts exclude from consolidated service centers? How do contacts select services for consolidated service centers inclusion?

- How do contacts divide responsibilities between generalists and service-specific specialists? How do contacts maintain specialists' professional identities within collaborative services?

- What combination of self, peer, and professional help do students receive?

- What procedures ensure students receive referrals to the appropriate services within consolidated service centers?

- How do contacts share student information within consolidated service centers?

- What physical space do contacts use for their consolidated service centers?

- How many staff support consolidated service centers? What are their titles and responsibilities? What reporting structure do contacts employ? How do contacts ensure efficient use of staff within consolidated service centers?

- What budgets support consolidated service centers? How have student development operational budgets changed since creation of consolidated service centers?

- What information and services can students access online? What resources support virtual components for consolidated service centers?

- What metrics and strategies evaluate consolidated service centers' success?

- What impacts do first-stop student development shops have on campus?

- What strategies adapt and expand consolidated service centers to other campus locations?

- What challenges do contacts encounter in the development and operation of consolidated service centers for student development services? How do contacts address these challenges?

- What advice do contacts offer for consolidation of student development services within consolidated service centers?

Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

- Advisory Board's internal and online research libraries (eab.com)

- The Chronicle of Higher Education (http://chronicle.com)

- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (http://nces.ed.gov/)

- Institution websites

Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed student affairs administrators responsible for student development services.

A Guide to Institutions Profiled in this Brief

Institution	Location	Approximate Institutional Enrollment (Undergraduate/Total)	Classification
Institution A	Southern US (City, Midsize)	12,900/15,400	Research Universities (very high research activity)
Institution B	Central Canada	16,700/18,200	Comprehensive University
Institution C	Central Canada	16,000/23,900	Medical Doctoral University
Institution D	Western Canada	46,000/57,100	Medical Doctoral University
Institution E	Central Canada	19,400/21,900	Comprehensive University
Institution F	Central Canada	20,500/25,800	Medical Doctoral University
Institution G	Central Canada	41,100/54,000	Comprehensive University

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