***Book Discussion: The Curricular Approach to Student Affairs Session 1***

***Optional Professional Development Opportunity hosted by the JMU Student Affairs Assessment Advisory Council.***

**1st Discussion (November 19th 9-10am Taylor Union RM 203)**

* Host: Sara Finney, Center for Assessment and Research Studies
  + Discussion Overview
    - Group introductions
    - Forward/Preface
    - Chapter 1: Why a Curricular Approach in Student Affairs?
    - Chapter 2: What is a Curricular Approach in Student Affairs?

**Reading Discussion Questions:**

*Used to help frame the Forward/Preface and first two chapters.*

1. What is the Curricular Approach?
   1. Describe what this term encompasses.
      1. New professionals hired in the division next year may not have heard this language. This concept may be new to them.
   2. What basic questions would higher education professionals ask me about the curricular approach if I brought it up or suggested it? That is, the questions below are the questions I believe I will be asked by professionals in the Division (and beyond) and would want to adequately explain.
2. How does the Curricular Approach differ from approaches we encounter in our offices?
   1. It would be helpful to describe what is current practice in order to compare/contrast it with the Curricular Approach.
   2. Has JMU been engaging in a curricular approach and just not called it that? If not, what approach is observed?
3. Why should we be engaging in the Curricular Approach?
   1. What are the benefits?
   2. What is the utility it affords?
4. Do you see any overlap between the Curricular Approach and the outcomes assessment process <https://www.jmu.edu/assessment/sass/overview-of-AC.shtml>?
   1. Where is the overlap?
   2. Where is the Curricular Approach distinct from the outcomes assessment process?

**2nd Discussion (December 3rd 9-10am Taylor Union RM 203)**

* Host: Jordan Todd, Center for Multicultural Student Services
  + Discussion Overview
    - Group introductions
    - Chapter 3: How to Identify Learning Aims
    - Chapter 4: How to Design, Implement, and Assess a Curricular Approach

**Reading Discussion Questions:**

*Used to help guide our reading and discussion for chapters 3 and 4*

1. What is the difference between learning goals and learning outcomes?
   1. How do we write “good” learning outcomes?
2. How might an institution balance collaboration and inclusivity in the design process against the risk of over-analysis?
3. What is the importance of an educational plan?
4. How might we strive for continuous improvement?

**3rd Discussion (December 10th 9-10am Taylor Union RM 203)**

* Host: Sara Finney, Center for Assessment and Research Studies
  + Discussion Overview
    - Group introductions
    - Chapter 5: Facilitating Student Learning Beyond the Classroom

**Reading Discussion Questions:**

**Chapter 5: Facilitating Student Learning Beyond the Classroom**

*This chapter focuses “on exploring contemporary understandings of student learning and a broad array of strategies to foster learning beyond the classroom.”*

1. Kerr and colleagues state, “Educators cannot ask students to go where they are unwilling to go themselves.” What does that mean, relative to your role? Relative to the Division?
2. Kerr and colleagues explore an array of learning theories, strategies and perspectives. Which, if any, challenged you to think about your work in a new way?
3. Curricular approaches provide “an opportunity to make the content and the process of learning explicit, which opens the teaching and learning to critique, assessment, and revision **from a critical, inclusive, and social justice lens**” (p. 13). Share a way that you do, or could, apply such a lens to your functional area.
4. When developing programming, it is important to focus on the “what” (i.e., content) and the “how” (i.e., pedagogy). However, pedagogy (pp. 88-92; App. K) may not be considered or made explicit. How can we encourage our colleagues to embrace pedagogical approaches/strategies and make them explicit?

**4th Discussion (December 17th 9-10am Taylor Union RM 203)**

* Host: Jonathan Stewart, Associate Director of Finance, IT, and Assessment
  + Discussion Overview
    - Chapter 6: Leadership for a Curricular Approach

**Reading Discussion Questions**

**Chapter 6: Leadership for a Curricular Approach**

*This will be our final discussion for this reading of The Curricular Approach to Student Affairs, but certainly not the final discussion about how we lead this change at JMU.*

1. What does it mean to be a part of “learning organization”?
   1. Where do you see JMU and Student Affairs fitting this mold?
   2. In the spirit of continuous improvement, consider the opportunities you see for improvement within the division, your unit, or teams in regard to creating a learning organization.
2. Kerr and colleagues state that SA Professionals would benefit from understanding three levels of organizational culture: artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions.  Using that framework, what is the culture at JMU, Student Affairs, and within your individual unit?
   1. How might an understanding of our culture context help us lead this change effort?
3. The authors provide a handful of recommendations for mindful leadership and other leadership strategies for a curricular approach. How might you use these strategies to lead efforts within your own sphere of influence?