

**Western Kentucky University  
Student Affairs Graduate Program  
CAS Evaluation External Reviewers Report**

**Presented by**

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**I. Introduction**

The reviewers would like to express our appreciation to the faculty and administration of Western Kentucky University and the Student Affairs program for the decision to perform a self-study using the CAS Standards, and for providing results of the self-study on BlackBoard for access by the University Community and the external reviewers. We would like to express our particular appreciation to and praise for Dr. Tracy Lara who is the Coordinator of the Student Affairs program and who was the architect of the review. Dr. Lara did an exemplary job of making the report available and making sure that all needed materials were placed within the report.

Dr. Lara and the faculty of the Student Affairs program have worked on the planning and implementation of the CAS self-study of the Student Affairs program for approximately two years. During that period, Dr. Lara and her colleagues collected a large amount of data and supporting documents about the program, the department, the college, and the university. They, along with members of an established CAS review team as well as a program advisory board, have examined the standards and guidelines for student affairs professional preparation programs, have sought to identify whether or not they have met the standards and guidelines by providing a response to each and a list of supporting documents, have identified

some gaps and have worked to address these gaps within the existing infrastructure of the program, department and college, and have developed an action plan which seeks to deal with gaps and to identify new opportunities for growth and development of the Student Affairs program. Finally, the Student Affairs program faculty and the review committee have invited an external review team consisting of the persons noted above to review their self-study and program. Dr. Gregory and Mr. Rodda are members of the CAS Board of Directors and represent both a faculty member and a professional practitioner's view of the program. Both Gregory and Rodda bring extensive student affairs and CAS experience to the process, and Gregory adds the experience of being a graduate program director of a similar graduate program at a similar university.

The report that follows will describe the fit between the elements that exist within the Student Affairs graduate program at Western Kentucky University and the standards and guidelines for such programs that have been promulgated by CAS. In addition, it will examine the action plan described by the Student Affairs program, describe opportunities and challenges facing the program and provide a conclusion regarding the findings of the external reviewers. The material found in this report reflects the points of view of the external reviewers and is not necessarily a reflection of the Council for the Advancement in Higher Education (CAS).

## **II. CAS Standards**

- A. **Mission and Objectives:** As noted above, the faculty have examined Mission and Objective Standards 1.1-1.5 and have provided a response as to whether they meet these standards. In addition, they have noted documentation to support their program's compliance with each standard related to Mission and Objectives. It is clear from this report that the Student Affairs program at Western Kentucky University meets each of the standards listed within the Mission and Objections

portion of the CAS Standards for Student Affairs Professional Preparation

programs. In addition to its more general missions, the Student Affairs program:

- a. Serves the needs of full-time student affairs employees of the university.
- b. Is beginning to meet the needs of Kentucky Community and Technical College student affairs and related employees.
- c. Serves local students who are not employed by the University, from up to 150 miles of the campus, and who may be employed by other local colleges and universities.
- d. Is developing an international focus which will add a new and important dimension to the program and will attract a new market of potential students to the program.
- e. Will serve as a feeder program for newly approved Ed. D. Program in Educational Leadership which has a Higher Education track.
- f. Is placing additional focus on developing the ability to accept more full-time graduate students through the development of graduate assistantships and tuition waivers to support those who are not full-time university employees.

B. **Recruitment and Admission:** The recruitment and admission policies, guidelines and procedures are clear and well stated and are available easily and quickly to prospective students. They address the needs of a wide variety of student applicants and apply to any candidate seeking admission to the Student Affairs program. Thus, we believe that the Student Affairs Program at Western Kentucky University meets the Recruitment and Admission Standards. The first Standard under Recruitment and Admission Standards reads as follows: “**Accurate descriptions of the graduate program including the qualifications of its faculty must be made readily available for review by both current and prospective**

**students”**. While we believe that the Student Affairs program does accurately reflect the qualifications of the program faculty, we believe that the listing of the entire counseling faculty overstates their involvement in the program. Thus, we would recommend that the listing and qualifications of the faculty only include those who regularly teach classes taken by the Student Affairs students. We realize that students “may” take courses from some of the counseling faculty not directly involved with the program, but this appears to be unusual and gives a false impression of the faculty from whom students will take courses. In fact, as the reader will see below, it appears that with the exception of one or two courses, Dr. Lara and Dr. Hughey teach the lion’s share of content courses, and that it is possible, as one student indicated, that all of the courses that she took during the first year of the program were taught by Dr. Lara.

We discovered that the following elements and issues are related to the recruitment and admission of students:

- a. The recruitment and admission of students is primarily focused on admission of Kentucky students, many of whom are full-time employees of the university.
- b. There is discussion of broadening the recruiting efforts for the program in order to recruit more full-time students and students from outside Kentucky, but these efforts are hampered by the lack of appropriate graduate assistantships and tuition waivers for the program in student affairs and related administrative areas, as well as by the lack of enough full-time and adjunct faculty.
- c. There are concerns about hurdles in the admissions process from within the College of Education as a result of the exclusive use of the GAP Score for admission. There is, however, an Alternative Admission Process that

seeks to include additional elements of a candidate's background, but even here there is concern about a lack of control by the faculty of the program in controlling the destiny of the admission process. Several persons referred to efforts to move to a more holistic admissions process, and we encourage these efforts. **We encourage the university to maintain academic standards for admission to its graduate programs, however, we refer university officials to research data that indicate that minority and first generation students may prove to be very successful in graduate school despite deficits in GRE scores in particular. We would also recommend that the university move away from a one size fits all model, and allow the graduate program coordinators to make final judgments regarding admission standards for their programs. These faculty should be held responsible for their decisions, but as professionals in their particular fields, be allowed to make these decisions.**

- C. **Curriculum Policies:** Curriculum policies are clearly stated, available to applicants and students and are reviewed on a regular basis. While some course syllabi are rather minimal, they do meet the requirements for such materials. Policies and procedures appear to be in compliance with university requirements, are available to students, are reviewed by the program advisory board as well as the faculty of the program, and any changes are made available to students. The curriculum is well thought out and the faculty have made significant efforts to include students in co-curricular programs and professional networking opportunities which will prepare them for careers in student affairs. Thus, we believe that the Student Affairs program at Western Kentucky University is in

compliance with all of the CAS Standards related to curriculum policies.

We discovered that the following elements and issues are related to curriculum policies:

- a. **We believe that the inclusion of all the counseling faculty in the list of those for the program is misleading. We encourage WKU to remove them from the list even though it is possible that students may take a course from one or more of them.** It would appear to list these faculty as affiliated to the program through departmental membership would be more appropriate and to list only those full-time and adjunct faculty whose role is primarily in the Student Affairs program as program faculty. This is particularly true since it is our assessment that the program needs additional full-time and adjunct faculty and the listing as now provided seems to indicate a plethora of available faculty.
- b. One other concern is confusion about the structure of and difference between the practicum and internship experiences. While the faculty understand that the practicum is intended to be an introductory practical exposure to a student affairs administrative operation and that the internship is to be a more “hands-on” experience with more defined learning objectives, this message does not appear to be as clearly understood by some site supervisors or students. It also appears that this does not occur in practice and that sometimes the practicum is in essence a shorter version of the internship. **Thus, we would encourage a clearer description of the content of each practical experience element, and more focus on assurance that site supervisors understand this difference and that students do as well.**

- c. While it appears that there are alternatives to the completion of three practical experiences through the completion of an additional class or a rather detailed report, it is our understanding that this is actively discouraged by the faculty of the program. Since the program now focuses primarily on part-time students who work full-time either at WKU or nearby community, technical or other postsecondary institutions, it would appear that it might be appropriate to waive one of these three experiences and to allow students one of the alternatives on a more regular basis. For those full-time students with no professional work experience, however, the three practical experiences are exemplary.
- d. One rather unique element of the curriculum policy is the blocking of two classes on Thursday each week so that students may come to campus, or take class one day a week. Students, for the most part, seem to like this approach; however, depending on which classes are available, they find it quite trying and physically exhausting at times. There do seem, from time to time, to be some scheduling issues since students may begin the courses any semester. For instance, the law class which is quite difficult for most students can be offered during the first semester of matriculation with no foundation having been laid by other courses. **We recommend that the courses scheduled for the Thursday block be examined regularly to make sure that an appropriate flow of courses is available.** As more full-time students come into the program, this may become easier.
- e. While the practice of offering many classes once every two years does not now appear to be a problem, we encourage the faculty to regularly examine this policy to assure that students' needs are being met. As the

program grows in size and diversity and the size of the faculty grows, it may be better to offer courses once per year.

D. Pedagogy: There are three standards within the pedagogy section. It appears that the faculty in the Student Affairs program are meeting each of the standards. The pedagogical philosophy of the faculty is clear and is supported in the documents provided, faculty appear to accommodate different learning styles within their classes, and teaching approaches are evaluated by fellow departmental and college faculty, students and the program advisory committee. Thus, we believe that the Student Affairs program at Western Kentucky University is in compliance with all of the CAS Standards related to pedagogy.

We discovered that the following elements and issues are related to pedagogy:

a. There are a variety of teaching methods and formats provided by the faculty. These include:

- i. Face-to-face classes,
- ii. January term classes,
- iii. Practical applications,
- iv. Thursday class block, and
- v. Distance Education methodologies.

b. Distance and on-line formats are now being tried in several classes.

Evaluation of these on-line classes should be conducted repeatedly and thoroughly to assure they are meeting the goals of the program, faculty and students. Some material is not appropriate for distance education approaches and the faculty need to assure that only appropriate courses are delivered through any particular teaching format, particularly on-line.

c. The first class in the international certificate program was taught on-line



during the January term. The concept for this certificate and class are to be applauded, and it will clearly meet a need for student affairs professionals. In our conversations with students, the short-term and on-line format received mixed reviews. **We recommend that consideration be given to providing this course and other courses in the certificate program in several different methodologies to find what works best.**

- d. The faculty are well qualified to teach the courses in the curriculum and their pedagogy seems sound.

E. **The Curriculum:** The curriculum in the Student Affairs program includes 48 credits of work that appear to include the three required foci: 1) foundational studies, 2) professional studies, and 3) supervised practice. The curriculum with a foundation in counseling consists primarily of student affairs courses. Three courses overlap the counseling program and the research methods course serves all graduate students in the college. This is a fairly typical and traditional arrangement. There are three practical experiences as part of the program as noted above. The curriculum is based upon the fact that most students are part-time. Thus, the Thursday block of courses seems very appropriate as an organizational tool. Thus, we believe that the Student Affairs program at Western Kentucky University is in compliance with all of the CAS Standards related to curriculum.

We discovered that the following elements and issues are related to the curriculum:

- a. While the historical and philosophical foundations of student affairs are dealt with as elements of several courses, it appears that more attention could be paid to these issues, perhaps through additional courses. This

would need to result in a rearrangement of the curriculum, which, while it is desirable is not necessary to meet the standards.

- b. The Program has accepted the writing and citation style of the American Psychological Association (APA V) as its standard. There appears, however, some significant variance as to how much attention is paid to this among the entire faculty. In fact, a glance at the CVs of several of the faculty indicates that they do not conform to this style at times. While academic freedom supports this concept, it is recommended that more attention be paid to this in all courses and that it be recognized that APA is the accepted style of academic writing in the student affairs profession and to do less is to shortchange those students who seek to pursue further graduate study and/or to write for publication after graduation.
- c. Several discussions have brought us to the conclusion that while the curriculum is sound, some class sequencing issues are still to be dealt with. This is partially true due to the option to begin the program any semester, the decision to teach courses only once every two years, trying to maintain a set course rotation, the Thursday block system, the part-time nature of most students, the availability of faculty, and other issues. It seems to us that, where possible, an appropriate sequencing of courses for students would be beneficial. For instance, research methods, student development theory and introduction to student affairs would seem to be courses that would be essential to other courses and that law, for instance, may be one that should be scheduled after a base of knowledge about the profession has been established. We do recognize the difficulty with achieving this within the current design of the curriculum.

- d. The January term concept is one that has shown value both at WKU and elsewhere. That said, we encourage the faculty to examine that courses are appropriate for teaching during this period, and which teaching methodologies are appropriate for use during this period.
- e. From our conversations, it seems that the college's research methods course fails to meet the needs of the students in the Student Affairs program. The course should be reviewed for its applicability and utility for the Student Affairs program, especially if and when the program becomes a feeder to the doctoral program. Depending on the findings of the review, a master's level statistics course or a re-designed research course might be needed.
- f. In examining the three elements of the curriculum (General Professional Requirements, Student Affairs Major, and Electives), we were struck by the inclusion of **CNS 556 Career Counseling** as a part of the General Requirements. While certainly an important and valuable course for many students, it does not appear to us to be a course necessary for all persons entering the student affairs profession. **Given our desire to see more focus on history and philosophy, we recommend that this course become an elective and that a new course be developed to focus on history and philosophy of student affairs and higher education.**
- g. As noted above, **we recommend clarification of the differences between the practicum and internships for all parties involved in the curriculum and these courses.**
- h. While we understand and value the counseling foundation of the Student Affairs program, we also recognize that a diversity of philosophy and

approach in the program is of value. **As a result, we recommend that if and when a new full-time faculty position becomes available that a person with a background not in counseling be considered, and that adjuncts be chosen who also do not have counseling as their philosophical underpinning.** This will not undermine the program, and in fact, we believe that it will diversify it and make it stronger.

F. **Equity and Access:** We see no evidence of any issues or problems with regard to equity and access. In fact, policies and procedures are clearly stated in the materials provided by the university and in related university documents and appear to be in full compliance with CAS Standards for Equity and Access.

G. **Academic and Student Support:** While the faculty in the program are clearly well prepared, the coordinator is exemplary, and the part-time and adjunct faculty who are actively involved with the program are superb, this is the area of standards in which we believe the program is the weakest. We believe that the program is in compliance with the letter of the standards in this area, but that the compliance with the spirit of the standards may well be questionable. As we have noted above, the listing of all counseling faculty as being involved in the program is misleading. For instance, one portion of one standard in this area reads, **“Sufficient full-time core faculty members must be devoted to teaching and administering the program to graduate not only employable students but also students capable of designing, creating, and implementing learning opportunities”.** Because of his administrative responsibilities Dr. Hughey, while technically a full-time faculty member in the program, does not have the time to devote to the program that would be desired. More than one student we spoke with indicated that they had Dr. Lara for all of their courses during the first year of

the program and many students indicated that they had Dr. Lara for at least five courses. We believe another full-time faculty member is needed for this program. We were informed that the potential retirement of one faculty member and the creation of the EdD program in Educational Leadership might offer opportunities for support for more faculty.

Advising is a key element of any graduate program. Virtually all of the current students with whom we spoke indicated that they were advised by Dr. Lara. While Dr. Lara is an extremely well qualified teacher and advisor, this type of advising load does not benefit the students or provide appropriate support for the faculty member. While there is much to be said for the efficiency of running a one-person-show, in the long term the quality of the program deteriorates. An additional full-time faculty member would assist in this area as well.

It appears that the level of financial support for students, particularly full-time students, is very limited and that institutional policy may be forcing those with the welfare of the program in mind to provide back door methods to support students when a policy change may accomplish the same purpose more directly, efficiently and appropriately. **Thus, we recommend the creation of and financial support for graduate assistantships and tuition waivers for this program. These assistantships and waivers, while supported by the college and the academic division of the university should be portable and usable in the Division of Student Affairs and elsewhere as deemed appropriate by the faculty. This is a magnificent opportunity for a significant interaction between Academic and Student Affairs in that Student Affairs could pay the stipend and Academic Affairs offer a tuition waiver.**

It does appear that adequate levels of professional development funds and

other support are available for faculty, that adequate library and research support are available, that adequate library resources are available, and that career assistance for students is appropriate. Faculty are skilled and are available to students who need their advice and support.

Thus, while we believe that the Student Affairs program at Western Kentucky University is in compliance with the CAS Standards related to academic and student support, we believe that without significant improvement the program may fall out of compliance in the near future.

We discovered that the following elements and issues are related to the academic and student support standards:

- a. The number of faculty is minimally adequate to meet the CAS standard, but increased full-time and adjunct faculty would be beneficial and would enhance the program.
- b. Dr. Lara provides the ethnic diversity on the faculty. **We encourage the university to recruit and hire persons of color for this program and make them a visible part of the program.**
- c. There is a need for more adjunct faculty. The current adjuncts provide important, but limited, content-based teaching within the curriculum.
- d. The professional preparation of the current full-time, part-time and adjunct faculty is exemplary, but is primarily focused within a counseling foundation. More diversity of background would be desirable.
- e. The addition of faculty for the EdD program in Educational Leadership may well assist the Student Affairs program to meet some of its staffing needs though it will not totally solve these needs.
- f. Graduate assistantships with tuition waivers as opposed to part-time jobs

would be a desirable enhancement of the program.

F. **Professional Ethics and Legal Responsibilities:** We see no evidence of any issues or problems with regard to professional ethics and legal responsibilities. University, college, department, and program policies appear to comply with state and federal law and appropriate professional association ethical principles and guidelines. In fact, policies and procedures are clearly stated in the materials provided by the university and in related university documents and appear to be in full compliance with CAS Standards and guidelines.

G. **Program Evaluation:** We see no evidence of any issues or problems with regard to program evaluation. The evaluation of the program that was undertaken as part of this self-study has been exemplary and can be an example for other programs seeking such review. In addition to the materials prepared for this evaluation, annual evaluation methodologies have been determined by the university, the college, the department, and the program. These evaluative efforts are in full compliance with CAS Standards as set forth in the CAS Materials.

### **III. Action Plan**

The plan as identified in the CAS review is on target and achievable. The plan is consistent with the CAS guidelines. Many of the steps are simply administrative updates. The most challenging objectives deal with converting several courses to a web format and the implementation of the newly developed assessment course in fall 2008. In regard to implementing graduate assistantships and tuition waivers, the program is dependent on the allocation of additional funds. **We recommend that the action plan be revisited and modified based upon this report and any findings for which action is necessary. After the action plan is revisited, we recommend that the faculty proceed with implementing the action plan.**

#### **IV. Issues/Opportunities**

The new EdD program in Educational Leadership poses intriguing possibilities for the program. While the immediate plans do not call for a student affairs component, several people indicated that they believe the program's Higher Education track may attract students who want a student affairs emphasis, especially administrators from the community colleges. Prospective students may want the opportunity to complete the doctorate to both help them in their career at their current levels and to further establish them in their careers as they seek to advance.

Additionally, an increasing number of graduates from the master's program have pursued their doctorate (we were told 30% of graduates have pursued doctorates), and with about half of the students with whom we met expressing interest in a doctorate, we see the potential for the existing master's program to become a feeder for the doctoral program. These students who have yet to settle into a definite career path may create an additional emphasis for the program.

For the immediate future, the Student Affairs program faculty can watch the introduction of the program and determine how close a relationship they would like to eventually have with the EdD program. We do, however, agree with the observation that the EdD program might offer a significant opportunity for the Student Affairs program to develop a component and to be the springboard for an expanded curriculum and enrollment.

The Student Affairs program has minimal faculty dedicated exclusively to it. In its early days, the program was primarily taught by Dr. Hughey. Now that Dr. Hughey is serving as the department chair, and has taken less teaching responsibility in the program, Dr. Tracy Lara has become the heart and exclusive face of the Student



Affairs program. This primarily single faculty member program approach limits the exposure of students to different perspectives. In addition, Dr. Lara advises all of the students that we met in the Thursday evening class.

The adjunct and part-time faculty provide an extreme value by teaching regular courses in the two-year course rotation, but the bulk of the teaching throughout the life of the program has been by one primary, full-time faculty member. We believe this to be unacceptable. Additional full-time and adjunct staff would foster the teaching of more electives and more frequent offering of core courses.

Dr. Lara's arrival brought new energy and fresh ideas to the program. She has advanced numerous curricular initiatives and changes and brought new skills to the program. The curriculum has been developed to meet the preparation needs of students for today's student affairs profession. The newest curricular enhancements are the addition of the assessment course and the development of the certification program in international student affairs. There is much energy and enthusiasm around these changes. They offer opportunities for growth and have been well received. The quality of this CAS review highlights the basic strength of the program but we worry that any "one faculty member" program faces a challenge to stay dynamic and up-to-date. We also fear that Dr. Lara's heavy teaching and advising load will over time burn her out and leaves her with little time for research, publication, seeking grants, professional involvement, and the like, all of which are needed for the dynamism in the program to continue and for her own professional development.

As noted previously, adjunct faculty play a vital role in the Student Affairs program. They augment the primary faculty roles of Dr. Lara and Dr. Hughey. With

the anticipated reductions in involvement by Dr. Tice and Dr. Wilder, replacements need to be identified. We were told about several student affairs staff who have recently completed doctoral work, or will do so soon, who are likely candidates to fill these roles. We hope that these staff members are interested and able to do so. However, none of them will bring the long and rich experience that is possessed by both Dr. Tice and Dr. Wilder. Ideally, Dr. Tice's ultimate replacement upon his retirement as Vice President of Student Affairs will provide the senior-level perspective and wisdom that long service in student affairs brings and that the program needs. **We recommend that additional full-time and new adjunct faculty be sought for the program.**

We believe that the program would benefit greatly from access to graduate assistantships and tuition waivers. Such financial assistance has the potential to increase the full-time enrollment in the program and reduce the financial challenges for students. Many students are scrambling to attend school while working full-time, or to afford school if attending full-time. The alternative, in many cases, has been a part-time student job in various student affairs units. While beneficial to both the student and the employing department, such status downplays the importance of practical experience and significant job responsibilities for budding practitioners. It also minimizes the input by faculty in the support of these students.

We were a bit concerned about our perception that there is a not broader understanding of, and appreciation for, the on-site practitioner experience as reflected in the unavailability of practical graduate assistantships. The faculty were very clear that they do not need the research assistance within the department that typifies many graduate programs and many graduate assistantships elsewhere. The program needs

these positions available for students to be located in student affairs offices on campus and on nearby campuses. This is a professional preparation program and thus is somewhat different than most graduate programs. The laboratory of a student affairs program is in the student affairs offices.

We were also concerned about the impact of enrollment decreases in other programs within the Department of Counseling and Student Affairs, and the perceived connection between those enrollment decreases and the Student Affairs program. We have been informed that the Student Affairs program has maintained relatively stable enrollment while the enrollment in some of the counseling programs has declined. Some administrators did not seem to be able to separate the Student Affairs program from the department in regard to this issue. While we understand that the decreases in enrollment in one program in a department has budgetary implications for all programs, we encourage administrators to attempt to separate these programmatic differences in terms of provision of new resources and transfer of resources from one program to another. We believe that ultimately this continued perception will have a negative impact on the Student Affairs program and its potential to grow and garner additional resources.

Dr. Lara has a counseling background. This background serves the program well. However, when an additional faculty position becomes available, we would recommend that a candidate with a rich practitioner background, and different academic preparation be hired to broaden the perspective and experience within the program. For instance, a person with a degree in higher education administration who has worked as an administrator prior to coming to the faculty may be preferable. We would encourage that this person be brought in at a level above

Assistant professor.

In our conversation with students, we heard a variety of concerns and suggestions that would enhance the student experience in the program. Most of their ideas were practical notions about the students' ability to meet the requirements of the program and about program delivery. The key points were:

- Students, especially those working full-time, are challenged to complete the hours required for the practicum and internships. Several students admitted that sometimes fulfilling hours became more important to them than their learning goals and/or what they can gain from or contribute to their internship or practicum site. We should note that we were quite impressed with the emphasis that practicum and internship supervisors gave to meeting the program's learning objectives. As a result, our observation is that the program should review the balance between hours and learning in these real-world experiences. **As noted above, we also recommend that the faculty continue to support alternatives for one of these experiences when a student is, or has been, employed full-time.**

- Students asked that the faculty consider course sequencing in the Thursday night block more carefully. This consideration should address both content and curricular placement. When possible foundational courses should be scheduled before more advanced courses both in the curriculum and in the individual blocks.

- Students suggested including a unit on professional writing (APA style) in the Introduction to Student Affairs course and **more attention and**

**consistent approaches to APA across the curriculum. As noted above, we support this request.**

- Students expressed some dissatisfaction with elective courses compressed into a few weekends or the January term. They felt limited in the opportunity to explore the course content in depth as is warranted by a graduate level course. They wanted more time to assimilate and consider the course content.
- While students acknowledged that a significant number of them work for residential life at WKU, they (even those who work in housing now) expressed a desire to limit the number of residential life and housing examples in class. They wanted more situations from other functional units in student affairs to prepare them more broadly. They noted that while they may work in housing now that may or may not be where their career takes them and that a broader approach would be more beneficial.
- While the students understand that counseling forms the philosophical framework for the curriculum, they would like additional administrative emphasis where possible throughout the courses. For example, the students were very pleased with the addition of the Law class and its broader focus.
- The students understand that fiscal issues are addressed in Administration in Student Affairs, but both students and practicum/internship supervisors expressed a desire for additional emphasis on fiscal management in the curriculum, and felt that a finance course may be beneficial for the program and the students. This supports the inclusion of more courses with an administrative approach and the inclusion of a new faculty member with these skills and this background.

## V. Conclusion

The Student Affairs graduate program at Western Kentucky University meets the standards for such programs as established by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS). The internal program review coordinated and facilitated by Dr. Tracy Lara was exemplary and should be lauded by the students, faculty and administration of the University. The program is currently in good shape, and changes recently made and anticipated should strengthen the program. The addition of a Doctor of Education program at WKU, which will have as one of its emphasis areas Higher Education Administration, could be of long-term benefit to the Student Affairs masters program. The Student Affairs program may well be a strong feeder for the EdD. We see many strengths in the Student Affairs program, but we also see areas for growth and improvement. Those areas are described above. First and foremost, we believe that additional full-time faculty are needed for the program. This is, we believe, the weakest area in the program. In addition, we believe that additional adjunct and part-time faculty would benefit the program and students, that a broader emphasis on administrative issues would broaden the curricular value of the program and that the formal establishment of and funding for graduate assistantship stipends and tuition waivers would enhance the program and assist it to grow. We realize that all of these changes are dependent on fiscal resources becoming available, but encourage the administration of the college and the university to support and advocate for these areas whenever possible. However, where in the report we indicate a recommendation or suggestion we believe that these things **SHOULD** be done. As you can see, we have bolded these items.

We thank you for the opportunity to visit WKU and to evaluate this outstanding

program. Please feel free to contact us if we may be of further assistance.

**Recommendations and Encouragements in sequential order**

- 1. We encourage the university to maintain academic standards for admission to its graduate programs, however, we refer university officials to research data that indicate that minority and first generation students may prove to be very successful in graduate school despite deficits in GRE scores in particular.**
- 2. We recommend that the university move away from a one size fits all model and allow the graduate program coordinators to make final judgments regarding admission standards for their programs. These faculty should be held responsible for their decisions but as professionals in their particular fields, be allowed to make these decisions.**
- 3. We encourage WKU to remove the counseling faculty from the list of Student Affairs faculty even though it is possible that students may take a course from one or more of them.**
- 4. We would encourage a clearer description of the content of each practical experience element and more focus on assurance that site supervisors understand this difference and that students do as well.**
- 5. More specifically, we recommend clarification of the differences between the practicum and internships for all parties involved in the curriculum and these courses.**
- 6. We recommend that the faculty continue to support alternatives for one of these practical experiences when a student is, or has been, employed full-**

time.

7. We recommend that the courses scheduled for the Thursday block be examined regularly to make sure that an appropriate flow of courses is available.
8. We recommend that consideration be given to providing courses in the international certificate program in several different methodologies to find what works best.
9. We recommend that this course, CNS 556 Career Counseling, become an elective and that a new course be developed to focus on history and philosophy of student affairs and higher education.
10. We recommend that if and when a new full-time faculty position becomes available that a person with a background not in counseling be considered, and that adjuncts be chosen who also do not have counseling as their philosophical underpinning.
11. We recommend the creation of, and financial support for, graduate assistantships and tuition waivers for this program. These assistantships and waivers, while supported by the college and the academic division of the university should be portable and usable in the Division of Student Affairs and elsewhere as deemed appropriate by the faculty.
12. We recommend that additional full-time and new adjunct faculty be sought for the program.
13. We recommend that more attention be paid to, and consistent approaches taken to APA style, and that it be taught across the curriculum.



- 14. We encourage the university to recruit and hire persons of color as faculty for this program and/or make them a visible part of the program.**
- 15. We recommend that the action plan be revisited, modified based upon this report and any findings for which additional action is necessary, and then implemented.**