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PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT IDENTITIES AND INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES OF INTERSECTIONAL PROGRAMMING

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Student affairs professionals have become engaged in inclusive practices and student success efforts in relation to students' racial, ethnic, gender, and/or class identities. Yet, many educators struggle to connect these important insights to the multidimensional identities of students and their success in higher education. This study examined student affairs professionals' existing knowledge, values, and practices related to their students' discrete and intersectional identities. Implications for practice are discussed using a sense-making frame to consider increasing the capacity of the higher education community to apply current research and best practices to develop programming—for the success of all students.

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Over recent decades, student affairs professionals (SAPs) have become increasingly engaged in campus practices related to students' racial, ethnic, gender, and/or class identities. In addition, research on students' intersectional identities (i.e., research that focuses on multiply-connected, sociohistorical, and relational identities) has produced insight into how students incorporate their multiple identities in specific campus contexts (Abes & Jones, 2004; Abes, Jones, & McEwan, 2007; Hurtado, Alvarado, & Guillermo-Wann, 2015; Jones, 2009). Yet, many educators, in general, still struggle to connect these important insights to inclusive student success efforts on their campuses. Student success and retention are deeply influenced by the degree to which students experience a sense of integration and engagement on campus and in the classroom, which is experienced through a lens of student identity (Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004; Karp, Hughes, & O'Gara, 2011; Kuh, 2009; Tierney, 1999). Although the foundational literature on student success highlights this critical point, much of this literature focuses on students' racial, ethnic, gender, or class identities framed in discrete, rather than intersectional ways.

This article examines student affairs professionals' reported knowledge of, values for, and practices related to their students' discrete and intersectional identities. The following questions guided the research: 1) What are student affairs professionals' perspectives regarding the connection between students' intersectional identities and their success on campus? 2) How do student affairs professionals engage students' individual and intersectional identities in practice?

The framework for this article is built on the premise that there is value in considering intersectional identities in educational practice and policy, since individual axes of oppression (e.g., race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, citizenship) do not act independently of one another (Grant & Zwier, 2011). Grant and Zwier (2011) framed their discussion of intersectional identity—not as a binary or oppositional issue of support (i.e., Do students of color or LGBTQ students need our support?), but as a cooperative and inclusive conversation that recognizes the intersectional experiences of students in their personal and educational lives. For example, it has been well-documented that LGBTQ people of color are more likely to experience hate-driven bias, violence, or harassment, often feel less integrated on campus (Holley et al., 2008; Patton & Simmons, 2008; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010), and feel the need to emphasize a single part of their identity to connect on campus (Patton & Simmons, 2008; Poynter & Washington, 2005). Therefore, intersectional student identity is a valuable lens to view college student engagement.

Literature

Support for this study comes from the literature on multiple dimensions of identity and intersectionality within the context of higher education. Individual dimensions of identity have been studied for some time and there is a plethora of research about identity theories based on race, gender, and sexual orientation. Recent work has developed the theoretical foundations for studying multiple dimensions of identity and the resulting educational practices (Abes & Jones, 2004; Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007, Jones, 2009). Current work on intersectionality takes the idea of multiple dimensions and deepens it to look at each identity as not separate and ahistorical, but as multiple, connected, and existing through contextual power relations that result in fused identities for individuals and groups. Finally, the literature on sense-making provides practitioners the opportunity to think about incorporating new knowledge within change processes in higher education.

Multiple Dimensions of Identity and the Shift toward Intersectionality

The tendency of some educators to sep-

arate students' various identities in their campus practice aligns with an established U.S. belief system that keeps identities discrete and static (Andersen & Collins, 1992; Butler, 1990). Even in the realm of social justice, activists have historically mobilized singular, fixed identities, with the interests of privileged groups at the center of the activist efforts (e.g., the civil rights, women's liberation, and gay liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s). From the mid-1970s through the 1990s and early 2000s, however, women of color feminists (Anzaldúa, 1987; Combahee River Collective, 1997; Lorde, 1982; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981) and identity theorists (Andersen & Collins, 1992; Bettie, 2003; Butler, 1990; Gordon & Newfield, 1997) challenged this static notion of identity. As a result, many activists and identity theorists began pulling away from the tendency to fixate on single identities, instead describing identity formation as historically-based and multiply-inhabited (Bettie, 2003; Butler, 1990; Hall, 1996; Omi & Winant, 1994). Further, theorists emphasized identity as relational—that is, individuals and groups formed identities in relation to one another and within larger, structural constraints, rather than in a vacuum (Andersen & Collins, 1992).

Intersectionality, as a theoretical concept, developed through women of color feminisms in the 1990s. Theorists described individual and group identities as not only multidimensional (e.g., racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, class, religious, and national identities intersect in different and complex ways), but also fluid, and somewhat agential—albeit within an existing power structure (Andersen & Collins, 2004; Crenshaw, 1991). Additionally, theorists underscored intragroup difference (Crenshaw, 1993) and challenging the politics of monoraciality—where racial identity is described as static and monolithic (Root, 1996). Recent intersectional work "possesses the potential to augment, and, in some cases, deepen the analytical strength of social identity models and their related frameworks" (Olive, 2015, p. 277), and improve pedagogy and practice.

In higher education, the Model of Multiple Dimensions Identity (MMDI) (Abes & Jones, 2004; Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000), which was developed over time, resulted in a visual model to understand the salience of multiple, socially-constructed identities. The original model (Jones & McEwen, 2000) set personal attributes at the core of the model, surrounded by individual identities. Each of the identities became salient for an individual based on their contexts (i.e., family background, sociocultural condition, or career and life decisions). The addition of a "meaning-making filter" (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007) to the MMDI described individuals filtering contextual situations before enacting identity salience. The MMDI is a complex, yet clear model to understand identity salience, but also can be used as a tool to help students make meaning of their contexts before enacting their identities.

Sense-Making and Change in Higher Education

The notion of sense-making (Eckel & Kezar, 2003) can serve as a starting point for higher education change efforts that are seeking to integrate intersectional concepts into practices of teaching and learning. Deep changes in higher education—change that transforms the assumptions and behaviors that pervade the culture and traditional approaches—require faculty, staff, and administrators to undergo an intensive meaning construction process and rethink existing understandings (Eckel & Kezar, 2003). Sense-making in higher education begins with cultivating interest and commitment to change among potential adopters (e.g., SAPs) rooted in their closely held values and goals (e.g., the desire to create a welcoming and rigorous academic environment for student success) (Gannaway, Berry, Hinton, & Moore, 2013). As such, SAPs need to understand and connect with potential changes in a way that is meaningful to them as

a first step to making a change in practice (Kezar, 2013).

There is a large body of literature addressing the central role of sense-making as a critical mechanism in processes of educational change. Change requires actors to make meaning of their environments and of student needs, and to make decisions either tacitly or mindfully about their responses to existing and new factors at play (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Ideas about what institutions should or should not do for students in order to achieve educational goals, or ideas about the appropriate role of the college will guide how SAPs interact with students and design programming. The taken-for-grantedness of these ideas about what is or is not important to student success, and the depth of these ideas, is what gives them power in the subtle way they guide practice (Hand, Penuel, & Gutiérrez, 2013).

Adopting new practices to serve students intentionally in relation to their intersectional identities will hinge in part on how the leaders and educators that form the college environments make sense of the role of student identity and how could affect their day-to-day work (Bensimon, Rueda, Dowd, & Harris III, 2007; Lane, 2012). Distributed and social cognition rely on interaction and webs of professional affiliations to access meaning about an initiative and what it demands of the implementer (Spillane, Reiser, and Gomez, 2006, p. 61). While leaders and reformers might design ideas for practice that address intersectional identity, the practice itself will be determined across practitioners' interactions and cognitive sense-making processes (Spillane, 2012).

A practitioner's failure to respond to new ideas or new initiatives is not simply an issue of inability or unwillingness, but also a problem of cognition and how the implementer comes to understand the intent of the change through interactions with the initiative's artifacts, messages, context, and the implementer's own prior knowledge (Spillane, 2000). This model challenges a traditional idea of stimulus and response, which may account for notions of local resistance or perhaps lack of resources or capacity to comply, but not for varied levels or opportunities for productive sense-making and cognition that precede successful implementation (Spillane et al., 2006). In this way, we can think of meaningful implementation of change as a combination of skill, will, and deep understanding (Malen, 2006). Moreover, interpretations in the field will often follow specific patterns related to prior knowledge and underlying understandings of educational practice. As a result, there is a tendency for implementers to draw on the aspects of new frames or new ideas that align with what they already know and believe, and ignore the more subtle or unfamiliar aspects. The result is a surface-level or incremental change where profound change was intended, an outcome that reflects flaws in cognition rather than outright resistance (Spillane, 2000; Spillane et al., 2006).

Methods

A mixed method study is appropriate for an exploratory or under-researched topic, such as implementing programs to address students' intersectional identities, to get both a broad perspective (quantitative) and more specific detail (qualitative) to explain the broad perspective (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). For this study, we developed a survey that asked multiple choice questions and also asked open-ended questions for participants to expand on the topic, in order to understand their perspectives and their practices—and answer our research questions. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) call this method an embedded design as the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the study are embedded in the same instrument (concurrent), but may tend toward one methodology. In this study, the quantitative questions are the "supplemental strand…to enhance the overall design" (p. 72) to give context for the qualitative questions and ultimately the analysis, which is primarily from

a qualitative perspective. The nature of the survey method helped to get a broad range of responses, while also delving into specific experience. We asked respondents their perceived value of identity work (measured by multiple choice responses) and how they incorporated identity issues into programming (through open-ended responses). Asking for specific examples of practice was a way to give meaning to the quantitative data. In addition, it seemed particularly relevant for a study looking at multiple identities to use a methodology that was based on multiple voices and modalities (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Instrument and Participants

The survey instrument for this study was designed for both faculty and student affairs professionals (only the SAP responses will be presented in this article) based on the literature of multiple identities and intersectionality, and revised several times by pre-testing the questions with content experts and peer reviewers to improve content (covers the topic) and face (appears to ask the right questions) validity (Babbie, 1990; Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2011) of both the multiple choice and open-ended questions. Triangulation of the data, as the qualitative form of reliability and validity (Creswell, 2007), is established through these two forms of data and is outlined in the data analysis. The Qualtrics survey (online survey tool) included questions about campus type and position type, but focused on how student affairs professionals structured their courses and programs, the methods they used, the perceived importance of addressing student identity on their campus, and the perceived relevance of student identities on student academic engagement.

The larger study identified potential participants from the membership database of a national higher education association, selecting only faculty and student affairs professionals. While the invitation email netted a large number of faculty respondents, this article focuses on student affairs professionals (SAPs). Therefore, we collaborated with two student affairs organizations that sent the exploratory survey on our behalf to entry and mid-level professionals, resulting in the total combined response of 207 SAP participants.

Participants were given choices about how to identify their institutional type and could mark more than one answer. Table 1 shows the identified institutional types. There is a representation from Four-year, Master's, and Doctorate institutions, as well as public and private institutions. There was limited representation by specialty-serving institutions.

Table 1

Institutional Type (more than one category could be selected)

Institutional Type	#	%
Four-Year Institution	89	77%
Master's-Granting Institution	44	38%
Doctorate-Granting Institution	52	45%
Private Institution	27	24%
Private, Religiously-Affiliated Institution	16	14%
Public College or University	72	62%
Hispanic Serving Institution	7	6%
Historically Black College or University	0	0%
Military Institution	0	0%
Tribal College	1	1%
Women's College	2	2%

Participants were asked to identify their primary functional area as student affairs professionals (SAPs). Participants identified with a wide variety of student affairs offices/ professional roles (See Table 2).

Table 2

Responsibilities on Campus (more than one category could be selected)

Functional Area	#
Academic Advising	23
Academic Success Skills/Tutoring	25
Admissions Recruitment	12
Alumni and Advancement/Development	6
Career Services	22
Counseling, Health, and Wellness	33
Disability Support Services	13
Enrollment/Financial Aid	7
Higher Education Opportunity Programs	13
Institutional Assessment and Research	16
International Student/Study Abroad	5
Multicultural, Diversity, and Equity	41
Orientation and First-Year Experience	35
Other Campus Life	37
Residence Life	27
Spirituality, Faith-based Services	6
Sports and Recreation	9
Student Activities and Leadership	45
Veteran's Affairs	10

Data Analysis

The quantitative portion of the survey (i.e., multiple choice questions) provided demographic data about the participants and their institutions, while also collecting perceptions about the relevance of student identity to student experience. These data are presented in their descriptive forms as tables. Due to the nature of the qualitative focus of this exploratory study, we were interested in how student identity was incorporated into programming to begin understanding practitioner perceptions of single/ intersectional identity salience in relation to students' academic engagement. The multiple-choice questions, based on the literature, gave an overview of how student identity was incorporated into actual practice. The open-ended questions then provided for participant-specific practices beyond the multiple-choice options and provided the triangulation of two data forms needed for the qualitative-focus of the study The qualitative data associated with each question were analyzed separately and open-coded (Saldaña, 2009) to understand how the participants made meaning of the topic and their practice. The individual codes were then grouped in categories as themes of practices (Saldaña, 2009). Each of the multiple choice questions are presented in descriptive tables and then the associated resulting themes of practices.

Researchers

The three researchers on this team reflect varied experience and expertise. One is a former faculty member in the sociology of gender and sexuality who currently works in faculty development. One is a former student affairs professional, later a researcher and change leader in a statewide community college student success improvement initiative, and a current PhD student. The third is a faculty member and researcher in the field of higher education. All three have written on diversity topics for both academic and practitioner journals. All have a commitment to influencing practice at the uni-

versity/college level to improve the student experience. Our biases are evident in our values about this topic; however, care was given to limit bias through reviews by colleagues and experts of both the survey design and the study conclusions to improve both the validity of the survey and the trustworthiness of the data and results.

Limitations

The survey administration did not use a sampling method to identify participants. We cast a broad net (through three national associations) in order to move our exploratory study forward. Therefore, the results are not generalizable, but may be transferable when thinking broadly about the results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). While participants self-selected to complete the survey and all may not have taken the time to fully answer the open-ended questions, the depth of responses provided substantial data for an exploratory study with a qualitative focus.

Results

The research questions that the data answer are: 1) What are student affairs professionals' perspectives regarding the connection between students' intersectional identities and their success? 2) How do student affairs professionals engage students' individual and intersectional identities in practice? The data to answer the questions were organized around the two major sections of the survey, Individual Identities and Intersectional Identities, with both quantitative and qualitative results presented in each section.

Single Identities

While the literature on identity development is extensive and connections have been made to student outcomes (Acevedo-Polakovich, Quirk, Cousineau, Saxena, & Gerhart, 2014; Reid, 2013; Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009), we wanted to understand our participants' perceptions on how student identity affects the quality of student life on campus (sense of belonging and academic engagement). This then set the stage for

Table 3

Facets of Identity Affect the Quality of Students' Sense of Belonging

Identity	Very Much or Quite a Bit	Some	Very Little
Race and/or Ethnicity	88.4%	9.2%	2.4%
Sexuality (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, or Questioning)	79.2%	17.6%	3.2%
Class/Socioeconomic status	77.3%	18.8%	3.9%
Gender (Man, Woman, Genderqueer, Transgender)	71.6%	24.0%	4.3%
Apparently Abled/Differently Abled	63.5%	30.7%	5.8%
International/Global	66.7%	27.5%	5.8%
Religion/Spirituality	54.4%	37.4%	8.2%
Veteran or Active Military Status	50.6%	32.15	17.4%
Undocumented Status	45.9%	22.6%	31.5%

asking how they actually incorporated student identity into programming.

Table 3 presents participants' perceptions of the extent to which single identities affect students' sense of belonging on their campuses. The SAPs' responses are reported as a percentage of the total response to the question. The highest-ranking responses (Very Much, Quite a Bit, Some) by SAPs are at the top of the table and the lowest at the bottom. (see Table 3 on facing page)

Race and/or Ethnicity as a student identity is listed by 88.4% of the SAPs as influencing students' sense of belonging (Very much or quite a bit), followed closely by Sexuality (79.2%), Class/Socioeconomic status (77.3%), and Gender (71.6%). In the open-ended responses, participants identified specific contexts that influenced students' sense of belonging in relation to their social identities. Respondents reported the surrounding local community as important, especially when it did not reflect the student population. The type of college, current culture of the college, and the reputation for serving specific types of students also was reported as important. These contexts could be either positive or negative influences (or both) for students depending on their social identity. In a contextually positive example, a respondent cited campus reputation: "Our campus has a good reputation amongst students and by awards of being Veteran and Disability friendly and great services so there is a positive impact of students' sense of belonging." Another respondent cited campus context as positive and negative: "We are a religiously-affiliated PWI with a number of legacy students. It can be very difficult for students who don't fit into that "box" to find their sense of belonging initially." Another respondent was particularly insightful about how far higher education institutions still need to go in providing supportive environments:

On the surface, our campus is very "diverse": just 20% of our student population identifies as White/Caucasian; 11% of our students are Veterans; our average age is 27; and 68% of our students are the first in their family to attend college. Students do feel a sense of belonging because they see "people like them" succeeding here. And, we still struggle to support and engage the rich layers of diversity that exist on our campus.

Sense of belonging is both a complex issue for our students, but also is a goal for our campus communities.

Table 4 (shown on the next page) presents participants' perceptions of the extent to which single student identities affect student academic engagement on their campuses. The SAPs' responses are reported as a percentage of the total response to each of the student identities. The highest-ranked student identities (combining Very Much, Quite a Bit, Some) by SAPs are at the top of the table and the lowest at the bottom.

In response to this question, 90.1% of SAPs reported Race and/or Ethnicity as influencing academic engagement (Very much or quite a bit) followed by Class/Socioeconomic status (79.3%), while only 41.5 % perceived that students' Religion/Spirituality influenced academic engagement. This finding is in line with foundational literature that colleges prioritized students' racial, ethnic, and class identities in relation to student success. However, a majority (over 80%) of the respondents acknowledged that all of the listed student identities impacted students' academic experience to at least some degree.

Qualitative comments acknowledged differences in student voice and agency. SAPs reported hearing from students about their negative experiences in the classroom. For example, one participant reported that "students are [still] being asked to serve as a spokesperson in their class." Specific issues such as "no ability to list preferred name within our system" and difficulty engaging undocumented students were also listed by SAPs. One participant summarized a frustration felt by SAPs: "I have noticed when a student does NOT feel supported in their classroom by faculty or outside the

Table 4

Facets of Identity Affect the Quality of Students' Academic Engagement

Identity	Very Much or Quite a Bit	Some	Very Little
Race and/or Ethnicity	90.1%	7.7%	1.7%
Class/Socioeconomic Status	79.3%	19.0%	1.7%
Gender (Man, Woman, Genderqueer, Transgender)	69.7%	28.0%	3.4%
International/Global	71.0%	24.8%	4.2%
Apparently Abled/Differently Abled	75.2%	17.0%	7.7%
Sexuality (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, or Questioning)	62.9%	31.0%	6.0%
Veteran or Active Military Status	53.9%	34.2%	12.0%
Undocumented Status	52.6%	28.0%	19.3%
Religion/Spirituality	41.5%	39.0%	19.5%

Table 5

Structure Programming to Address Student Identities

Identity	Very Often or Often	Some	Very Little
Race and/or Ethnicity	70.3%	21.2%	8.5%
Gender (Man, Woman, Genderqueer, Transgender)	55.1%	24.6%	20.3%
Sexuality (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, or Questioning)	53.4%	26.3%	20.3%
Class/Socioeconomic Status	47.9%	31.6%	20.5%
International/Global	41.5%	36.4%	22.0%
Apparently Abled/Differently Abled	33.1%	34.8%	32.2%
Religion/Spirituality	30.4%	29.6%	40.0%
Veteran or Active Military Status	19.0%	31.0%	50.0%
Undocumented Status	17.8%	22.2%	59.0%

classroom by staff their engagement with the campus dramatically shifts."

Finally, the responses to this question addressed the issues of financial/personal costs, particularly relevant to lower SES students and families. Students might not have been able to afford textbooks, had time to join clubs, or had jobs that took precedence over classes or internships. The high cost of education especially affects low income students, but has an impact on all students.

The data show that SAPs see the effects of student identity on the ability of students to engage throughout campus life, and the institution's ability to support their needs once admitted. The individual comments generally reflected an understanding of the student issues, for example, "Any student coming from a marginalized social location is going to experience an impact on overall engagement with campus if that campus is not intentional about making space for voices often unheard in the academic and broader social discourse."

Table 5 reports the percentage of participants who reported that they structure their programming to issues relevant to single student identities. The highest-ranking responses (Very Often, Often, Some) are at the top of the table and the lowest at the bottom.

Similar to those identities perceived to influence student engagement, survey respondents reported Race/and or Ethnicity as the identities most often addressed in their programming followed by Gender and Sexuality. Identities least likely to be addressed were and Veteran or Active Military Status and Undocumented Status.

Table 6 reports the kind of out-of-class practices or programming activities SAPs reported using to engage students in identity issues. These activities, which we provided as options for participants, are reported as numbers (respondents could mark more than one response). The student identity is listed in alphabetic order and the activities are listed from most cited to least cited (overall). For example, the activities most reported to engage Apparently Abled/Differently Abled identities were Organized Student Group Events (35) and Speaker/Lecture Series (34) and least reported were Internships (6). An open-ended question gave respondents an opportunity to report other activities.

SAPs most often reported organized Student Group Events, Speaker Series, and Town Hall-type events in their programming efforts that focus on student identities. Many of the specific examples given by SAPs in their comments focused on collaboration between student affairs departments and academic departments across the university, for example: "A prime part of my work is to stimulate cross-campus programming on all these issues while supporting student groups exploring their identities and cultural backgrounds." In addition, participants gave examples of smaller, more individual approaches such as informal discussions with students, staff reflection exercises, and conference presentations. SAPs also acknowledged the importance of intention and planning at the institutional level to create healthy environments, for example: "Residential learning communities are one of the few cross-divisional efforts to blend academics and co-curricular program, in regard to race or gender," showing a viable location on campus for incorporating the work of intersectional identities.

Intersectional Identities

The second part of the survey moved the participants from identifying practices around single identities to intersectional identities. While single identities are now a part of the student development literature and there are best practices that help guide SAPs, there are fewer best practices on how to apply research and knowledge about intersectional identities.

Participants were first asked about familiarity with the concept, and 87.9% reported being very familiar or familiar with the concepts of "intersectional identity" (a theoretical phrase, describing identity as

Table 6

Out-of-class Programming Activities

Identity	Organized Student Group Events	Speaker/ Lecture Series	Town Hall Meetings or Discussions	Community-Based Projects	Residential Programming	Mentor/Mentee Programming	Learning Communities	Internships
Apparently Abled/Differently Abled	34	35	19	23	23	16	6	6
Class/Socioeconomic status	34	36	30	35	23	22	12	11
Gender (Man, Woman, Genderqueer, Transgender)	67	61	44	26	39	27	25	15
International/Global	53	39	25	27	28	20	21	15
Race and/or Ethnicity	79	67	62	37	45	40	10	17
Religion/Spirituality	46	39	32	30	18	12	11	7
Sexuality (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, or Questioning)	70	64	41	30	42	26	11	13
Undocumented Status	30	29	21	16	9	9	9	10
Veteran or Active Military Status	45	30	16	25	6	16	13	11

multiply-connected, sociohistorical, and relational) or "intersecting identities" (a complementary phrase, describing identities as interrelated). When asked about how important it is for the college or university to emphasize intersectional student identities in spaces of learning, 88.7% of SAPs reported very important (58.9%) or important (29.8%) and only 1% reported not important. Participants were then asked to report the extent to which they intentionally structured their programming to connect with students' intersectional identities: 78.2% reported incorporating intersectionality.

Respondents also identified intersectional identities that were commonly addressed in their practice. Many gave pairings that might be expected, such as race and gender or race and class. In addition, some participants reported identities that were relevant to their specific work. For example, "I work a lot with Title IX. Gender and sexual orientation have influences on one another. When I present on gender issues, I intentionally address the intersection of gender and sexual orientation." Quite a few respondents reported four or more identities that are regularly a part of their programming, while others said they took an individualized approach in their one-on-one discussions with students.

Many of the specific practices in addressing intersectional identities were similar in nature to the single identity responses. Mentoring programs, student organizations, performing and visual arts, lunch & learns,

and community awareness programs were examples of specific programming. In addition, SAPs provided examples of cross-departmental collaborations and many cited resource centers in close proximity to one another as a way to encourage cross-group programming, as well as joint sponsorship of events. Others wrote about individual interactions with students or groups of students as key locations for intersectional identity work. One participant mentioned, in particular, a new student success program:

We try to create heterogeneous environments based on student interest and affinity rather than identity and then use the affinity to help individuals explore their identity within that affinity. We will roll out a program in the fall that will use that model along with peer mentoring in a year-long affinity cohort in the hopes that we increase social integration and degree commitment. Wish us luck!

In summary, SAPs report a strong understanding the concepts of individual student identity and students' intersectional identities. They were also able to offer examples of incorporating identity into their campus practice, either through programming or individual interactions with students. Overall, a large majority (88.7%) of SAP participants viewed institutional support of students' intersectional identities as critical to student engagement and learning.

Discussion and Implications

Many SAPs in our study have a strong commitment to issues of equity and diversity in their practice, as evidenced by their perceptions of student identity in connection to academic engagement, their support for institutional investment in intersectional practices, and their incorporation of student identity into their work. The answer to the research question about SAP perception is marked by varying degrees of the perceived salience of particular dimensions of student identity. Certain dimensions of identity (e.g., race, ethnicity, or class) were prioritized by SAPs or seen as more salient than others (e.g., gender, sexuality, veteran or immigration status, religion) to students' academic engagement. The prioritization is reflected in reported practices and open-ended questions that focused on issues of race, income, and general language about "underserved" students.

This emphasis among respondents is not surprising in the context of practice and sense-making. For many years now, the scholarship of teaching and learning and associated professional development programming have provided opportunities for SAPs to grapple with the impact of race and class on student outcomes, and to think about how these dimensions of identity should be reflected in practice and pedagogy. This is not the case with all dimensions of identity covered in the survey instrument, nor is it true of the concept of intersectional student identity. Campus-wide student success practices often reflect this, as well. For example, although some institutions are figuring out ways to track LGBTQ student success (via retention, persistence, and graduation rates), campuses typically disaggregate student success by "traditionally underserved groups," such as race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status (Hart Research Associates, 2015) and don't often present these data intersectionally. Moreover, the degrees of salience given to different aspects of identity may or may not correspond with how students would report their own experience or prioritize dimensions of their own intersectional identities. Understanding how to align educators' perceptions and practice with the authentic needs of students, particularly as issues of sexuality and gender take a more central place in social justice conversations, is an important next step in student success research.

The high level of support from participants for institutional commitment to serving students relative to their intersectional identities and a high level of perceived salience of some of these individual dimensions of identity to practice are both indicators of interest and a foundation for building

a commitment to intersectional practice. The support and perception of salience reflects their own values, which provides a promising foundation for potential sense-making or capacity building efforts. While this is a strong place to start, and reflects the current environment in research and professional development, an intersectional framework for understanding experiences of oppression and privilege demands an expansion of capacity for intersectional practice. Therefore it requires SAPs in the sense-making process to question their prior knowledge and fully understand and commit to the intention of the change toward what Grant and Zwier (2011) discuss as "intersectionally-aware pedagogies" (p. 183) and curricula that are culturally competent, attentive to diverse histories, and "personally meaningful" (p. 185) to students. Finally it asks of them the skill, the will (Malen, 2006), and the deep understanding (Spillane, 2006) about students, identities, and institutional contexts to make changes to their programming agendas and methods.

The results of this exploratory study frame some important challenges to be addressed in terms of building SAP capacity for intentional, intersectional work in the university. The survey responses suggest that SAPs have made sense of the need to address some dimensions of identity and to a lesser extent, have found ways to integrate this need into the work they do with students.

In short, in light of the relative lack of clear sense-making opportunities related to intersectionality and research to support sense-making on the topic of intersectionality in higher education, these results offer a baseline for future efforts—particularly for cross-campus collaboration, reported as a priority by SAP participants in our survey. Professional development opportunities for SAPs at the institutional level may be in conjunction with faculty, in order to build collaborations (participants noted key activities that required collaboration). Skill building through resources, webinars, and conference sessions would be valuable at the regional and national association levels and add to the individual commitment already evident in the profession.

As significant achievement gaps for students of color and low-income students continue to persist and even widen in higher education (Cox, 2016), the role of these facets of identity must not be downplayed in any campus context. More than just achievement, students in minoritized groups are having inequitable experiences and are disproportionately likely to rate their campus climate as unwelcoming (Garvey et al., 2015; Rankin et al., 2010). As our participants noted, these students have additional dimensions to their identities, which must be taken into consideration, and they experience both oppressions and privilege at the nexus of these identities.

From the perspective of many SAPs, these conversations about intersectionality are still in the early stages and increasing conversations on intersectionality is only a first step toward change in practice. Given what is known about sense-making in higher education, future research in the area of student intersectionality should focus on leverage points for building from existing capacities and values among SAPs, and identifying real models for change. Moreover, the apparent concentration of awareness, knowledge, and perceived salience among SAPs provides a possible nexus for future action and capacity building in campus communities. As researchers, it is also important to consider how we use future research to build and express a cogent rationale for developing intersectional practice in and beyond the classroom.

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