

EDITOR'S NOTES

The financial situation in higher education, which has been challenging for at least the past decade, has continued to deteriorate in the past few years. State governmental support for public institutions has continued to erode, and most institutions have increased their reliance on tuition as a revenue source (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). Student affairs units operate in this financial environment and have had to be nimble and creative to sustain their viability.

Typically, student affairs staff do not enter their profession because they seek to manage large budgets and other resources. In fact, often they would prefer to leave those chores to others (Woodard, Love, and Komives, 2000), although over the long term, not managing budgets effectively can result in serious problems for them. So this volume was conceived to provide a contemporary look at the financial challenges before student affairs and to provide recommendations, strategies, and solutions for the budgetary challenges that student affairs staff face.

This issue of *New Directions for Student Services* examines contemporary problems in selected areas of student affairs finance and hence should not be considered a compendium on the topic all by itself. Rather, this volume should be regarded as one of several in this series on managing resources in student affairs. Others that address related topics include Issue 89, *The Role Student Aid Plays in Enrollment Management* (Coomes, 2000); Issue 92, *Leadership and Management Issues for a New Century* (Woodard, Love, and Komives, 2000); Issue 96, *Developing External Partnerships for Cost-Effective, Enhanced Services* (Dietz and Enchelmayer, 2001); and Issue 101, *Planning and Achieving Successful Student Affairs Facilities Projects* (Price, 2003). Taken as a set, the five issues provide a comprehensive view of the resource management issues that student affairs offices on contemporary college campuses must address.

This volume looks at seven specific issues concerning the financing of student affairs on contemporary college campuses. In Chapter One, I provide an overview and a framework for the financial environment in higher education. Student affairs is not divorced from the overall financial environment, and this chapter provides background information about how the environment has evolved over time.

In Chapter Two, Joan Claar and Hazel Scott compare and contrast the financial environment of public and private institutions. They use a case study to illustrate the differences between these two types of institutions.

Tim Schroer and Chris Johnson identify and discuss some the challenges in providing financing for student unions and student activities in

Chapter Three. As services and programs have expanded over the years, new financial challenges have arisen for professionals in these areas.

Rich Keeling and Dennis Heitzmann provide a detailed look at financing health and counseling services in Chapter Four. These areas are linked because they face many of the same financial issues, including the need to manage costs in a very difficult financial environment.

Student housing is the focus of Chapter Five, prepared by Mary Ann Ryan. The very nature of student housing has changed dramatically over the years, and this chapter covers such issues as technology infusion and renovation.

Howard Taylor, William Canning, Paul Brailsford, and Frank Rokosz look at contemporary issues in recreation finance in Chapter Six. The days when campus recreation consisted of intramural events are long over, and these authors provide a detailed look at how to develop a contemporary recreation program from a financial point of view.

I wrap up the volume in Chapter Seven with some ideas about how to demonstrate financial accountability in student affairs. With so many stakeholders interested in how resources are managed, student affairs officers must have a plan by which they can demonstrate that they are using resources wisely.

It is unlikely that financial challenges for student affairs officers will disappear in the foreseeable future. Hence it is important that strategies be developed to ensure that programs and services that serve students and other important stakeholders survive and thrive. Our hope is that this issue of *New Directions for Student Services* will encourage fruitful conversations about student affairs finance and that new and creative solutions can be identified in this challenging environment.

John H. Schuh
Editor

References

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JOHN H. SCHUH is distinguished professor and chair of the department of educational leadership and policy studies at Iowa State University. He was a student affairs practitioner for twenty-seven years.