

CAS Characteristics of Individual Excellence for Professional Practice in Higher Education

CAS Contextual Statement

Defining competencies of student affairs and other professionals in higher education who plan, implement, and offer programs and services is the mark of a maturing profession. A number of authors and organizations have framed competencies in several broad areas. For example, Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2004) identified competencies in the areas of 1) administration and management, 2) multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills, 3) helping and advising, 4) assessment and research, 5) teaching and training, 6) ethics and professional standards, and 7) translation and use of theory to guide practice. This document seeks to define a list of necessary attributes for professionals in higher education that is broader than competencies and includes other markers of professionalism. These characteristics of excellence can be used in an evaluative format, both self evaluation and in the context of "360 degree" (Tornow, London, & Associates, 1998) or supervisory format.

There are numerous purposes for the creation and use of this document. One purpose is to move the student affairs profession and other professionals within the higher education context to more concrete, concise, and agreed upon characteristics that are expected of professionals who provide, implement, and facilitate programs and services in higher education. Another purpose is to assist in the enculturation of new professionals into the profession by defining what it means to be a professional in higher education. This document also seeks to clarify the context within which people are choosing to work. In response to the literature on supervision that indicates that supervision in higher education is often irregular and when it does occur stresses operational tasks rather than professional development (Arminio & Creamer, 2001; Saunders, Cooper, Winston, & Chernow, 2000; Winston & Creamer, 1997), this document was created to provide aspirational expectations for higher education professionals (Carpenter, 2003).

Because it is the intent of this document to honor individual differences that people bring to their practice, when perceived differences from the expected characteristics are identified these differences need to be discussed. It is through these discussions with supervisors and colleagues that such differences can be acknowledged and their implications explored.

This document offers direction for professional development whether prompted by self evaluation or from supervisory evaluation. In either case, this document is intended to be used in collaboration and discussion with a supervisor, supervisees, students, and/or colleagues. From these discussions an individual professional development plan can be created and then movement toward accomplishing that plan be evaluated.

References

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Evaluating individual professional practice in higher education requires the identification of ideal performance characteristics that describe excellence in professional practice. This document has evolved from multi-faceted professional competencies that are inherent in the purpose, development, and application of the CAS Standards and Guidelines. It assumes a philosophy and practice of life-long learning and professional development shared by individual practitioners and their institutions. Characteristics are grouped into **General Knowledge and Skills**, **Interactive Competencies**, and **Self Mastery**.

General Knowledge and Skills

General Knowledge

1. Understands and supports the broad responsibility of the institution for enhancing the collegiate experience for all students
2. Possesses appropriate knowledge of relevant theories, literature, and philosophies on which to base informed professional practice
3. Knows values, historical context, and current issues of one's profession
4. Has developed, can articulate, and acts consistently with a sound educational philosophy consistent with the institution's mission
5. Understands and respects similarities and differences of people in the institutional environment
6. Understands relevant legal issues

General Skills

7. Manages and influences campus environments that promote student success
8. Works to create campus and related educational environments that are safe and secure
9. Effectively utilizes language through speaking, writing, and other means of communication
10. Engages disparate audiences effectively
11. Teaches effectively directly or through example
12. Thinks critically about complex issues
13. Works collaboratively
14. Is trustworthy and maintains confidentiality
15. Exercises responsible stewardship of resources
16. Engages in evaluation and assessment to determine outcomes and identify areas for improvement
17. Uses technology effectively for educational and institutional purposes
18. Bases decisions on appropriate data
19. Models effective leadership

Interactive Competencies

With students:

20. Counsels, advises, supervises, and leads individuals and groups effectively
21. Knows the developmental effects of college on students
22. Knows characteristics of students attending institutions of higher education

23. Knows students who attend the institution, use services, and participants in programs
24. Interacts effectively with a diverse range of students
25. Provides fair treatment to all students and works to change aspects of the environment that do not promote fair treatment
26. Values differences among groups of students and between individuals; helps students understand the interdependence among people both locally and globally
27. Actively and continually pursues insight into the cultural heritage of students
28. Encourages student learning through successful experiences as well as failures

With Colleagues and the Institution

29. Supervises others effectively
30. Manages fiscal, physical, and human resources responsibly and effectively
31. Judges the performance of self and others fairly
32. Contributes productively in partnerships and team efforts
33. Demonstrates loyalty and support of the institution where employed
34. Behaves in ways that reflect integrity, responsibility, honesty, and with accurate representation of self, others, and program
35. Creates and maintains campus relationships characterized by integrity and responsibility
36. Effectively creates and maintains networks among colleagues locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally
37. Contributes to campus life and supports activities that promote campus community

Self Mastery

38. Commits to excellence in all work
39. Intentionally employs self reflection to improve practice and gain insight
40. Responds to the duties of one's role and also to the spirit of one's responsibilities
41. Views his or her professional life as an important element of personal identity
42. Strives to maintain personal wellness and a healthy lifestyle
43. Maintains position-appropriate appearance
44. Stays professionally current by reading literature, building skills, attending conferences, enhancing technological literacy, and engaging in other professional development activities
45. Manages personal life so that overall professional effectiveness is maintained
46. Belongs to and contributes to activities of relevant professional associations
47. Assumes proper accountability for individual and organizational mistakes
48. Espouses and follows a written code of professional ethical standards
49. Abides by laws and institutional policies and works to change policies that are incongruent with personal and professional principles
50. Re-evaluates continued employment when personal, professional, and institutional goals and values are incompatible and inhibit the pursuit of excellence