Investigating the Evolving Role of Student Affairs in Contexts of Change

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Acknowledgements

The web of associations for the Latin noun "studium" includes the term love, amongst others such as care, diligence, and passion. I would add the sentiment of gratitude, for those who have accompanied me throughout this academic journey. The following acknowledgements are written for you, with the words that you inspire in me.

Executive Summary

I investigated the evolving role and restructuring needs of student services in a context of international higher education undergoing a period of major transition: the student affairs of a university in Italy. The institution has recently been divided into two entities, and the student affairs department is in the process of transitioning to a new role of serving two institutions with their own respective student categories. How student affairs can effectively transition and differentiate according to the diverse populations amid a structurally high-impact organizational change was the driving inquiry of this study. My aim was to glean clarity of change impact on student affairs, explore the working experiences of student affairs personnel within contexts of change, and build a viable and working framework for differentiated student services to propose to the capstone partners.

Methodology

The conceptual framework was developed by examining complexity theory and negotiated order theory, which informed the primary literature strands explored for organizational identity in change contexts, HR culture and practices in change contexts, student affairs, and the service of differentiated student populations. An exploratory qualitative study was designed with data collection that triangulated multiple methods to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and enhance validity. The multiple methods permitted cross-data validity checks while deepening the opportunity for diverse and nuanced findings (Patten, 1999).

Three research questions guided the capstone's inquiry and progress:

1. What impact does structural change have on the organization's student affairs department's role?

2. How do student affairs personnel's working experiences affect the department's capacity for organizational change?

3. In what ways can student affairs personnel effectively serve differentiated student populations in the changing context?

Findings

Data collection and analysis generated ten findings in response to the research questions. Findings are listed according to groupings of relevance to the questions; findings one to three relate to research question one, four to seven to research question two, and eight to ten to research question three.

Finding #1: A "change within change" scenario, such as accreditation, occurring within the organizational context engages employees in rethinking the way student services are perceived and delivered.

Finding #2: While entity division is perceived as a novel and significant change, employees and leaders alike prioritize an adaptive response to this change and a reliance upon pre-existing foundations and resources to achieve success.

Finding #3: Challenges for student affairs employees are complex for a twofold reason: serving two institutions increases work processes and requires employees to alternate program advising roles on a constant basis.

Finding #4: Though SLD's position bridging the two divided institutions was recently formalized, previous institutional processes indicate that SLD occupies a high-profile, centralized role that can be leveraged as an empowering advantage with its new status.

Finding #5: Assessment practices oriented towards collecting feedback that meaningfully captures the student voice and needs are an essential tool for improving responsiveness to student needs.

Finding #6: SLD employees and institutional leaders think about improvement outcomes in the changing context as work which is centered around a specific set of actions: envisioning the future, awareness of change, and mission fulfillment.

Finding #7: A new social dimension and responsibility emerging in the student management processes is the shift from communication with the offices of external organization to communication with students' parents/guardians.

Finding #8: When analyzing differentiated student needs, SLD practices must also leverage a welcoming and unified "open door" policy to effectively serve all students.

Finding #9: Long-term students have distinctive needs centered around the construct of independence; services must reflect the goal of long-term student integration to the local community, culture, and national system.

Finding #10: Ongoing interaction with multiple university departments and perspectives is essential for SLD in its service to differentiated student categories.

Recommendations

The themes and patterns emerging from the findings led to three recommendations. My intent in disclosing these recommendations is for them to represent a starting point and that they themselves evolve and further develop as the institutional environment continues to experience change contexts and future growth.

Recommendation #1: Conduct an audit of current SLD training procedures in partnership with key departments such as Admissions and Academic Affairs. Analyze audit data to inform a redesign of onboarding and continuous training experiences in alignment with SLD's centralized role, mission, objectives.

Recommendation #2: Plan short, medium, and long-term strategies for applying assessment outcomes to SLD departmental operations and determining assessment efficacy.

Recommendation #3: Leverage the current leadership and SLD employee attitude of improvement interpreted through concrete activities (envisioning the future, awareness of change, mission fulfillment) to build a program of structured guidance for moving forward based on team cohesion, department purpose, and interaction with leadership.

Recommendation #4: Increase the SLD voice in the accreditation process through the creation of a student affairs accreditation subcommittee chaired by a managing figure and rotating members nominated by the department.

Recommendation #5: Design a hiring plan for additional SLD resources based not only on factors of enrollment growth projections and student differentiation but also the more complex nature of the SLD work experience.

Recommendation #6: Considering the ongoing need for a standard orientation base for both student populations, optimize the differentiation of needs modeled after the student categories' academic program experience.

Recommendation #7: While distinguishing services, implement a meaningful definition of an "open door policy" for universal student needs that is also supported by a substantiated roadmap for identifying and addressing such needs.

Introduction

Organization Context

Florence University of the Arts – The American University (FUA-AUF) is a private, non-denominational institution of higher education in Florence, Italy founded in 1997. Students from 35-40 nationalities participate in undergraduate and graduate curricula, as well as study abroad programs for visiting students from affiliate university partners abroad. Employee categories include administrative leadership, employees of varying departments and functions, and faculty members (full-time, part-time, adjunct). The institution is currently in the process of accreditation for granting US degrees through the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE). An entity division has been recently implemented as of December 2022: FUA-AUF maintains the study abroad programming, while AUF serves the degree students and will continue the accreditation process. The formal division signifies, amongst many operational transitions, the need to differentiate how student needs are met according to the two populations. Up to 2022, FUA-AUF, as a single institution, delegated student affairs to its Student Life and Development Department (referred to hereafter as SLD). The institution's definition of student affairs did not differ from what the SLD mission states currently, "...to assist students as they acclimate to their surroundings by providing a supportive environment that facilitates personal, cultural, and intellectual growth through internal and external resources within the community."

The SLD department oversaw services for a student body composed of a larger study abroad population (3500-3900 in an AY) and a smaller degree student population (65-200 in an AY).

Figure 1

SLD Pre-Transition
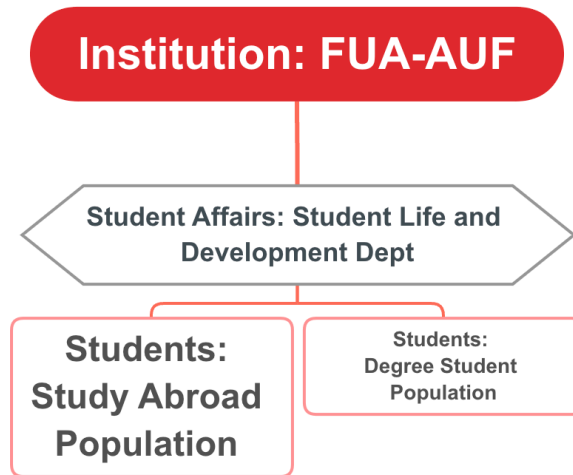
 Note: Organizational status of student affairs prior to transition.

Figure 2

SLD Post-Transition
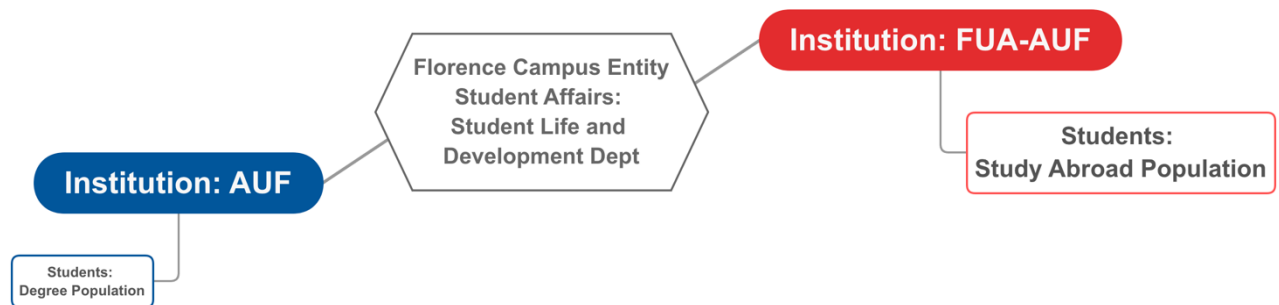
Note. Organizational status of student affairs after the transition.

Post-transition status:

The above institutional view represents the formally divided institutions with their respective

populations, and most significantly for this capstone project, a repositioning of SLD in

relation to the academic entities. No longer under the organizational structure of a single

institution, SLD now sits under a centralized Florence Campus services entity whose aim is to address the student needs of the two institutions.

The two primary stakeholder groups investigated in this capstone are the SLD personnel and student communities. The composition of team members involved in SLD for the purposes of my capstone includes a Dean of Students for global oversight, a Student Life Manager in charge of day-to-day operations, and an average of 4-6 advisors. A satellite colleague, the housing coordinator, has a different reporting line but the related area of services falls within the realm of student affairs.

Figure 3

SLD Partial Organizational Chart
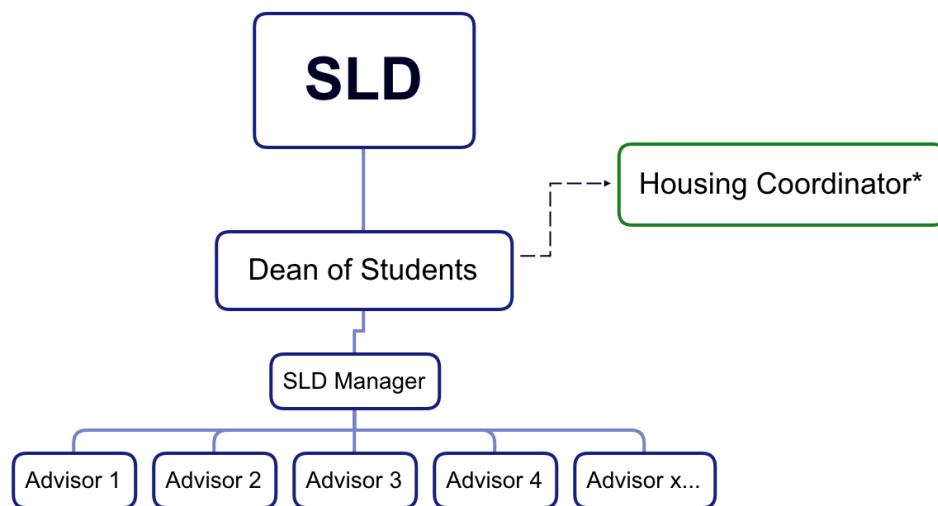
Note. The roles represent those directly involved in capstone interviews. They do not reflect the full organizational chart of SLD.

- Dean of Students: Entrusted with department oversight and reports to the VP of HR and Executive Committee on matters related to student affairs.

- SLD Manager: Manager in charge of operational functioning and work schedules of advising staff.

- Advisors: Individuals who deliver services to all students regarding arrivals and orientation, emergency assistance, extracurricular activities, and ongoing advising via a front desk presence throughout the entirety of an academic term.

- Housing Coordinator*: While housing is considered an SLD service, its coordinator typically reports to institutional administration and collaborates alongside the Dean of students and SLD Manager. The coordinator's satellite presence within my partial org chart is important as advisors can be involved in assisting with housing maintenance tickets submitted through the student portal.

While the HR structure of SLD has an evident hierarchical basis starting from the Dean role, the department prioritizes the equity of involvement from all levels of work categories related to student services. Examples include arrivals and orientation assistance (this also extends beyond SLD as discussed further on in the capstone), leading extracurricular activities, and the emergency phone on two-week rotations that can be assigned to any individual within the department regardless of role or rank.

An important goal of this capstone is to acquire the proper tools, guiding foci, research methods, and overall insight to explore how SLD colleagues and services can successfully transition to new organizational systems and structures in the midst of evolving institutional identity. In this capstone, a successful transition is defined as the capacity to address student needs with stable yet adaptive approaches considering the ongoing change context surrounding and impacting student services operativity.

Significance of the Problem of Practice

The overarching quality related to the problem of practice is the multifaceted and complex structural background that situates the problem. At the organizational level, a higher education institution, FUA-AUF, is dividing into two separate entities (FUA-AUF and AUF) with different populations (study abroad and degree candidates), posing a substantial challenge for the student affairs unit that will not be absorbed by either but remain as an external and common service entity serving both institutions. The larger framework in which the problem of practice emerges highlights the potential impact on the position, identity, ways of working, and communication for the individuals involved in student affairs.

FUA-AUF's study abroad portfolio of programming represents over thirty-five years of experience, partnerships accrued worldwide, and rapid growth. The realm of degree programs, on the other hand, historically represents a smaller percentage of the student body within the campus community. Considering the shift of degree programs to the AUF entity, a complex decade lies ahead for areas such as enrollment, campus operations, and financial management. Institutional identity and the fostering of a distinctly baccalaureate culture for degree students, separate from FUA-AUF visiting students, will be key objectives for the newly instituted AUF.

The unit of focus for the capstone topic is the Student Life and Development (SLD) Department staffed by employees dedicated to the area of student affairs.

Figure 4

SLD Student Services

Student Affairs: SLD

Student Services

Operations	Cultural Integration	Community Engagement	Safety, Support, Wellness	Student Success
Pre-Arrival*	City Walks	Italian Family Club	Counseling**	Writing Center
Orientation*	Sports	ChatPal	24/7 Emergency Support	Career Center
Housing*	Living in Florence	Community Events	Medical Services Support	Alumni Services
	Blending News/Mag	Community Outreach	Travel Log	
	Musing		Mind and Body	

Note: Overview of services overseen and delivered by SLD.

* Areas involve other departments and employees in support of SLD operations.

** Area assigned to a certified professional who is a full-time university employee but external to SLD.

Prior to December 2022, the department delivered unified services to a single body composed of a higher volume of visiting students and a small degree student population. Post-division, the five facets of services have remained essentially the same as general categories. From an HR perspective, the prioritization of staffing resources is concentrated in the Operations and Safety, Support, and Wellness columns given that they require the support of other departments and employees across the university system. All other columns are managed in-house by SLD staff and involve the roles in the previously illustrated organizational chart. Some customizations of service sub-facets are implemented exclusively for degree students.

For example, the Orientation sub-facet under Operations includes encounters with department representatives and academic advisors in the case of degree students.

The two entities plan on stipulating shared personnel and campus facilities across the two student body categories for the 2023-27 cycle with the aim of increasing the independence of degree program operations and resources. While shared resources are intended to support the initial years of AUF, campus units will face challenges of efficacy and fostering growth. Accreditation and institutional division thus pose an important problem of development and practice for the decision-making and implementation of services delivered to two student bodies distinct not only by virtue of nature but also from an administrative perspective. Student Life, and the affiliated operations of SLD stand at the forefront of overall priority and analysis in both the accreditation process and institutional restructuring. The department is already engaged in efforts for improving degree student advising capacities through increased SLD training, SLD resources, revised degree program assessment, and external support from the Academic Affairs Office in the form of an enhanced degree track advising.

The continued exploration of adapting services for differentiated student bodies is wholly urgent as the emergence of the AUF degree culture will be deeply influenced by the services offered. From a university system perspective, SLD is expected to adhere to the requirement for "a clear and consistent communication of the AUF degree-seeking student population and the institution's evolving relationship with the FUA-AUF study abroad entity and population" (*AUF Self-Study*, 2023). Without an adequate preparation for and understanding of the evolving AUF and FUA-AUF interaction, SLD as a department will face significant challenges in delivering services to the respective populations. Finally, if the understanding of differentiated needs goes unaddressed, the already existing gap between the two constituencies may continue to widen. Long-term students as a minority population have

at times struggled in the past to create their own sense of institutional identity. As shared by a colleague, "Sometimes they think they don't belong to this or that group, or a certain community because they're 'different' from the visiting students." (Advisor, SLD focus group, April 28, 2023). Therefore, to best serve all students and strengthen the success of SLD employees in this enterprise, understanding and responding to the unique needs of student constituencies is imperative for the department's future.

The ultimate desired outcome is an SLD team equally fluent in two service modalities for AUF and FUA-AUF. The capstone aim is thus a starting point for delving into the processes of obtaining and refining this fluency.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the capstone project's investigation of the evolving role and restructuring needs of student services in a higher education context undergoing major change. The development and underpinning factors of the questions are further addressed in the conceptual framework section following the literature review.

1. What impact does structural change have on the organization's student affairs department's role?

2. How do student affairs personnel's working experiences affect the department's capacity for organizational change?

3. In what ways can student affairs personnel effectively serve differentiated student populations in the changing context?

Literature Review

This capstone seeks to focus on the student affairs personnel's emerging role within institutional restructuring in relation to the task of serving differentiated populations and capacity for adapting to organizational change. The major research literature themes explored are the following: organizational identity in change contexts, HR culture and practices in change contexts, student affairs, and serving differentiated student populations. Services for international students and global examples student affairs delivery, impact, and perception are also addressed as supporting strands of literature given the international nature of the university system and study bodies involved.

Student Affairs within Higher Education

Considering the complex environment of change, I identified the unified role of student affairs and services for the divided entities and related personnel as a richly evolving institutional area for capstone development. As a literature consideration preceding those related to the primary themes supporting the research questions, I first sought to conceptualize the prominence of student affairs, identified as a priority in the AUF and FUA-AUF division, through existing and emerging scholarship. In today's landscape of higher education, student-centered campus operations have fully emerged as protagonists in varying degrees of dialog and/or practice. Considering AUF as the degree-holding entity being accredited by the NECHE, the US landscape of higher education research activity has experienced a century of change efforts related to student affairs. Following the human-centered Neohumanist and Rationalist eras, the 20th century witnessed landmark moments such as the Progressive Education Movement in the 1920s and the American Council on Education's advocacy for differing college student needs in 1937 (Carney, 1999). The post-Civil Rights period spurred intense dialog related to services evolving from student rights, though many individual and institutional barriers continue to persist today (Pope et al., 2009).

Recent studies indicate the need for student services to be centrally valued as student populations evolve (Ciobanu, 2013) and to constantly evolve in delivery and promotion (Perry et al., 2020). Ciobanu especially highlights the position of student affairs and services as essential for a successful academic experience. The above considerations provide an important groundwork for understanding the institutional prioritization of student affairs resulting to the area's centralized status after the entity division. Carney's (1999) evolutionary overview of student affairs in US higher education provides relevant connections to negotiated order theory through propositions such as student development as an interactive process between people and environments, and environments exerting a conforming influence that may restrict and enable behavior.

Organizational Identity and HR in Change Management

Literature revolving around organizational identity provides a clearer view of the foreground in which the student affairs personnel are positioned between the two educational entities. Day & Day's (1977) negotiated order theory review both predicted the need for broader framing in the theory's future in history, politics, and structures and described the interrelated need to examine a system's historical events leading to its current complex state (specifically healthcare). This need connects to organizational identity perceptions of organization members in scenarios of change or crisis and the ability to bridge good/bad, past/present along with benchmarking (Konvoor-Misra, 2012). Organizational identity should consider the nature of the organization and its historical context while examining micro and macro factors connected to the represented field, and if this activity is planned well with organizational members they contribute to the connective and social "glue" strengthening identity (Ernst & Schleiter, 2019). Literature on the business community such as the case of Proctor & Gamble looks at a strong core value (i.e., thoroughness) and how it is innovated without straying from the organization's history, and organizational identity meanings

adapted as the present progresses into the future (Golant et al., 2015). Though mergers structurally differ from the repositioning of the student affairs personnel, their convergence of different organizational identities and cultures can also be a useful departure point for thinking about dialog and social interaction for identity reconstruction (Mönkkönen and Puusa, 2015) and a good interface between the multiple levels of identity that exist in both individuals and organizations (Felix & Bento, 2018). Higher education mergers offer examples of several studies such as the impact of mergers on micro-level processes (Wollscheid and Røsdal, 2020), nested identities in institutional staff perception of organizational identity at campus locations with different academic identities (Borlaug et al., 2022), and the importance of psychological/emotional elements and new identity building in organizational consolidation (Puusa & Kekale, 2015).

I also considered the supervisory role of HR for the student affairs personnel transition. Masheshwari & Vohra's critical HR practices framework during organizational change provides a cross-functional approach to organizational culture leadership, training, and communication that can positively contribute to employee commitment to change (2015). Supporting a general framework could be a strategic HR approach to not only building manager capacity but also supporting informal change agency practices (Barratt-Pugh & Bahn, 2015), as seen in a study on a large-scale Australian government department merger. The research in this thematic grouping suggests that the capstone process would benefit from reconstructing a history of student affairs past/present practices and their relationship with the institutional evolution timeline and major events, the state of core department values, and the communicative channels and/or dialogs throughout which affiliated department identity perception evolves.

Lastly, I explored views of change management in the field of higher education that provide examples of impact in university settings for work processes and human interaction.

As often occurs in many sectors, a gap persists between plans for change and implementation, and the need to account for sustainability within change requires collaborative processes and a holistic system understanding of interrelations between actors and occurrences (Mader et al., 2013). A case study of a US-based state university system amid restructuring admissions operations (Barnett, 2011) found that the institutions within the state system represented two divergent perspectives that emerged from the data – a global, "common good of the system" view, and an institution-specific view based on the best interests of the single entity. Suggested strategies that may speak across this gap are the fostering of a representative voice that assists in forming a new organizational identity and to ensure commonalities across multiple voices in a system that may strengthen the forming identity. Further cases of single institutions engaging in change management practices (Smith et al., 2020) in work and office restructuring point to the criticality of a collaborative approach implemented as structured processes accounting for diverse perspectives. Examples include a 2-year college redesigning admissions and registrar areas into a single unit, or a 4-year R1 institution streamlining billing, financial aid, and registrar operations into a single process flow for students with longtime monitoring goals; the data identified in both contexts highlight the central role of academic advising for successful transition along with internal office reorganization. In seeking to answer my third research question regarding the service of differentiated student populations, I find helpful in the above literature themes of collaboration, representation during change implementation, the possibility of identifying areas of simplification for operational development within complex situations, and maintaining an ongoing, long-term, evolutive view of managing change.

Service of Differentiated Populations

My subsequent inquiry explored how the literature can inform the issue of serving differentiated populations, the primary challenge that student affairs is undertaking post-

restructuring. Studies reveal various examples from American higher education campuses. Commuter and residential students for example may have conflicting roles for which services must be diversified but in a targeted and at times separated way (Dukes & LaCost, 2022). The two groups were also analyzed for the attribution of usage value to Learning Management System features and indicated different LMS preferences such as residential students appreciating learner-content activities while commuter students valued learner-learner peer-based involvement. Another study found that transfer versus native students on campus do not signify a difference in academic involvement levels while transfer students lagged in awareness of student resources (Wang & Wharton, 2010). A quantitative look at student data for college freshmen and transfers (Lee et al., 2009) sought to examine the relationship between counseling experiences and academic performance of the two groups. Though the findings do not demonstrate a direct relationship, services attending to emotional / psychological needs such as counseling do seem to benefit academic retention and the uniquely different challenges of the two categories should be recognized. The potential learnings from scenarios such as the above, even if based on other forms of student differentiation, can point to helpful student affairs clarification pre-strategies such as gathering and analyzing the past trends, strengths and weaknesses, and emerging patterns of the two populations alongside the department's own self-analysis discussed in the previous section.

International Student Support

A minor focal area of scholarship addresses the theme of international students within a local campus setting. Despite the curricular differences of AUF and FUA-AUF, both share the commonality of an international student body. The current majorities of both are represented by non-Italian students and regardless of continent or country, students collectively experience cultural shock and a journey of acclimation. As such, I examined

research involving both sample-based studies and exploratory analyses of the state of the field. In one sample study involving twenty institutions across twelve US states, services generally appear to address challenges to delivery and quality acknowledged by existing literature yet international students tend to underutilize specialized services (Martirosyan et al., 2019). A 200-institution investigation of how campuses communicate services for international students found that while a variety of services is consistently promoted, common barriers of integration continue to occur (Madden-Dent et al., 2019). Therefore, as post-restructuring services are analyzed by student affairs, it will be crucial to identify current and future challenges and limitations based on available assessment data and new data generated by potential sources such as interviews of system users, prior to formalizing and operationalizing change initiatives. In outlining a model for supporting international students, Di Maria (2020) emphasizes the systems perspective and the interdependency of processes involved in international student support. This outlook is supported by previous work on student body internationalization by Briggs and Ammigan (2017), which points to the necessity of a well-structured system for international students in campus endeavors rather than simply increasing international student enrollment.

Italian Context

An additional peripheral literature focus is the Italy country location of my capstone project, which merits the question of how local contexts of students and student services in higher education have been examined within ongoing dialogs of scholarship. Though the institutional environment is private, international, and based on the US higher education system, available perspectives are helpful for comparison and contrast to how the educational system in Italy generates views, experiences, and perspectives of student services. A 2006 effort was conducted to assess university performance through student satisfaction (Petruzellis et al), a case is being made for simplifying the national model for collecting

student perspectives (Bertaccini et al., 2018), and the international student's voice is being considered in the overall dialog of student experience and wellbeing on Italian campuses (Cipolletta et al., 2022).

Global Case Studies

Lastly, the international nature of both the institutional organizations involved in this capstone and their respective student populations warrant an ample view of student affairs practices worldwide. Global examples speak to FUA-AUF's and AUF's previously referenced positionality as institutions with fully international student bodies where student needs may often diverge from other universities operating in their national context.

My search led to higher education case studies from diverse geographical areas of the world with the aim of integrating international voices and reflections on student service practices into the literature review. A Portuguese institution's perceived social responsibility is measured through the student perspective for overall reputation and quality (Santos et al., 2020). A sample of a Dutch university's international population from 17 different countries reveals that acculturation and familiarization can be improved for structure and management (Aladegbaiye et al., 2022). Practices that promote social responsibility can translate to community building and engagement, or spur reflections on how the acculturation process can be improved for efficacy for differentiated student populations in in our capstone context. Overall satisfaction with a university's services can directly impact institutional reputation as seen in Taiwan (Moslehpour, 2020) or reveal a concrete need for being more student-centric in service delivery as noted by an Australian study (Roberts et al., 2015). These perspectives provide potential connecting insights to practices such as assessment and department service review as SLD adapts to the change context. A German perspective of the person-environment relationship in service satisfaction (Gruber et al., 2013), and lastly examining service needs of Turkish students according to Maslow's hierarchy (Abbas, 2020) round out

my survey of country perspectives to consider for the management of student services intended as human development in the case of long-term students. Questions for ongoing investigation and future research include: What else are student affairs professionals implementing for campus internationalization and for their international student bodies? Across cultures and continents, what approaches, successes, and failures can be interpreted through the lens of student affairs and its personnel?
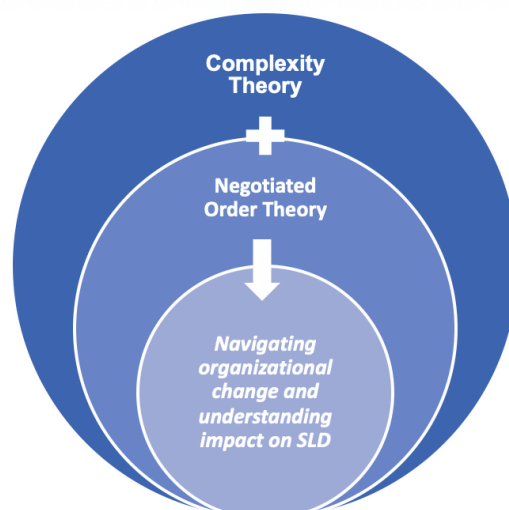
Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework based on complexity theory and negotiated order theory guide the aforementioned themes. Complexity theory can be seen as a counter-response to the machine-oriented concept of a compartmentalized approach to solving problems and categorization. Whether viewed through the lens of the natural sciences or organizational management, the key concept is based on dynamic, non-linear behavior in systems (Burnes, 2005). Spurred by discoveries of dissipation (thermodynamics), the non-linear (mathematics), and chaos theory (particularly in mathematics), 20th century views (Pascale, 1999) of systems as subject to change and constantly adapting led to looking at complexity as diversity in a number (greater or higher to be complex) of interdependent, evolving parts. Complexity sees the whole as greater than the sum of its parts (Bryne, 1998), while complex systems generate behavior resulting from the interaction of system components (Cilliers, 2005). Studies in the last few decades have oriented complexity theory linkage with the realm of organizations, considering organizations as real-world and social examples of the Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) of complexity theory. The metaphorical value of the analogy was readily recognized in the growing and evolving nature of organizations (Burnes, 2005) and subsequent studies sought to establish an operating framework for behaviors within organizational change based on the theory (Lowell, 2016). In the arena of complexity theory and leadership, scholars suggest the need for adaptive and enabling approaches (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007) and that leadership can mediate variables of organizational identity and social moments (Schneider & Somers, 2006). Complexity theory applied to organizational contexts addresses the interpretation and management of ongoing evolution and emergence of change, patterns, and occurrences. As organizations themselves can increase in complexity whether through restructuring or overall growth, crucial needs thus point towards adaptability,

flexibility, and open communication within system elements as they interact and exchange dialog and work processes.

From the in-system interaction of complexity theory emerges the basis for the second conceptual grounding in negotiated order theory entailing the ongoing negotiations in the interactions between individuals within organizational contexts and how they shape social order. Anselm Strauss laid the groundwork for the theory in the 1960s and 1970s, and Day & Day's subsequent review signaled the possibility of using negotiated theory to develop understandings of "process, emergence, social change…in complex organizations" (1977). Particularly useful for this capstone is Callaghan's conceptual scaffolding of complexity theory supported by negotiated order theory for understanding organizations (2008). By looking at organizations through the negotiated order lens, a more social view of complex structures can be gleaned through the interaction of their actors as they collectively interpret and construct organizational identity through ongoing work processes. Negotiated order theory can be used to understand organizations through occupations and meaning in institutional change (Bechky, 2011), employee perceptions in crisis contexts (Hirech et al., 2012), and the role of managers in change implementation (Bryant & Stensaker, 2011).

Figure 5

Scaffolded view of conceptual framework

Note. A scaffolded view of negotiated order nested in complexity theory aims to understand the impact of change on SLD.

Research Question Development

From the aforementioned literature review and conceptual framing that foregrounded capstone development, I developed three research questions to guide the investigation. Student affairs serves as the common factor across all three questions in differing capacities.

The first question addresses the literature strand of student affairs in relation to organizational identity in change contexts. Complexity theory affords multiple perspectives for viewing intricate organizational change, leadership opportunities, and adaptability in shifting and evolving environments. The second question examines the subcategory of organizational change literature from the HR lens of employee culture, practices, and experiences. Through negotiated order theory, this question provides a viable space for exploring student affairs dialog and experiences as employees navigate the organizational transition. The final question addresses differentiated populations as served by student affairs employees, and scaffolds both theories to examine a department in a complex position and its collective identity interpretation and work-building as it seeks to fulfill department objectives in the service of the student body.

As the questions were informed by the conceptual framework and supporting literature, the direction of data needs solidified into coherent pathways.

Table 1

Research Questions and Data Direction

QUESTION	CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	DATA DIRECTION
1. What impact does structural change have on the organization's student affairs department's role?	Complexity theory	Organizational structure, adaptability, processes and emergence within change.

2. How do student affairs personnel's working experiences affect the department's capacity for organizational change?	Negotiated order theory	Practices, dialog, experiences in evolving positioning.
3. In what ways can student affairs personnel effectively serve differentiated student populations in the changing context?	Complexity and negotiated order theory	Patterns, strengths, weaknesses, occurrences within complex population needs.

Note. Summary of foundational bases utilized to develop the data collection plan described in the following section.

Study Design and Methodology

Based on the questions finalized for the project's data collection and analysis, an explorative qualitative methods plan was conceived with the intent of collecting data generated by study participants and textual data available in document sources. Due to the capstone's focus on a specific department of individuals within a realm organizational change, the study design was informed by both the descriptive/analytic and complexity/contextualization components (Ravitch & Carl, 2021) of qualitative research. Direct contact with various subjects within the Student Life and Development department and/or regularly interacting with the department was an indispensable primary data source. Perspectives from external institutions who also interact with differentiated student populations were also integrated in order to enrich understanding of the focal phenomena. Upon further analysis of data needs, document analysis sources for the textual data were also deemed essential for providing supporting context, evidence (or counterevidence), and examples directly from the current state of affairs at SLD and the institutions it serves. The value of document analysis as described by Bowen (2009) attributes the role of methodological and data triangulation particularly in case study research. Each research

question was examined according to the conceptual framework parameters outlined in Table

1 to determine what data was necessary for acquiring relevant answers to the question.

Table 2

Research Questions and Data Needs for Collection

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	DATA NEEDED AND POTENTIAL SOURCES	COLLECTION METHODS
1. What impact does structural change have on the organization's student affairs department's role?	Information on past and future roles of student affairs dept.	Semi-structured interviews with institutional leadership.
		Document analysis of materials pertaining to dept role/mission.
	Student affairs work processes and employee before/after perceptions.	Semi-structured interviews with SLD managing figures.
		Document analysis of department materials pertaining to accreditation and long-term student affairs.
2. How do student affairs personnel's working experiences affect the department's capacity for organizational change?	The "what" of the working experience.	Document analysis pertaining to HR, onboarding, working experience.
	Employee perceptions of transition.	Focus group of SLD staff.
3. In what ways can student affairs personnel effectively serve differentiated student populations in the changing context?	Current SLD employees and external perspectives.	Focus group (same individuals as RQ2) External leadership interviews for insights on differing populations.
	Student services assessment practices.	Document analysis of SLD assessment practices.

Note. Abbreviated summary of how methodology is mapped onto the research questions and

the data sought to answer those questions. See Appendix A for detailed version.

Data Collection Instruments

Qualitative Interviews and Focus Group

Background and sampling strategy: All three research questions sought data in the form of

perspectives to be gleaned from interview subjects, with whom I met either on an individual

interview basis or a focus group setting. In the latter case, two research questions were served

by the collection instrument as per the aforementioned data needs chart. Due to the specificity

of context, on one hand it was necessary capture evidence as direct voices from the field in which SLD personnel operate and experience in a changing context, on the other the overall number of participants was relatively small and their nomination for recruitment emerged alongside the data collection planning phase. I thus engaged in practices of purposive sampling according to the potential sources determined for inclusion in the chart.

The SLD staff perspective addressed by all three research questions guided the sampling approach within the department to include department management, employees with significant work experiences, and recent employees who joined the department in the 2022-23 AY. The differing layers of roles and responsibility were an important feature of SLD sampling to present a balanced view of those involved in department leadership and decision-making, and those involved in the day-to-day operations from varying degrees of department experience. Administrative figures of university-wide leadership were selected considering their system-wide views and for their familiarity with and guidance provided to student affairs since the 2007 inception of the current department model.

Lastly, I identified two external institutions for obtaining external perspectives on managing differentiated populations. For these cases, I applied theoretical sampling (Babbie, 2017) considering the candidates' connection to and potential for contributing to the evolving theory and conceptual framework: experienced representatives with a multifaceted view of experience in managing student affairs and needs, higher levels of administrative profiles with significant experience in diverse populations. The exact number of representatives and roles confirmed for the interviews and focus group varied according to the protocol in question. The below list represents the finalized number and professional roles of the interviewed subjects.

- University system leadership interview (two participants): The President/CEO confirmed availability for the interview to provide a system-wide viewpoint, while

the VP for Human Resources, Institutional Research, and University Advancement confirmed participation with the understanding that her viewpoint was crucial for the employee-driven aspects of the capstone's scope.

- SLD management figures interview (two participants): Two positions were available for me to contact as the supervisory roles of the department, the Dean and Manager (who reports to the Dean). The roles represented in-depth department familiarity, student affairs expertise, and knowledge of the department's relational positioning within the university system.

- SLD focus group (five participants): This area of recruitment presented the biggest challenge for me in terms of selection and subsequent scheduling. The rehiring process due to the post-Covid department restructuring limited the pool of candidates with enough relevant experience to grasp the capstone scope. In addition, diverse perspectives were a key desired element of the focus group. The line-up of participants included SLD management (Dean and Manager from the above category), the housing coordinator who had started the year prior to the pandemic and thus had acquired a pre-transition experience, an advisor with at least three years of experience, and one of the newer advisors who completed her third month and was in the final phases of department training.

- External perspectives (two participants): The Vanderbilt interviewee, the Assistant Dean for Student Engagement and well-being at Peabody College was a capstone advisor recommendation that I was able to follow-up with and gain consent for participation. As for the second external perspective, I reviewed FUA-AUF's portfolio of US higher education partner organizations for study abroad programming. Interest was gauged and confirmation secured with the associate vice provost for international affairs at Fairfield University, a Jesuit institution in New

England. The parameters sought for both interviewees were years of experience in the role, a higher-level administrative position, and direct experience with managing diverse populations.

Interviews: Individual, semi-structured interview protocols (Appendix B) were developed according to the conceptual frames and the varying data needs responding to the research questions. A total of three protocols were developed for engaging in dialog with participant categories, and each connected to a specific research question. While the protocols were written in a structured manner with the same questions per category, the possibility of a unique, co-constructed path with room for probing and follow-up questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2021) was maintained due to the diverse backgrounds and roles represented. The one-on-one format selected for these interviews first provided an open dialog space for exploring each leader/manager's viewpoint depending on their area of oversight for the university at large or specifically within the realm of student affairs. Secondly, the increased time affordance of the format allowed for a deeper dive into the leaders' institutional positionality and the extensiveness of their experience.

For research question one, the impact of organizational change was discussed with university executive leadership from the lens of past, present, and future student affairs perspectives. Research question one's second dimension of SLD employee perceptions of their department role transition shaped the interview protocol for SLD department leaders for their direct involvement in shepherding student affairs colleagues and operations through organizational change. The interviews with leadership profiles from the external institutions lastly had the aim of understanding good practices, common themes, or challenges from other institutions who experience the theme of differentiated student population management addressed by research question three.

Focus group: One focus group protocol was developed to gather the experiences and perceptions of SLD employees in response to the inquiry dimensions of research questions two and three regarding respectively working experiences and differentiated populations against a backdrop of organizational change. In this case, it was important to explore the collective experiences and knowledge construction (Ravitch & Carl, 2021) of SLD colleagues representing varying department functions and the on-the-ground voices directly involved in daily student affairs operations. Here, the plurality of voices provided by a focus group format was an important pursuit for a few key reasons. The format allowed a glimpse into the collective department spirit reflecting the everyday reality of the SLD staff as a collaborative process. The group setting was also more compatible with the department's overall availability given the frequent use of workday shifts that often rotate campus locations, leading evening or weekend extracurriculars, and emergency hotline coverage. Therefore, focus group aims related to both research questions two and three purposes were integrated into a single interview protocol to optimize the scheduling logistics involved for gathering SLD employees in a unified space rather than creating separate protocols for each question.

For all data involving interviews and the focus group, each protocol related to specific research questions with the result of thematic question groupings that explicitly addressed conceptual framework items.

Figure 6

Protocol Flowchart

RESEARCH QUESTION	PROTOCOL	CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
1. What is the change impact of org change on SLD role?	Institutional leadership	As complexity increases in org structure, how needs can point to in-system adaptability. Construct of pattering, before/after. (Schneider & Somers, 2006; Uhl-Bien et al, 2007).
2. How do SLD working experiences affect dept capacity for org change?	SLD management interview	Process, emergence, social change in complex organizations; identifying areas of simplification for operational development. (Day & Day, 1977)
		Managing change as an ongoing evolutive process, differentiated populations. (Bryant & Stensaker, 2011)
3. How can SLD serve differentiated populations in the midst of org change?	SLD focus group	Org view of SLD personnel positioning between two identities, SLD practices and relationship with institutional change emerging in employee experiences, evolving dialog in work experiences leading to dept identity perception. (Callaghan, 2008)
	External Interviews	As primary challenge for SLD post-restructuring, what trends, strengths, weaknesses, and patterns can be referenced for serving differentiated populations? (Bechky, 2011)
		What trends, strengths, weaknesses, and patterns experienced by an external case study can be referenced for serving differentiated populations?

Note. The flowchart illustrates the relational impact of the research questions and conceptual framework and their presence within the protocols.

An example of how the research questions and conceptual framework concretely emerge in interview questions can be seen in the protocol for SLD management figures (Appendix B). The guiding document is structured to address the two counterparts as follows (logistical requirements disregarded in the below list):

1. Purpose of data collection in connection to the related research question prior to interview content.

2. Questions associated with pre-determined themes deriving from the conceptual framework. For SLD management, eleven questions were grouped according to three themes each containing three to four questions

- *Impact of structural change*

- *Role of student affairs*

- *Services in the context of institutional restructuring*

Similar to the approach described for SLD management, each of the other three protocols are structured to explicitly identify the research questions being addressed and thematic grouping of questions according to the conceptual framework.

All participation of interviewed individuals was finalized via email through a recruitment letter that also included an attachment of a capstone abstract with a brief overview of the overall endeavor (Appendix B).

Document Analysis

While establishing the parameters for protocols related to collecting data from interview participants, I simultaneously analyzed the range of textual data available in document form to support interview findings as a secondary data source. While documents afforded the important usage of corroborating and augmenting data from the interviews, in several cases documents took on a more explicit representation (Yin, 2003). I identified a total of 12 document categories sourced from the university system that yielded 15 distinct document artefacts.

Documents in support of research question one for analyzing the mission and role in past, current, and future phases of the department included website content and accreditation material where the student body was cited, along with materials typically provided to students such as the student manual, pre-departure emails, and orientation slides. Documents identified for analyzing the work experience dimension of research question one included department procedures and accreditation materials where department operations and services offered were addressed. The research question two dimension of capturing the working experience was addressed from an HR perspective of the department, onboarding

documentation, training processes, and staff development. SLD staff work schedules and hours were also considered. In response to research question three's differentiated populations inquiry, descriptions of assessment practices provided relevant points of how service delivery will be expected to perform in the service of long-term students as a distinct category from the visiting students.

Selected documents were listed according to type of format, conceptual framework connection, and the evidence provided by the item.

Table 3

Document Analysis Matrix Partial View

DOCUMENT / MEDIA SELECTED	CONTENT PRESENTED	CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ADDRESSED	EVIDENCE
SLD Student Manual online	Webpage content	Complexity theory for org change in evolving contexts - past/future dept roles	Information for students based on services and resources, both on campus and locally in Florence.
Department manuals/procedures (pre/post)	PDF text	Complexity theory for org change in evolving contexts - work processes	Working procedures, processes, and standards for department employees.
HR policy	PDF text or dialog	Negotiated order theory for navigating SLD dialog and experience while navigating org change - personnel experience	How HR policy determines/shapes roles and responsibilities related to SLD employees.

Note: The preview displays the first few entries of the analysis matrix; a complete version is available in Appendix C.

Analytic Memoing

In order to promote interpretive sensemaking and reflective practice throughout the research process, analytic memos (Appendix D) were crafted to finetune methodology and adjust the course of data design actions according to memo insights. Memoing activity for

sensemaking was useful in my capstone journey for clarifying theoretical links and addressing emergent issues (Ravitch et al., 2021) as encountered throughout my experience. From a personal standpoint, memoing allowed me to understand how "reflexivity contributes to making the research process open and transparent" (Palaganas et al., 2017) and illuminated ethical revelations about the study (Saldana 2019) such as the challenge of proximity bias.

The first memo was developed around the process of interview protocol development for clarifying and refining the way protocols addressed study participants and minimized the potential obstacles for their participation. The memo exercise led me to triangulate the research questions, conceptual framework, and protocol questions to ensure that questions truly addressed the related research question; shed personal assumptions (as an employee of the organizations involved) while crafting protocols; and question sequencing for an efficient use of time for all participants.

The second memo examined document analysis as a wholly different experience from crafting protocols. While the protocols required a finite end date leading to data collection for development for usage in interview scenarios, gathering and analyzing documents extended well beyond study design to data and analysis. The entire process required moments of decision-making and/or finetuning for factors of project relevance, necessity, and feasibility that shaped my final list of documents as presented in the capstone appendixes. This is further discussed in the following data timeline and collection section regarding adjusted scheduling needs.
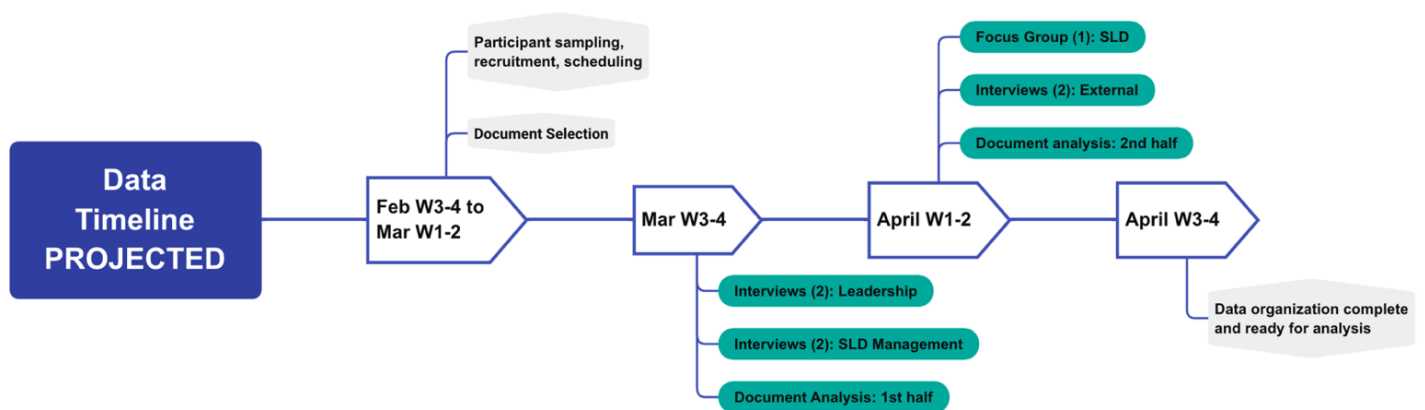
Data Timeline and Collection

Timeline Plan

Data collection was originally planned to take place in the period from mid-March to mid-April, preceded by the recruitment phase and concluding with data readiness for analysis.

Figure 6

Projected Timeline Plan

Note: Timeline as originally planned prior to data collection.

Gray items represent logistical phases while the teal items indicate moments of data collection. The originally scheduled monthlong collection phase sought to balance the two macro-categories of data (interview subjects and document analysis) – interviews scheduled according to protocol type and document analysis as an ongoing process throughout. The second half of March entailed an average of two interviews per week conducted with the "leadership group" representing the university system and SLD. The first half of April foresaw the distribution of two external interviews and one focus group over the two-week period, thus requiring one or two interview moments per week depending on participant availability.

Data Collection Adjusted Scheduling

The spring 2023 semester timing of the data collection plan coincided with an intense period for the capstone organizations due to an accreditation visit, preparation for upcoming summer programs, and participation in a conference abroad. The timeline therefore was adjusted as data collection progressed according to feasibility and the impact of external scheduling factors.

Figure 7

Timeline of Actual Data Collection
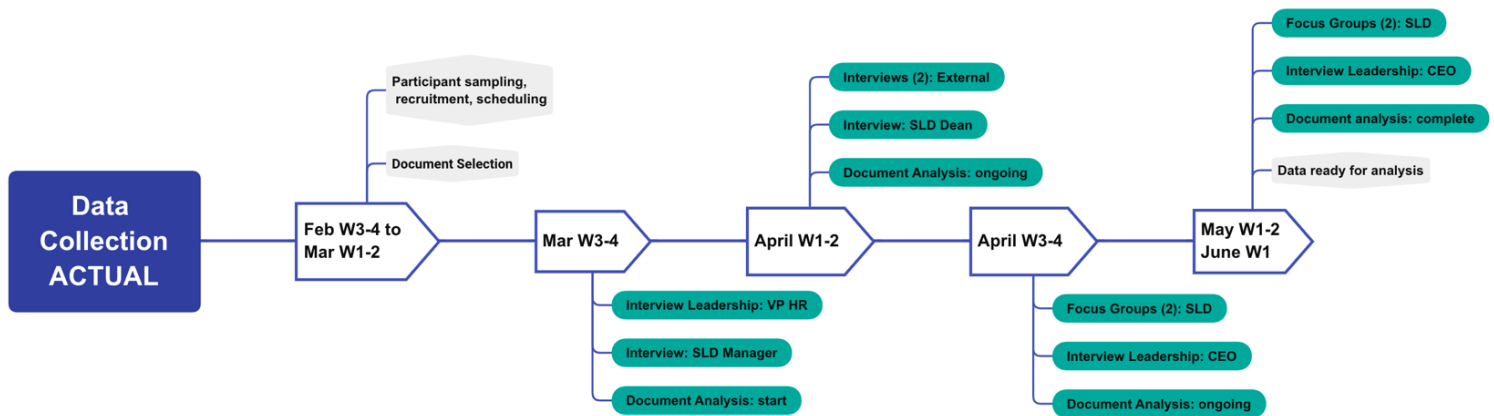
Note: Timeline of data collection that was adjusted for feasibility and scheduling factors. The major timing factor that impacted my collection status from an accreditation standpoint was a mid-April site visit that took place on campus and required any other scheduling items involving university system colleague participants to be extremely limited in the week prior and following the visit. The second factor of upcoming summer programs in particular impacted SLD colleague availability, which first caused the necessity to split the focus group into two sessions rather than one. Identifying a common date and time was not feasible after several attempts to lock in a calendar entry as SLD employee schedules shifted according to summer programming prepping needs. Lastly, a conference abroad involved several key figures from leadership and SLD. Therefore, the timing as originally planned had to be

adjusted as described in the following phases of data collection actions taken along with the challenges and opportunities that required readjustments of scheduling and/or data collected. The following describes the evolution of the data collection timeline:

Mid-February to mid-March: I analyzed sampling approaches for project-appropriate candidates and identified a potential range of documents for analysis. Communication was initiated with the candidates for tentatively scheduling interview dates.

Mid-March to mid-April: I conducted the first round of confirmable interviews and simultaneously drafted the document analysis matrix according to conceptual framework relevance and evidence provided by selected documents. Within this monthlong period, I was able to collect interview data from the VP of HR, the Student Life Manager, Dean of Students, and the two external voices. For one of the external interviews, a welcome surprise occurred when an individual's travel plans allowed for an in-person interview to be conducted in this period rather than via videoconferencing.

Final two weeks of April: The SLD focus group was scheduled in this period and split into two dates due to the differing work schedules that impeded the single gathering of the five selected and confirmed colleagues.

Early May to early June: In the final phase of interview data collection that took place in the month of May and early June, I secured and conducted the last interview to complete with the university system president. I also reviewed the documents listed in the document analysis matrix to further filter and eliminate any superfluous sources such as datasets that ultimately brought little relevance to the concepts of organizational change, SLD working experiences, or differentiated populations. Due to the aforementioned conference abroad involving several key staff members, the wrap-up of document analysis was unfortunately delayed until early June. On the basis of reviewing the available and unavailable artefacts, the document analysis matrix underwent a final revision regarding documents provided by SLD colleagues.

Data Collection

Interview and focus group data: The process utilized for collecting interview data consisted of a method adaptable to in-person and video conferencing modalities via Zoom or GoogleMeet. Interviewees participated in 45 to 60-minute recorded dialogs that addressed the interview questions and gave space to additional comments or reflections thanks to the semi-structured protocol basis. All interviewees were notified prior to the interview recording, the option to maintain an anonymous identity, and the liberty to not answer a question. The recording software of choice was otter.ai, which easily lent itself to transcribing both in-person interviews and video conferencing calls. In the first case, the software was activated on a device (i.e., computer) browser to record the interview meeting. In hindsight, while I did not experience volume issues, a microphone extension to ensure sound capturing would be recommended for larger group settings. For video conferencing sessions, otter.ai was set up to join the scheduled meetings and simultaneously record the interview. I also used my iPhone recording feature for each interview as a backup audio source in case of connection delays or issues that may have impacted the otter.ai recording capacity. The necessity to reference a cellphone recording due to a connection interruption occurred for one of the interview sessions I held. Each session generated an audio recording file download (plus an additional cellphone recording) and a .txt document file download of the recording transcription. The post-interview operations I followed once these materials were available for transfer can be summarized as follows:

1) Download and store in designated password-protected data archive, subdividing into folders per data category and subcategory, if applicable. One audio file and one .txt file per interview.

2) Listen to audio file to cross-check word accuracy in .txt transcription, correct only for factual accuracy. Refer to additional cellphone recording in case of otter.ai recording errors generated by connectivity issues.

3) Verify and/or update speaker indications in the .txt file and correct only for factual accuracy.

While the AI software was an undoubtedly convenient resource, I did experience a few transcription challenges when it came to non-native English speakers. The pronunciation of some speakers, who are fluent in English and fully understandable from a listening standpoint, resulted in a greater margin of general misspellings in the original transcriptions. Errors also occurred each time a non-English word was utilized, such as terms in Italian that are regularly cited or used as field-specific jargon even in English-language dialog. An example is *permesso di soggiorno*, equivalent to a "permit of stay" in the Italian immigration system and applicable to any student in Italy for over ninety days.

Document analysis data: This collection followed a standard procedure whose variability depended primarily on whether I was able to directly access the data or needed to request and receive it from another individual at the institution.

1) Consult document analysis table for documents and identify those that are located in the same or similar locations.

2) Send a pre-alert request to institutional staff for access in the case of documents that I cannot directly access or need assistance with locating in university platforms.

3) Review the document(s) for the pages and sections pertinent to the data needs indicated in the document analysis table.

4) If permitted by word or pdf processing software, extrapolate the pages and sections and save in designated data archive. Subdivide file names per data category and subcategory, if applicable.

The two processes for collecting interview and document data resulted in a set of password-protected word processing files for data analysis. The overall collection process was stable in terms of obtaining data as predicted by the data needs chart, with a few data sources deemed as unnecessary upon evaluation of sufficiency of existing data and/or relevance. On the other hand, the evolution of data inclusion developed in some areas during the collection process itself as noted previously in the analytic memoing section. Memos not only helped shape how to collect data but provided clarity during the collection process itself as seen in the case of document analysis.

Data Analysis

Data preparation for analysis was first applied through the creation of the codebook. Rereading and reviewing collected data, I kept my analysis priorities open to both patterns of similarity, frequency, and correspondence, as well as the use of filters described by Saldana as the "researcher's analytic lens" (2019). Keeping in mind the circular process of revisiting raw data based on theoretical findings and literature (DeCuir et al., 2011), the conceptual framework developed early in the capstone project was rapidly evident in the patterning of codes emerging from the raw data. Based on the protocols I had already used with study participants along with the data analysis chart, I had predicted that several codes would be generated on a deductive basis given the consistency of the conceptual framework grounding the entire project. While the prediction was accurate, I did also encounter counterexamples on an inductive basis that were present throughout the various data categories and including the external interviews. An example is the code "universal student needs" that all individuals cited regardless of differentiated populations, unified by the common desire to make sure every student's needs are taken care of.

Table 4

Codebook Development

Genesis	Code	Summary Description
Deductive	Accreditation as development	Citations of accreditation as a development experience directly related to student affairs.
Deductive	Adaptive response	Individual's awareness of changing context and how one's self or work experience adapts with it.
Deductive	Assessment	Assessment practices cited as important tool for student affairs.
Deductive	Centrality SLD	Positioning of student affairs in a central manner.
Deductive	Challenges in change	Difficulties experienced or foreseen in change contexts.
Deductive	Different needs	According to populations being discussed.
Deductive	Improvement in change	Dialog related to improvements either experienced or envision in the midst of org change.
Deductive	Long-term student autonomy	Student population that views itself as more independent and has different everyday life needs.
Deductive	Multiple perspective	Dialog related to necessity of multiple perspectives beyond the department when dealing with student affairs.
Deductive	Orienting development	Orientation cited as development moment
Inductive	Meaning of service	Personal takes on what student service means to an individual.
Inductive	Open door	Statements of student affairs as being an open-door, no questions asked space where all students can congregate and be in a safe space.
Inductive	Social glue	The human and social value cited in student affairs operations.
Inductive	Universal student needs	When students are cited as an entire, unified body to serve rather than their differentiated contexts.
NA	Clarity needed	Instances where the data indicates lack of clarity in a process and can be a potential area for future improvement.

*Note. S*ummary illustrates how codes were formalized on a deductive/inductive basis.

With the exception of two codes, all other codes were utilizable in both realms of interview and document analysis data. The two codes pertaining only to document analysis data were "SLD centrality" and "Clarity needed," with emergences occurring solely in review related to document analysis.

The general method applied in analyzing the data for codes followed these steps:

1) Data review of files prepared from data collection phase. Each file was reviewed at least twice for coding.

2) Availability of an updated Excel file for coding. The file indicates columns for code category, themes if applicable, the data source category, and data.

3) Insertion of applicable data to the Excel coded data file.

Findings

The data yielded ten findings clustered into subgroups responding to the research questions that guided the data collection and analysis:

Findings one to three address research question one: What impact does structural change have on the organization's student affairs department's role?

Findings four to seven are associated with research question two: How do student affairs personnel's working experiences affect the department's capacity for organizational change?

Findings eight to ten respond to research question three: In what ways can student affairs personnel effectively serve differentiated student populations in the changing context?

Finding #1: A "change within change" scenario, such as accreditation, occurring within the organizational context engages employees in rethinking the way student services are perceived and delivered.

Employees often cited AUF's accreditation process, occurring against the backdrop of organizational restructuring, as a dual change experience that has been helpful for understanding student needs. Five distinct mentions from four focus group participants and executive leadership were generated by the interviews. The newest employee described it as "helpful to focus more" while an employee who had worked previously in SLD in 2020 and came back three years later shared that it "very important to me, because I worked here three years ago...It was very helpful to better understand this process [of SLD's new role], because I wasn't aware of everything." Such comments align with the observation of a more senior advisor, who cited accreditation processes as something that "helped all of us, increasing our awareness of what the institution is doing, and they helped the new employees and staff members to develop a corporate attitude towards the institution." Accreditation is also seen as "a moment for us to stop and review and rediscover and empower our service" in terms of

departmental capacity, as stated by a managing SLD figure. Considering research question one's inquiry regarding organizational change and SLD as a department, the accreditation journey within the organizational restructuring has allowed individual SLD staff members to feel more knowledgeable about their jobs and the department to better understand how to enhance its service delivery. Lastly, the institutional leadership's prediction that "long-term students are going to benefit greatly from our accreditation process" underlines how this change-within-change scenario has at its core the scope of best serving students and student interests, thus highlighting the central importance of student affairs in such endeavors. The statement also links to the theme of leadership and complexity theory suggesting a leader's potential for mediating variables of organizational identity (Schneider & Somers, 2006). Associating students and student affairs to the accreditation process at the leadership level as well as throughout the self-study document can ground the department's self-awareness of its role and the spaces it occupies despite the complex and evolving environment.

Finding #2: While entity division is perceived as a novel and significant change, employees and leaders alike prioritize an adaptive response to this change and a reliance upon pre-existing foundations and resources to achieve success.

The consensus echoed by employees of varying levels and institutional leadership viewed the necessary differentiation of student services as an event that not only implies new services but implements and strengthens existing ones. Considering the change-within-change context of the previous finding, the institutional staff mentality towards organizational restructuring can be an advantageous response of adaptive and enabling approaches (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007) in complex situations. The activity of drawing from existing foundations and shared resources was cited across diverse data categories.

Table 5

Existing Foundations Data Samples

SOURCE	EXAMPLE
Focus group	"...some of the services that we will deliver and that we are delivering to the long-term student is just some of the visiting students services that just need to be implemented."
SLD manager	"...we will create from already existing services, activities, that we have and how to best modify them or change them to serve the two communities and the two institutions in the best way."
HR leadership	"So the surfaces, as I said, will remain the same but there will be more attention, a different action, a different kind of attention to the students."
Document: AUF Self-Study	When describing student affairs for long-term and visiting student populations, the text refers to "shared but differentiated services."

Participants of varying roles appreciated the existing foundations that have sustained the university system thus far. They seemed invested in sensemaking views of how the body of experiences acquired thus far provides a valuable starting point for the changes ahead as well as those currently unfolding. The collective nature of the sensemaking process can be seen as an example of meaning that is negotiated amongst actors to interpret organizational identity in change (Bechky, 2011). The structural change occurring in the organizational context impacts the student affairs role as an area that should communicate both the stability and adaptability that guide the department in approaches that guarantee continuity yet are capable of a flexible navigation into the future of stewarding students as the university system grows.

Finding #3: Challenges for student affairs employees are complex for a twofold reason: serving two institutions increases work processes and requires employees to alternate program advising roles on a constant basis.

As SLD employees frequently encounter both populations through their frontline presence on campus, they need effective strategies for rapidly conducting on-demand, moment-to-moment student needs according to program background. The campus presence

of SLD is intended to be ubiquitous and accessible (further addressed in finding four), to provide direct assistance at all times to students. As per the university system's plans for degree student operations, student portal, and current web, portal, and database implementations are in place for improving the admissions process specifically for degree-seeking students. Services and engagement initiatives will be further differentiated for this population as discussed in findings eight to ten. SLD employees will thus need to familiarize themselves with dual response systems for certain advising needs while delivering standard assistance for shared areas of services. In addition to unified vs. dual approaches, the capacity to rapidly assess advising needs at any given moment will be an increasingly essential component of the SLD training process. As noted by a SLD managing figure, "...it took at least six months for a student advisor to really understand the institution, the different services, and how to perform well on the job. And now we're adding the fact that there are two institutions to learn about and then be able to switch hats even throughout the day." Organizational impact on SLD will require its managers and employees to occupy a role where centrality is key, and nested within this centrality are multiple levels of identity that can emerge in individuals and organizations (Felix & Bento, 2018).

Finding #4 Though SLD's position bridging the two divided institutions was recently formalized, previous institutional processes indicate that SLD occupies a high-profile, centralized role that can be leveraged as an empowering advantage with its new status.

As I gathered documentation regarding the working experiences of SLD employees, I was reminded both by textual evidence, policy, and colleague voices that the ubiquitous SLD presence on campus has been a defining feature of department work experiences in the years prior to entity division. As shared by HR leadership, 2010 department reorganization established the current 40-hour per week contract but initially concentrated SLD staff and services in one building. Over the subsequent five-year period, SLD maintained a home base

office in one campus location but integrated front desk shifts at all campus locations within the working schedules of its employees. The aim was to provide students with immediate access to SLD advisors across the network of facilities, at all times.

Table 6

Sample View of SLD Desk Shifts at Campus Locations (April 2023)

Workday category 1	Staff 1: 8:30am opening to 5:30pm with 1-hour break
Workday category 2	Staff 2: 5:30-7:30pm closing shift Staff 1: 8:30-10:30am opening shift
Workday category 3	Staff 2: 10:30am-7:30pm shift with 1-hour break Staff 1: 8:30am opening to 1:30pm
	Staff2: 1:30-7:30pm shift

The indicated hours are an example of front desk hours in use before and after the entity division. They are designed to run parallel to the opening hours of the buildings in question and guarantee the SLD presence on a continuous basis. Two of the six campus locations adopted the workday categories, with the variation seen in the remaining buildings that either do not require a front desk (two) or run on different operating hours (two) and thus adjust the workday time frames accordingly. The remaining hours of the forty-hour per week contract that fall outside of those scheduled at a front desk facility are dedicated to back-office responsibilities. SLD employees also alternate two-week rotations of the emergency line accessible 24/7 by the entire student body, seven days a week, and oversight of arrival, orientation, and extracurricular activities for which a bonus system is in place for any hours beyond the contractual forty-per-week and work scheduled on Sundays or holidays. Furthermore, front desk duties require a department-branded uniform for consolidating visual identity as per the HR manual. It is the only department to observe uniform regulations across the campus system, the only other partial instance being the hospitality department's faculty and student uniform requirements applicable to two campus locations.

Another area of SLD centrality to university system operations I observed during document analysis was its prominence in HR processes for new hires in all departments. Sources such as the HR Manual and SLD scheduling for airport arrivals and housing check-in pointed to an employee induction pathway in which student affairs exposure is seen as necessary for familiarizing oneself with the university system at large. HR procedures require a 6-month period in which induction activities are distributed in phases. After HR, SLD appears as the department with the highest number of interactions for a new employee regardless of the affiliated unit. Such interactions include department introduction upon employee badge pick-up (occurs at SLD), review of SLD Manual and follow-up with SLD staff member, and involvement in the academic calendar's arrival days managed by SLD. The latter requires a full immersion in student affairs as a part of the SLD team – finance, field learning, and academic hires in Spring 2023 donned the SLD uniform and assisted with directing students at the airport, accompanying them in shuttles for the airport pick-up option, or guiding students through housing key pick-ups and check-in procedures at the main campus.

The data associated with this finding suggests that SLD is well-positioned as an area already considered as an institutional reference point that all departments are exposed to. This is demonstrated as described above through its physical presence on campus shaping the work experiences of scheduling and visual identity, and its prominence in HR procedures. The open-ended question remains as to how this advantage can be further leveraged or rethought now that its status represents as a separate yet connecting department in between the two institutions.

Finding #5: Assessment practices oriented towards collecting feedback that meaningfully captures the student voice and needs are an essential tool for improving responsiveness to student needs.

A potential connection to finding four's concluding question may be offered by assessment as a practical and accessible means to explore the new meanings in store for SLD's new role. Though recently implemented in 2022, the revision phase of university system's assessment manual engaged areas such as SLD, administration and finance, and IT, inviting them to rethink their place in and contribution to institutional assessment. The three departments proposed their vision and needs with the assessment team, and the first results of the institution-wide assessment conducted according to the revised manual are slated to be released for the 2022-23 AY in late August or September 2023. As a SLD managing figure shares, it will be necessary to verify how new assessment directions will need to be monitored and improved in terms of the department's overall capacity to address its role and its service in the university system:

"I think there will be a need for more training within the department to make sure that we are effectively assisting the students as we as we need to, and more developed assessment. We do have some peer assessment protocols or methods that we already used. But I think that we will need to expand on them more to know and be sure that we're addressing the needs of the two students from that middle point."

In the meantime, the data collected for this capstone indicated the indispensable need for student affairs assessment, expressed by SLD and external participants alike.

Table 7

Student Affairs Assessment Data Samples

PERSPECTIVE	SOURCE	EXAMPLES
Student voice	External	"So we have done focus groups with some students...to provide it to students and say, 'Tell us how you're engaged in each dimension' [of the holistic engagement compass] and then a follow up question is how you would like to be engaged, to see if there are other ways that they might like to be engaged that

		we're either not thinking about or could and so we're in the process of trying to develop it into a tool."
	SLD focus group	"So having the approach also of assessing and asking students what they need and what they're wanting, or what they're lacking. In order to improve in our baseline."
		"...surveys, so having student feedback with direct feedback from both student populations."
Departmental self-awareness and improvement	External	"[graduate students are] developing a compass tool that can help us assess what are the dimensions, where are we meeting people's needs, and how are people engaging? And where would they like to that maybe we're not or that we could bolster? So that would be another way that we're doing some assessment."
	SLD focus group	"...this [assessment] is the kind of tool that we must see if our department is doing good in delivering the service, if the students are receiving the service, if it's effective."
		"The assessment is crucial for us to understand what we are doing, and if what we are doing is the right thing we should be doing for them."

The comments of external and SLD participants coalesced around two strands of intended perspective in the assessment dialog as shown in the previous table: the inclusion of the student voice in identifying student needs and diagnosing SLD's efficacy in addressing those needs, and assessment as a tool for gaging departmental self-awareness. This finding, supported by the similar experience of a higher ed student affairs peer at a different institution, is suggestive of an SLD direction towards not only understanding assessment as an important practice but as a continuous improvement tool to integrate into the ongoing working experiences of SLD staff.

Finding #6: SLD employees and institutional leaders think about improvement outcomes in the changing context as work which is centered around a specific set of actions: envisioning the future, awareness of change, and mission fulfillment.

Table 8

Improvement as Action Data Samples

ACTION	SOURCE	EXAMPLES
Awareness of change	SLD focus group	"[SLD staff] are feeling they are part of something that is increasing, evolving and changing."
	HR leadership	"...when there's a transition, the HR office...has to be ensure that they [SLD team] are moving into this new era with awareness, with the right awareness."
Envisioning the future	SLD focus group	"Knowing how we are visualizing our future has been an experience that helps, especially from an organizational point of view and student life. Knowing what services or activities or tools that we can think about implementing in the future. Or even improving right now."
Mission fulfillment	SLD management	"And we could also help both entities to maintain the institutional vision, the mission, and make sure that everyone through Student Services also sustains the pillars of the mission."

The employees who shared the above reflections seem to gain confidence from engaging in a continuous improvement approach as a part of their working experience. The emergence of these three activities, though seemingly spontaneous, may signal the outcome of institutional efforts to navigate change with employees or perhaps positive attitudes coalescing around the progress of the change process. Regardless of the genesis, the activities are interconnected and provide an ample window of opportunity for institutional leaders and employees to exchange perspectives of the evolving university system in a common space of collective action. Another way to visualize the three areas of activity is their patterning as an actionable process cycle that leads back to improvement as the catalyst for engaging in change-oriented activities.

Figure 8

Action Process Cycle
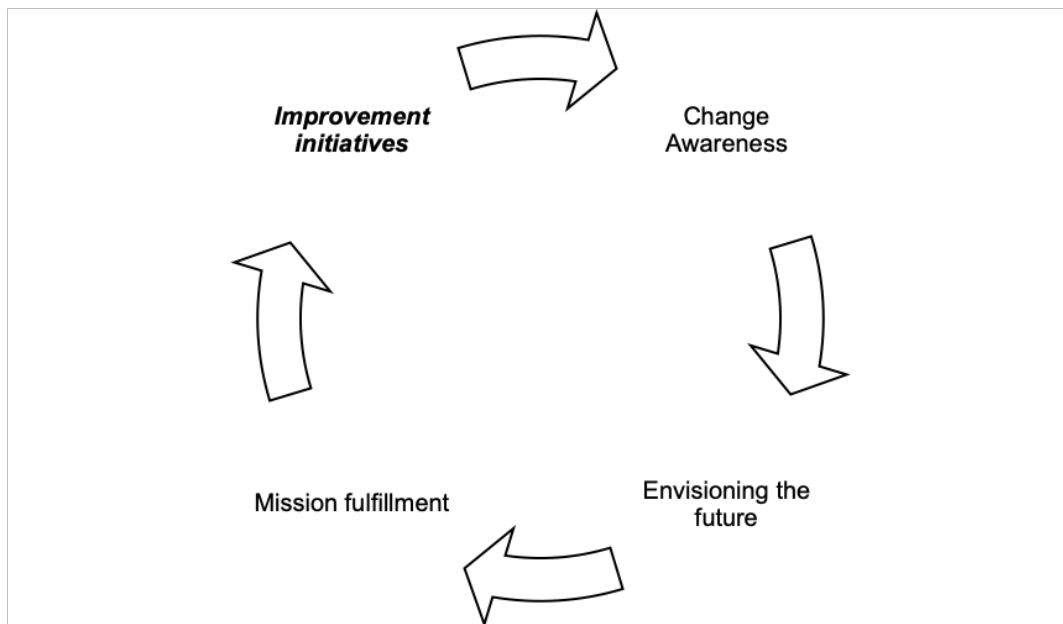
Note: Visual representation of process cycle created by the author.

Finding #7: A new social dimension and responsibility emerging in the student management processes is the shift from communication with the offices of external organization to communication with students' parents/guardians.

An area to monitor moving forward is the communication shift that SLD focus group participants recounted as an increasingly significant topic to manage with differentiated student populations. The managing figure summarized the group's thoughts as follows:

"Usually with the study abroad student population, we can maintain direct contact with either the student directly or a university study abroad office, and parents or guardians rarely come into the picture. But when we are handling grievances from long-term students, they tend to be accompanied by a parent or guardian, and this can bring up a series of other challenges because then we are dealing with maybe a legal adult [the student] but then there's the guardian who is often paying for the studies."

While communication with long-term students and their families/guardians has always been an ongoing practice for institutional employees, the organizational restructuring for AUF degree students has generated increased reflection of SLD employees on their work processes. In this case, the more frequent communication scenario occurring for visiting

students is experienced as an org-to-org interaction (i.e., between two universities) and, in the case of US visiting students, FUA-AUF also needs to account for FERPA in any direct parent interaction. The long-term student scenario on the other hand involves communication that substitutes the structural institution with the social institution of the family or guardianship. While matters must be disclosed directly to the long-term student unless they are a minor, the guardian can at times represent an opposing agenda with respect to that of their child's. Continued discussion with SLD focus group colleagues led to a further unpacking of these divergent views:

> "...you are also dealing with two different constituents. So one who is actively involved in this institutional community [the student] and of someone who may be just involved economically or financially [guardian]. And they are looking at the situation from very different points of view."

SLD employee communication management for long-term students not only involves a different social dimension, but also multiple and potentially conflicting voices within that dimension. Employee support and training in this particular work experience aspect will be crucial to successfully navigating in the change context as the long-term student population continues to grow and associate with the AUF baccalaureate community identity.

Finding #8: When analyzing differentiated student needs, SLD practices must also leverage a welcoming and unified "open door" policy to effectively serve all students.

There is always that thrilling moment in data analysis when a piece of evidence suddenly sheds an illuminating insight on your investigation. One comment from an external participant while recounting her team's student outreach efforts made me stop the audio recording in the post-interview data review and re-listen to it several times:

> "So it almost seems like a challenge of finding something that works almost like a Venn diagram, right? Because there are the overlapping areas...and fitting in between that kind of space, an intersecting space of needs, and also things that are simply different..."

In this very straightforward reflection, the individual harnessed an effective description of the beauty and challenges faced by my colleagues on an everyday basis. The code of "differing needs" yielded unique instances cited by all interviewees including external participants. The story that unfolded was equally dedicated to the universal and differentiated dimensions of student needs. Within the realm of universal needs, all interviewees emphasized the emergence of mental health as a major factor of student services regardless of population category, with one external interviewing sharing, "I think mental health is going to continue to be a hot topic in the world and in higher education, I think given the state of the world and for many of the challenges that we're all facing." As for long-term students in my capstone partner context, their needs were described as those also provided to visiting students but of a differentiated scale and/or approach. The adaptive approach outlined in finding two, and thinking about services that are diversified but in a targeted and at times separated way (Dukes & LaCost, 2022) are helpful tools along with the external interviewee's Venn diagram commentary for visualizing this finding's data results.

Figure 9

Intersecting Needs Diagram
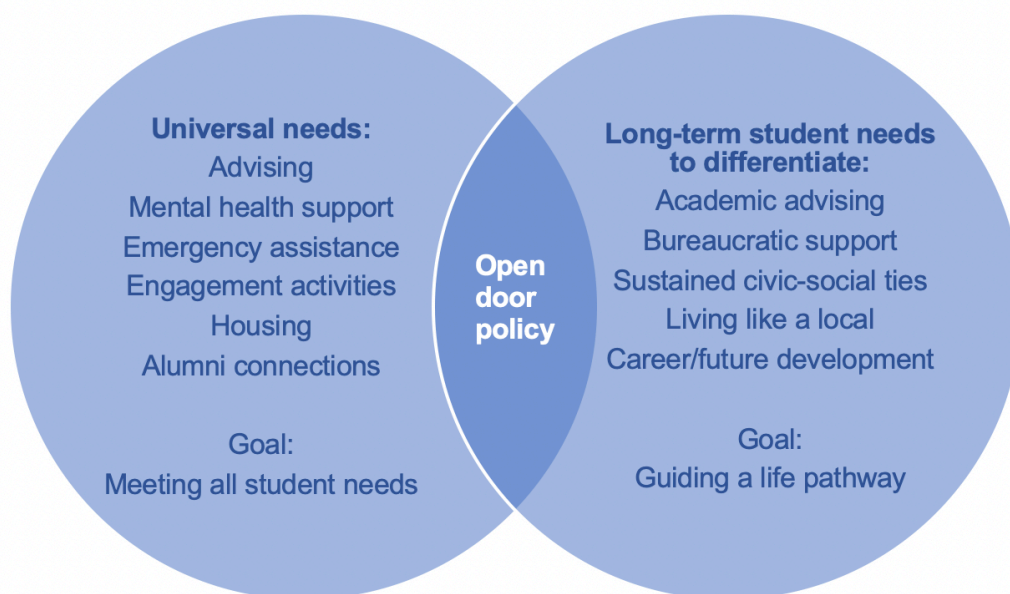
Note: Diagram illustrating needs of all students, those of long-term students, and an intersecting area for an open-door policy.

The worlds of universal student and long-term student needs may seem separate, yet they are not unrelated. SLD employees and institutional leaders alike reflected on how a universal need would be distinguished when applied to long-term students:

- While "academics lead everything, they need to connect to student life because their work is so intertwined." Long-term students therefore need a diversified advisor figure whose "position is in between student life and academics." (Both quotes from executive leadership).

- While health and safety and mental health support is an important resource for all students, long-term students require guidance that integrates issues of immigration, banking, and local bureaucracy to establish a life-oriented commitment to the program duration as emphasized by SLD staff throughout the interviews.

- When involving all students in community-building extracurriculars, long-term students need to be engaged in a different way. For example, if the calendar of extracurriculars restarts every academic season, the repetitions do not benefit long-term students who attend the academic year. If the aim for visiting students is to interact with locals and the local community, the trajectory of long-term students should ultimately be "more oriented in living permanently in the city of Florence [as a resident]." (SLD focus group)

- The same institutional housing standards and forms of assistance must be met for all students, with the difference for long-term students "who are looking to settle...[whether] in finding independent housing or having more housing options and opportunity to be living with other degree students." (SLD housing staff)

- Alumni network services for former student connections and fundraising are fruitful experiences for all students. Degree students transitioning out of their studies should have at their disposal an "empowered Career Center" that, beyond the current services of resume enhancement and job readiness preparation, also finds solutions to the lack of visa extension programs given the "increased contact with local companies" the alumni and career colleagues are experiencing. (Both quotes from SLD management)

Surprisingly, the dialog on differentiated services for visiting and long-term students, as well as the populations described by the external voices at their respective campuses inevitably turned to a common reflection that I used as an inductively discovered data analysis code of "open door policy." All SLD employees and externally located student affairs professionals concurred that no matter what, at the end of the day, student affairs should be a space for any student to be able to reach out to regardless of need, background, or enrollment category. An external participant asked herself, "How do we create a welcoming space for those students to...talk to us about those needs? And how do we then both anticipate and meet the spoken and unspoken needs that these disparate groups have in common?" The same participant spoke of the same unwavering efforts whether the response was to five, fifty, or 300 students. In the Venn diagram I designed to capture the rich data generated by interview participants, the open-door policy occupies the intersect as both the common point and example of student affairs practice. Effective service of disparate populations will require strategies of differentiation, but it should also explore what occupies or should occupy the intersecting space of needs on a continual basis. As stated by the university system's HR leadership, "[SLD] will have to serve students in the same way as they have always done no matter what kind of students," to which SLD management currently responds by "being the point of reference and in a way the face of now two different institutions, but still being that united front for all the student needs."

Finding #9: Long-term students have distinctive needs centered around the construct of independence; services must reflect the goal of long-term student integration to the local community, culture, and national system.

Thirteen data points resulted in relation to this finding and across all interview categories representing the SLD and university system. In particular, the word "independent" emerged as four instances offering varying associations with long-term students.

Table 9

Independence of Long-Term Students

ASSOCIATION	SOURCE	EXAMPLE
New employee expectations of long-term students according to cultural bias	SLD management	"New staff struggle more to understand why we deliver certain services for long-term students because they're used to the public Italian university system where we're expected to be more independent. They may think ok, the visiting students are new, and they need services for a short stay. Why do the degree students continue to need additional services, even after two years of study? So it's a cultural challenge that they face."
Independent behavior observed in long-term students	SLD focus group	"After the first period of adjustment, the long-term student feels like a local and that they do not need much assistance compared to the study abroad students."
Non-academic predictions based on behavior trends.	HR leadership	"...long-term students will have probably more independence in organizing their extracurricular life."
Goals for long-term student development	Executive leadership	"[Long-term students] need a different understanding of what they're doing, where they're doing it and the need itself, such as being more independent from the institution. Visiting students may just take advantage of activities, learn, and then go back. Our long-term students need to adapt because they're going to be here for two years, four years, five years. And so we're trying to create opportunities for them to become citizens."

Independence is therefore represented by the constructs of expectations and projected goals alongside actual observed behavior. The long-term student needs, as discussed throughout the

capstone, require further differentiation and forms of implementation. The compounded view

of greater service endeavors for the result of a more independent degree student may seem

unusual at first glance, but through this lens SLD can determine its own scope and

redefinition of independence as an integration to the local community, culture, and national

system.

Finding #10: Ongoing interaction with multiple university departments and perspectives is essential for SLD in its service to differentiated student categories.

Another substantial incidence of similarly coded data is associated with this last

finding. Twelve unique moments of dialog described or suggested the necessity of student

affairs exposure to other university departments and areas of operations. All internal and

external interview participants emphasized ongoing interaction with other departments and

gaining diverse perspectives as a key to student affairs' success. In some ways, this finding is

a mirror opposite of finding four which highlights SLD's central position for others to

interact with and learn from. Within the context of student affairs benefitting from outside

perspectives, the data points highlighted four high-priority themes.

Table 10

Advantage of External Perspectives Data Samples

THEME	SOURCE	EXAMPLE
Individual SLD employee benefit	SLD focus group	"... [appreciation for the] exchange with others, academics or admissions, people from other teams. It's also helpful to maybe have another perspective of the situation."
Student benefit	HR leadership	"...considering the degree-seeking students now that come to the Student Life department seeking connections to other offices within the institution or more advice on their academics. The communication within the Student Life Office to other areas of the institution will become much deeper."
Mutual and multi-departmental benefits	External	"Every other week, career services, EDI, admissions, and our office, and now international students and affairs all come together for an hour. We share what our offices

		are doing. We ask questions, our Senior Associate Dean is there to ask questions and it has been really helpful."
Call for institution-wide support	External	"...to have people in every division of the university advocating for them [SLD] just as strongly."

Smith et al's change management study (2020) can be recalled here for thinking about structured processes that account for diverse perspectives. The forward-looking direction of SLD's identity and role development, student-oriented operations, and working experiences should integrate and are well-served by ongoing, inter-departmental interaction and co-signed activities. Key partners across the institution include but are not limited to Academic Affairs, Admissions, and Communications and Marketing.

Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Conduct an audit of current SLD training procedures in partnership with key departments such as Admissions and Academic Affairs. Analyze audit data to inform a redesign of onboarding and continuous training experiences in alignment with SLD's centralized role, mission, objectives.

- The training program can be shaped and informed by the SLD role identity rather than the institutions it serves, the latter to be introduced as supporting structures for student populations.

- The training program can be focused on student needs according to universal factors, differentiating factors, and intersecting approaches.

- Training modules can include needs by population/academic program, SLD linkage to other departments involved in student experience i.e., admissions and academic affairs, and building competencies in liaising with parents and guardians.

- Parallel to the SLD training program, the updated department role identity can be revisited accordingly in the processes of system-wide employee training procedures housed at HR. This revision could factor in how employees of all departments and any new employee should view SLD in terms of its positioning and aims.

Recommendation #2: Plan short, medium, and long-term strategies for applying assessment outcomes to SLD departmental operations and determining assessment efficacy.

- As the 2022-23 AY is the first to be reviewed by the updated university assessment system, include in short-term planning an immediate post-assessment analysis for areas related to the student experience, SLD services, and SLD staff performance.

- While yearly assessment results are examined to determine areas for improvement, establish medium-term (i.e., for a two or three-year cycle) objectives of understanding

if assessment tools are effectively capturing SLD's adjustment to its new organizational role and service delivery needs.

- As the above point will likely coincide with the upcoming initial accreditation of the institution, simultaneously develop future objectives for the SLD department for the next five to 10-year cycle in alignment with the subsequent self-study preparation.

Recommendation #3: Leverage the current leadership and SLD employee attitude of improvement interpreted through concrete activities (envisioning the future, awareness of change, mission fulfillment) to build a program of structured guidance for moving forward based on team cohesion, department purpose, and interaction with leadership.

- The current mindset and ways of thinking about improvement through the activities of envisioning the future, being aware of change, and fulfilling the institutional mission are fertile ground for establishing good practices within the university system.

- A structured program of exchange between leadership and SLD department employees revolving around the three activities can start from formalizing how individuals engage in, elaborate, and apply them in their work lives and responsibilities.

- The program can potentially generate data and resources to inform both training and assessment practices related to the SLD department.

Recommendation #4: Increase the SLD voice in the accreditation process through the creation of a student affairs accreditation subcommittee chaired by a managing figure and rotating members nominated by the department.

- Current SLD employees serving as accreditation staff members represent department leadership. With the stable presence of department management and rotating staff members nominated by the department, accreditation efforts can be empowered by the staff member's existing perception of the process as a clarifying and enabling

experience. As accreditation will be an ongoing process even after the initial status is granted, a subcommittee with a well-defined scope ensures the continuity of SLD voice in accreditation matters.

- Establishing a subcommittee would require the drafting of (brief) bylaws or a similar document of standards that outline the terms of rotation, expectations, familiarization process, how to contribute, and how to disseminate experience findings to the department. Interaction with the accreditation's overseeing Standing Committee should also be accounted for.

Recommendation #5: Design a hiring plan for additional SLD resources based not only on factors of enrollment growth projections and student differentiation but also the more complex nature of the SLD work experience.

- The evolving student populations call for different competencies and educational backgrounds, as seen in the data and findings. A hiring plan should account for how these differences are addressed across the scale of SLD roles and level of responsibility.

- While it will continue to be important to consider maximum numbers of student advisees per employee for various types SLD functions, it will be important for SLD managing figures and the HR department to integrate factors of increasing demands and complexity in student affairs operations when estimating the need for additional human resources.

Recommendation #6: Considering the ongoing need for a standard orientation base for both student populations, optimize the differentiation of needs modeled after the student categories' academic program experience.

- Current orientations only differ with the addition of additional resources for degree students only. While needs are shared yet differentiated, rethink orientation delivery

according to need dimensions that are more meaningfully expanded throughout for the long-term students.

- Consider how the orientation period can mirror the student's academic experience. For example, the established orientation dates per session as defined in the academic calendar can be used as the baseline for visiting students. For degree students, how can the long-term nature of their academic program be reflected as an expanded calendar of orientation activities? What can be defined as essential delivery in the shorter timeframe of orientation applicable to all students, and what can be formalized within the first week, first two weeks, and first month after degree program start? What can the orientation experience contribute to a first-semester conclusion reflection activity? At the end of the academic year?

- As a continuation of the above point, it would be important to consider the social and community-building elements of a degree student's experience, a more integrated exposure to admissions and academic affairs (rather than as pass-off phases), and the tools for navigating the university system (registrar and bursar, to name a few).

Recommendation #7: While distinguishing services, implement a meaningful definition of an "open door policy" for universal student needs that is also supported by a substantiated roadmap for identifying and addressing such needs.

- As substantiated by interview data, universal needs continue to remain in the big picture of student needs. A meaningful definition of such needs in the form of a purposeful framework can propel a general concept towards concrete pathways for improving student services and the overall student experience.

- Targeted efforts for an improved understanding of universal needs can simultaneously help clarify perspectives linked to differentiated ones, especially when the universal need serves as the intersection from which diverse needs branch out.

- Current student surveys are collected every academic term for visiting students and academic year for degree students. The format focuses on the quality of services offered and staff delivery of services. If an additional dimension that seeks to capture universal needs can be implemented in the survey, this data can be triangulated with yearly HR assessment and reviews with SLD staff in a three-year cycle with a twofold aim: constructing the framework of the previous point and connecting learnings to SLD hiring and training practices.

Discussion and Conclusion

Limitations

Personal bias: An important limitation to consider comes from my own positionality as an employee of the university system addressed by this capstone. Though proper clearance was secured according to capstone handbook policy, the bias of topic proximity was something I encountered and had to elaborate and/or redefine along the way through the help of protocol review and analytic memoing.

Scope of inquiry: As a one-person capstone team, I was aware of having to be highly discerning in my sampling and document selection processes. As such, with the aim of interacting primarily with SLD staff who interact with students daily, my participants did not include all employees affiliated with student services. For an expanded continuation of this project inquiry, the endeavor of including all voices (directly employed by SLD, collaborators of SLD, or an example or two of employees from other departments involved in SLD processes for training purposes) would be recommended.

Areas for further inquiry

A study designed to analyze SLD and university system responsiveness to differentiated student populations would be important to conduct post-accreditation. Other potential topics generated from this capstone based on a prediction of growth include long-term student community building and SLD training effectiveness based on its restructured identity. The foundations for this capstone could also be considered for a longitudinal study with multi-year aggregate results.

Conclusion

While change and complexity combined may evoke difficult or challenging situations, they can be an opportunity for acquiring new forms of learning and improved approaches to services in the best interest of the student constituency. My findings illustrate a series of starting points for action based on a department's restructured identity against a backdrop of change still in progress. As change will continue to impact the organizational context, the hope is that the capstone project's insights will stimulate an attitude of change for SLD employees as an actionable, opportunity-building experience in the years to come.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Data Collection Chart

Data Needs Chart

Research Questions	Data Needed	Collection Methods
1. What impact does structural change have on the organization's student affairs department's role?	Information on past and future roles of student affairs dept (institutional leadership)	Semi-structured interviews with institutional leadership: VP of HR, CEO.
		Document analysis of dept role/mission: web, student manual, accreditation Self-Study section on students, pre-departure emails to students, orientation slides.
	Student affairs work processes, employee perception of roles before/after, and service output to students (SLD managing figures)	Semi-structured interviews with SLD managing figures: Dean of Students and SLD Manager.
		Document analysis of department materials: Accreditation Self-Study sections on long-term student affairs.
2. How do student affairs personnel's working experiences affect the department's capacity for organizational change??	The "what" of the working experience: Workplace environment, individual role responsibilities and interchangeable tasks, resources available for development and growth.	Document analysis: HR definitions of roles and responsibilities Onboarding documentation, training process, development. Work schedules/shifts
	Employee perceptions of transition (Managing, coordinating, and advising employee roles)	Focus group of SLD staff: Dean of Students, Manager, housing coordinator, and 2 advisors.
3. In what ways can student affairs personnel effectively serve differentiated student populations in the changing context?	Current SLD employees of differing levels and external perspectives.	Focus group (same individuals as RQ2) External leadership interviews for insights on differing populations: 1. Peabody grad student affairs 2. US university int'l affairs unit
	Student services assessment practices.	Document analysis: SLD assessment practices

Appendix B: Protocols

Recruitment Letter

Dear [Name],

As a doctoral student in the Leadership, Learning, and Organizations program at Vanderbilt University, I am inviting you to participate in my capstone project on the evolving role of student affairs for FUA-AUF and AUF in the midst of high-impact organizational restructuring. You have been identified as a potential interviewee for my study because of your [leadership or student affairs] involvement at [institutions (*for employees of the partner orgs*) *or* field of student affairs in higher education (*for external perspectives*)].

Your participation is very important to my project and will contribute to expanded and/or new frameworks of practice for serving differentiated student populations at FUA-AUF & AUF. Should you agree to participate, I will contact you to schedule [an interview and/or a compatible focus group date] according to your availability.

- [*For all interviewees*] The interview will take 30-45 minutes and can be conducted in person or by phone or conference call if you are not located in Florence, Italy. An in-person interview can be scheduled on campus (i.e., office or classroom space) or at an external location if preferred.
- [*For SLD employees only*] The focus group will take 45-60 minutes and take place in an available space on campus. The number of attendees may vary from 4-10 depending on participant availability.

Participation is voluntary and your responses will be kept anonymous if requested. You will have the option to not respond to any question that you choose. Participation or nonparticipation will not impact your relationship with FUA-AUF and AUF. Agreement to participate will be interpreted as your informed consent to participate and that you are at least 18 years of age.

If you have any questions about the project, you may reach out to me as the Principal Investigator or my faculty advisor, Dr. Carrie Grimes at carrie.m.grimes@vanderbilt.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant, contact the Vanderbilt Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (615) 322-2918. Please print or save a copy of this page for your records.

Sincerely,

Grace Joh
Ed.D. Candidate
Leadership and Learning in Organizations
Peabody College – Vanderbilt University
grace.a.joh@vanderbilt.edu

Recruitment Letter: Capstone Abstract Supplement

[Communicated to participants as information aligned to IRB submission.]

Author: Grace Joh
Tentative title: *Investigating the Evolving Role of Student Affairs in Contexts of Change*

In the proposed project, I will investigate the evolving role and restructuring needs of student services in a context of international higher education undergoing a period of major transition. The site is based in Florence, Italy, and comprises two educational entities: FUA-AUF is a private, international institution serving a large population of visiting study abroad students and some degree-seeking candidates. The university has undergone an institutional division resulting in the separate entity of AUF dedicated solely to degree students. AUF furthermore is in the process of US accreditation.

How student services, a shared resource between the two entities, can effectively transition and differentiate according to the diverse populations in the midst of a structurally high-impact organizational change will be the driving inquiry of this study.

The capstone will utilize interviews, focus groups, and a survey that engage employees from varying levels within the student affairs department and institutional leadership. Interviews and focus groups are designed as a maximum 1-hour duration and will take place within campus office or classroom spaces. Data collection also foresees document analysis of institutional materials, communication, and database information approved for disclosure during the project.

The capstone will investigate the following research questions:
1. What impact does structural change have on the organization's student affairs department's role?
2. How do student affairs personnel's working experiences affect the department's capacity for organizational change?
3. In what ways can student affairs personnel effectively serve differentiated student populations in the changing context?

The overall goal is to glean clarity of change impact on institutional student affairs, explore the working experiences of student affairs personnel within contexts of change, and build a viable and working framework for differentiated student services to propose to the capstone partners.

<h1 style="text-align:center">Interview Protocol: Institutional Leadership</h1>

Data Collection Purpose
RQ1: What impact does structural change have on the organization's student affairs department's role?
Who: VP of HR, CEO, VP Finance
To note: The institutional area of student affairs is referred to as SLD, the acronym of its specific department name, Student Life and Development.

Pre-Interview: Confirmation and Preliminary Info
 Email confirmation of interviewees and collection of preliminary data regarding institutional role, due 48 hours prior to the interview.

Dear XX,
Thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview scheduled for Date, Time, Year.
In preparation for our upcoming interview, I am writing to request some initial information regarding how your role interacts with the student affairs. I kindly ask that you provide a brief response to the below two questions. The answers will be helpful as a framing perspective for the interview dialog that we will engage in in a few days.
- *Can you describe your interaction with student affairs? If a team acts on your behalf, please describe the team's interactions.*
- *Given the recent institutional division of degree and study abroad entities, will your role and interaction with student affairs remain the same or change? If changing, how so?*

I look forward to receiving your responses 48 hours prior to our scheduled appointment and remain available for any questions you may have regarding the above questions or upcoming interview.

Pre-Interview: On-site
1. Review of interview scope, interview themes, and data usage.
   a. *Thank you for joining me in this interview as well as for sending in the requested pre-interview details. As I've shared with you, I am interested in learning about your leadership view on how the recent institutional changes are impacting the SLD department and its role moving forward. I'd like to discuss insights on current and future perspectives of the topic, as well as understand key moments in the past for SLD leading up to today.*
2. Verification of prior consent and preference for identification. [verbal]
3. Disclosure and reminder of interview recording. [verbal]
4. Request for any final questions prior to interview start. [verbal]

Interview

Recording starts. *Today's interview is with _____, whose institutional role is _____. Today's date and the interview start time is _____.*

<u>Theme:</u> Impact of structural change
[Conceptual framework integrated: as complexity increases in org structure, how needs can point to in-system adaptability. Construct of pattering, before/after.]

1. I'd like you to take a moment to reflect on a past moment when structural changes at the institution impacted SLD.
    1. What complexities emerged for the department?
    2. How did department employees adapt to the complexities?
    3. Are there any patterns that impacted the department in the moment that you are recalling?

2. How would you describe the impact of current restructuring on student affairs as a department?

3. What types of impacts related to restructuring do you currently observe in SLD operations?

4. How does structural change impact the resources dedicated to SLD operations?

Theme: Role of student affairs
[Conceptual framework integrated: process, emergence, social change in complex organizations; identifying areas of simplification for operational development.]

5. How would you describe the role that SLD represented prior to the university restructuring?

6. Reflecting on SLD's role in the current restructuring, how would you characterize the department's role now?

7. How does the work you and your team do have the potential to impact the role of SLD within the institutional system?

Theme: Context of institutional restructuring
[Conceptual framework integrated: how managing change is an ongoing evolutive process, differentiated populations]

8. What has been successful in managing the two populations prior to restructuring?

9. Can you describe current experiences or phenomena that the department is experiencing in the service of the two populations?

10. What are the factors that could contribute to a successful SLD transition to serving two student populations in the immediate timeframe? On a long-term basis?

The interview end time is _____. Recording ends.

Interview Protocol: SLD Management

Data Collection Purpose
RQ1: What impact does structural change have on the organization's student affairs department's role?
Who: SLD department leaders (Dean of Students and Student Life Manager)
To note: The institutional area of student affairs is referred to as SLD, the acronym of its specific department name, Student Life and Development.

Pre-Interview
1. Review of interview scope, interview themes, and data usage.
   a. *Thank you for joining me in this interview. As I've shared with you, I am interested in learning about your managerial view on how the recent institutional changes are impacting the SLD department and its role moving forward. I'd like to gain insights into SLD work processes, how you are experiencing the department restructuring, and how you are delivering services to students.*
2. Verification of prior consent and preference for identification. [verbal]
3. Disclosure and reminder of interview recording. [verbal]
4. Request for any final questions prior to interview start. [verbal]

Interview

Recording starts. *Today's interview is with _____, whose SLD role is _____. Today's date and the interview start time is _____.*

Theme: Impact of structural change → department work processes
[Conceptual framework integrated: as complexity increases in org structure, how needs can point to in-system adaptability. Construct of patterning, before/after.]

1. To get ourselves situated, I'd like for you to take a minute or two to think about what's changed in department processes over 2022 and 2023.
   1. What changes have been more complicated to handle and why?
   2. What changes have been beneficial for the department and why?

2. Your department serves two student populations of separated institutional entities. What has been the impact of the centralized position on the role of the department and the team?

3. How has the impact of university change affected your department's operations? Have processes become unified, reduced, or multiplied?

4. Can you describe some of the challenges for the department as it adapts to responding to two academic entities instead of one?

Theme: Role of student affairs → department manager perceptions
[Conceptual framework integrated: process, emergence, social change in complex organizations; identifying areas of simplification for operational development.]

5. How do you see the new department role in relation to the separated institutions?

1. What advantages can the department's new role offer to the institutions?
2. How do you perceive the interactions and communication with the academic entities as different now that they have been separated?

6. Where do you see operational and staffing areas within your department as needing to consolidate knowledge and identity according to the new department role?

7. Have you observed any signs of department cohesion and identity as the team transitions into its new role?

Theme: Context of institutional restructuring and how services are adapting
[Conceptual framework integrated: how managing change is an ongoing evolutive process, differentiated populations]

8. Now I'd like for you to imagine that you are a degree student, and then as a visiting student. Try reflecting for a few minutes on the service needs of both student categories and jotting down notes.
   1. What elements would students see as good or lacking, as of today?
   2. Post-restructuring, how would you want a degree student to perceive the role of SLD in their program experience? How about a visiting student?

9. Compared to times prior to university restructuring, which services have you updated or added for the two student populations?

10. Which services do you see as successful and which as needing improvement?

11. Where do you see department colleagues performing well or struggling with adapted services?
    1. Do you see this occurring with a particular student profile category? Why?

The interview end time is _____. Recording ends.

Focus Group Protocol: SLD Employees

Data Collection Purpose
RQ2: How do student affairs personnel's working experiences affect the department's capacity for organizational change?
RQ3: In what ways can student affairs personnel effectively serve differentiated student populations in the changing context?

Who: SLD department employees (Dean of Students and Student Life Manager, coordinators of SLD areas and activities, advisors)
To note: The institutional area of student affairs is referred to as SLD, the acronym of its specific department name, Student Life and Development.

Pre-Interview: Confirmation and Preliminary Info
Email confirmation of interviewees and collection of preliminary data regarding SLD role, due 48 hours prior to the interview.

Dear XX,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the focus group scheduled for Date, Time, Year.

I am writing to request some initial information regarding your role in SLD. I kindly ask that you provide a brief response to the questions below. The answers will be helpful as a framing perspective for the focus group dialog that we will engage in in a few days.
- *What's your role at SLD and where do you work on campus?*
- *Can you describe your typical working day/week?*
- *Who do you most communicate with in your daily work?*
  - *Staff/other departments*
  - *Students*

I look forward to receiving your responses 48 hours prior to our scheduled appointment and remain available for any questions you may have regarding the above questions.

Pre-Interview
1. Review of focus group scope, interview themes, and data usage.
   a. *Thank you for participating in this focus group. We'll be conducting our session as an open dialog guided by a few questions and reflection points. I'm interested in learning about your working experiences as we experience institutional restructuring and differentiated services for students.*
2. Verification of prior consent and preference for identification. [verbal]
3. Disclosure and reminder of focus group recording. [verbal]
4. Request for any final questions prior to focus group start. [verbal]

Focus Group

Recording starts. *Today's focus is on the following colleagues: _____ and SLD role(s). Today's date and the interview start time is _____ .*

Theme: The "what" of working experiences
[RQ2, Conceptual framework integrated: org identity view of SLD personnel positioning between two identities, SLD practices and relationship with institutional change emerging in

employee experiences, SLD evolving dialog in working experiences leading to department identity perception.]

RQ2: How do student affairs personnel's working experiences affect the department's capacity for organizational change?
RQ3: In what ways can student affairs personnel effectively serve differentiated student populations in the changing context?

1. Can you describe how you've experienced institutional restructuring in your daily work?

2. Which of your experiences have enabled your department to successfully navigate recent organizational change?

3. What experiences have been barriers / challenging in navigating the change?

4. What else would be valuable for me to know about your ability to do your job as SLD moves forward with organizational change?

Theme: Serving differentiated populations
[Conceptual framework integrated: as primary challenge for SLD post-restructuring, what trends, strengths, weaknesses, and patterns can be referenced for serving differentiated populations?]

5. What helps you to understand the different needs of long-term and visiting students?

6. Can you describe an example or two where service delivery to the distinct populations felt successful and why?

7. Can you think of a moment when you (or you and your colleagues) faced difficulty due to the differentiated student population and related need? What happened and how did you navigate that difficulty?

8. How has the quality of your student service delivery changed according to the new need to serve differentiated student populations?

9. What approaches have you seen that enable your team to effectively serve differentiated student categories?

The focus group end time is _____. Recording ends.

Interview Protocol: External Perspectives

Data Collection Purpose
RQ 3: In what ways can student affairs personnel effectively serve differentiated student populations in the changing context?
Who: External leaders and managers in higher ed whose areas/offices manage services and needs of differentiated student populations.

Pre-Interview
1. Review of interview scope, interview themes, and data usage.
    a. *Thank you for joining me in this interview. As I've shared with you, I am interested in insights on how your organization successfully manages operations for differentiated student populations, as our academic community transitions into entity division.*
2. Verification of prior consent and preference for identification. [verbal]
3. Disclosure and reminder of interview recording. [verbal]
4. Request for any final questions prior to interview start. [verbal]

Interview
Recording starts. *Today's interview is with _____, who works at _____. Today's date and the interview start time is _____.*

Theme: Serving differentiated populations
[Conceptual framework integrated: what trends, strengths, weaknesses, and patterns experienced by an external case study can be referenced for serving differentiated populations?]

1. Tell me about your role at your organization.

2. Can you describe the context that requires you and your team to manage student populations that are very different from each other? What are the profiles of the populations?

3. How would you characterize the primary needs for each population?

4. What challenges have you faced in customizing services for the different populations?

5. What mistakes would you share as learning lessons for other organizations addressing differentiated student populations?

6. Are there any past or recent experiences of serving differing populations that have helped improve how your team accounts and plans for the needs of each population?

7. Are there any emerging trends or patterns that either currently affect or have the potential to affect your team's approach to the differentiated populations?

The interview end time is _____. Recording ends.

Appendix C: Document Analysis
Document Analysis Matrix

Document/Media Selected	Content Presented	Conceptual Framework Addressed	Evidence
1. SLD Dept Mission Statement online	Webpage content	Complexity theory for org change in evolving contexts - past/future dept roles	Mission and purpose statement of the department, how the department intends to serve student body, services.
2. Academic Catalog statement on students	Webpage content	Complexity theory for org change in evolving contexts - past/future dept roles	Institutional statement on vision for students, the student population, and services.
3. SLD Student Manual online	Webpage content	Complexity theory for org change in evolving contexts - past/future dept roles	Information for students based on services and resources, both on campus and locally in Florence.
4. AUF Self-Study	PDF text	Complexity theory for org change in evolving contexts - past/future dept roles	How the SLD is described for its role and services for external constituents and university status.

5. Pre-Departure communication
    a. Degree
    b. Study abroad
	Email content	Complexity theory for org change in evolving contexts - past/future dept roles	What students are informed of prior to arrival, depending on program enrollment status.

6. Orientation slides
    a. Degree
    b. Study abroad
	Presentation slide content	Complexity theory for org change in evolving contexts - past/future dept roles	What students are informed of upon arrival, depending on program enrollment status.

7. Department manuals/procedures (pre/post)	PDF text	Complexity theory for org change in evolving contexts - work processes	Working procedures, processes, and standards for department employees.
8. AUF Self-Study	PDF text	Negotiated order theory for navigating SLD dialog and experience while navigating org change - work processes	How/what SLD services for degree students post-division are described and disclosed externally.

9. HR policy	PDF text or dialog	Negotiated order theory for navigating SLD dialog and experience while navigating org change - personnel experience	How HR policy determines/shapes roles and responsibilities related to SLD employees.

10. Schedules/shifts
    a. Campus
    b. Emergency
	Excel	Negotiated order theory for navigating SLD dialog and experience while navigating org change - personnel experience	Overview of employee work hours according to department standards and needs. 6-14-23: emergency line shifts still not received

11. HR onboarding process	Word/pdf text	Negotiated order theory for navigating SLD dialog and experience while navigating org change - personnel experience	Insight on training & development elements that are relevant for SLD employees.

12. SLD assessment practices and reports
    a. Procedure
    b. Standards (manual)
	Pdf texts	Complexity and negotiated order theories for SLD's identity building in its complex position and evolving work experiences - differentiated populations	Insight on how SLD took into account the visiting and degree student populations in the past AY.

Appendix D: Analytic Memos

Analytic Memo 1:

Protocol Development
2-26-23

This month has been dedicated to creating my data collection protocols and completing the IRB review, the latter being an apt parallel process for formalizing the importance of the development work that goes into protocols. In mid-February, after creating my data matrix for understanding what data can be generated from my RQs and how, I landed on the following simplified overview (which excludes data not generated from interaction with subjects such as document analysis):

Research Question	Data Source	Collection Method
1. What impact does structural change have on the organization's student affairs department's role?	University Leadership	Interview
	SLD Managers	Interview
2. How do student affairs personnel's working experiences affect the department's capacity for organizational change?	SLD Employees	Focus Group
3. In what ways can student affairs personnel effectively serve differentiated student populations in the changing context?	SLD Employees	
	External Voices	Interview

The table clarified for me the importance of varying levels and roles within the institutional context of my partner org(s), where data collected needed to come from single sources and protocols, and where a protocol could serve more than one research question purpose such as the focus group. The suggestion of my advisor to include external voices for RQ3 was a helpful addition for considering the experiences of other organizations in similar fields. The next phase of drafting protocols after identifying data collection methods was to determine how I could integrate my conceptual framework into the protocols. This required the effort of a triangulating approach: my RQs, the conceptual framework (to which the RQs responded), and the protocol questions now represented three elements that needed to speak to each other. As I produced initial drafts and refined subsequent revisions, three distinct challenges arose and eventually became the guiding parameters used to evaluate the efficacy of each protocol:

1. Does each question in the protocol answer the related RQ?

I realized in the revision phases with my advisor that tighter and carefully tuned phrasing is an essential tool for crafting every single protocol question. Some of the first draft's questions were only peripherally related to a RQ, too vague, or tried to address too much with one question. Reading each question alongside its associated RQ revealed to be an essential filtering activity to eliminate redundancy, the risk of generating interesting but unhelpful data, or, in the case of some revisions, the reintegration of a key word from the RQ to link relevance (i.e., words such as role, impact, and complexity).

2. *Less in more and the employee perspective*

This is an area where I felt the most personal struggle. My capstone is a less-common instance of the researcher working within their own org context. While the necessary forms of clearance to do so were secured, working on the protocols represented a concrete instance of needing to clarify my role in interviewing org reps. My initial tendency was to conflate my capstone mentality with assumptions of how my colleagues would understand my project. For example, the wording of some questions in retrospect read as direct iterations of the RQ. Such wording assumed that the interviewed colleague was equipped with "an insider's" familiarity with my capstone planning and purposes when in fact the individual is not a capstone research colleague but my intended data source. The perspective I needed to craft was through questions that addressed the employee, according to the employee's context and experience, and that were guided by the RQ rather than the other way around.

3. *Sequencing*

A peripheral activity I experienced while addressing the above two challenges was looking at question sequencing. This was another helpful suggestion from my advisor to make sure that those gleaning higher-importance data appear earlier in the protocol. My initial difficulty with this item was related to what I share in challenge #2 above: Being inside my own organizational context made me see every question as essential/important, regardless of order or pertinence. As time constraints and other unforeseen circumstances (including positive ones that may arise during interviews) may occur, I realized that prioritizing information gathering when forming protocols is absolutely essential and it will be interesting to see how I circle back to this point after I've concluded the interviews.

Analytic Memo 2:

Document Analysis Selection and Planning
 6-20-23

My first memo chronicled the process of refining interview and focus group protocols by addressing a few unexpected challenges: overcoming my own bias of "organizational vicinity" in crafting questions for individuals that I work with and ensuring that every single question connected to research questions and the conceptual framework. Timing-wise, the February memo served as a reflective tool during an active process whose concluding moment was bounded by the necessity of using the protocols at scheduled interviews. This second memo represents a departure from the first in several ways and seeks to provide a rearview mirror perspective of my document analysis experience as I emerge from the findings and recommendations phase of the capstone.

From gathering to analysis and white paper usage, document analysis has unexpectedly revealed to be the lengthiest, though not most difficult, component of data-related work involved in my capstone. By reviewing my notes, progress checkmarks, and iterations of the document analysis matrix, this memo explores:
- How the significance and position of documents as data have evolved from February to June.
- How the process was not only informed by the capstone framework but also contributed to the progress and direction of multiple capstone phases.

The extended timeframe was unexpected and went through several phases of activity and pause due to personal circumstances. Contrary to the protocol development, document analysis has evolved continuously from late February to June, following a journey parallel to the capstone itself that this memo seeks to capture.

Phase 1: late February to late March, study design. Where to start and the pitfalls of abundance.
I welcomed my capstone advisor's suggestion of considering document analysis as a data source to triangulate with interview-generated data. "Practical, but also low hanging fruit given my direct access to institutional servers, platforms, and leaders for sourcing my needs!" I thought to myself. The first iteration of my document analysis matrix seemed like an easy exercise in the beginning, and aligned perfectly with the current phase of study design for which I was also developing interview protocols. The reality of the experience is that the first submission took several weeks to produce. I had correctly predicted the facilitation provided by my easy access to institutional material, yet underestimated the time commitment required to review, scan, and filter within multiple and extensive categories of sources. By the end of March, when I was already well underway with my first round of concluded interviews, I was finally able to produce a first iteration of the document list I planned on utilizing for data collection and analysis. I decided to use qualitative documents and media, as well as student evaluation and academic performance datasets, with each single item within the matrix linking to a theme or subtheme of the RQs.

Phase 2: April-May, data collection. Relevance and what the data actually provides.
With data collection going at a productive pace and results coming in from the study participants, review of the document analysis matrix with my advisor elicited questions of relevance for some of the proposed artefacts. Actually seeing the data (from interviews and

documents) and how they channeled into funnels of RQ relevance required me to revisit the evidence actually provided by some items. For example, the datasets I had initially proposed, evaluation and academic performance, did little for addressing the RQ themes of change impact, working experiences, and differentiated populations. I therefore eliminated them as a first operation in this phase, and secondly, I reviewed all matrix elements for any that required further clarification on format or access requests via HR and IT departments. Lastly, this phase's version shifted the RQ relevance column to an expanded view of conceptual framework and RQs connected to each document. On a separate note, in the April-May window, the majority of April provided limited access to interview subjects and document procurement due AUF's hosting of a major accreditation visit.

Phase 3: June, data analysis. Time management, feasibility, necessity.
During data analysis, I re-reviewed the list of documents as a third and final iteration that addressed edits mainly for necessity and overall project timing and feasibility. As a connection to a concern that arose in Feb-March, despite the multi-phase and iterative process, I was still left with too many artefacts. Those that were deemed unessential even if useful were eliminated and the matrix nomenclature for documents (and categories, if applicable) was clarified to facilitate input in the coded data Excel. My key takeaway at the end of the process was that document analysis isn't always a straightforward process, which I experienced both in terms of timing and how documents interacted with my capstone for multiple purposes.