

A BRIEF HISTORY REGARDING THE CREATION OF *ABOUT CAMPUS*

About Campus: Enriching the Student Learning Experience was an outgrowth of a number of seemingly converging forces that occurred during the late 1980s and early 1990s. During this period the higher education community focused increased attention on the quality of undergraduate education. Starting with the seminal document *Involvement in Learning* (1984) through *An American Imperative: Higher Expectations for Higher Education* (1993), these and other reports presented clarion calls for reform of higher education.

In response to these calls, ACPA, through its Senior Scholars, created the “Student Learning Project” to draw attention to ways student affairs professions could become more influential in promoting high quality undergraduate education by shifting the professions’ historical orientation from student development to student learning. This new focus on student learning resulted in the creation of the *Student Learning Imperative (SLI): Implications for Student Affairs* (1993), which was introduced to the membership at the 1993 annual conference.

Quite naturally, creating learning-centered divisions of student affairs was not without its challenges, in particular determining appropriate leadership roles of ACPA in championing the new orientation through a range of professional development venues. At the time, the Association was sponsoring an acclaimed journal (*The Journal of College Student Development*) that supported cutting edge research, as well as *Developments: A Newsletter of the American College Personnel Association* which was designed as a “tabloid style newspaper” to keep members well informed about association projects, activities and (most importantly) ways to become involved in the organization. While both publications were central to the overall vitality of the association, they were *narrowly focused* on student affairs issues rather than more broadly on student learning and reform of undergraduate education. At the time, the best exemplar of the later focus was the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE) which sponsored two nationally acclaimed publications, *Change* and the *AAHE Bulletin*.

With input from Russ Edgerton and Ted Marchese, AAHE President and Vice President, ACPA began to explore the creation of a publication that focused much more broadly on national issues associated with student learning, the undergraduate experience and innovative ways to enhance educational attainment. The intent was to create a publication that merged the unique attributes of *Change* and the *Bulletin* into a topical, engaging and relevant publication that appealed to wide audiences – student affairs educators, academic administrators, faculty, governing boards and others interested in the student experience broadly defined.

In 1993 the Association approved a new publication, *ACPA CONNECTIONS*, designed to achieve the preceding objectives. After many discussions concerning whether the publication should be produced “in-house” or “outsourced” to a reputable, national publishing company, a decision was made to partner with Jossey-Bass (J-B), the leader in higher education books,

monographs and other resources. Though numerous discussions with the J-B higher education editor, Gail Erlandson, and her assistant, Paula Stacey, contracts were forged and the new publication was renamed, *About Campus: Enriching the Student Learning Experience*.

The first issue of *About Campus* was published in March of 1996 under the direction of the Executive Editors Charles Schroeder and Patricia King, Managing Editor Paula Stacey, and a nationally recognized Board of Contributors including Marcia Baxter-Magolda, Art Chickering, Susan Komives, George Kuh, Pat Terenzini and Vince Tinto among others.

About Campus was a very important venture for ACPA because it broadened the focus on critical issues in higher education, issues that created unique opportunities and obligations for student affairs educators to respond in new and meaningful ways. For example, by regarding fostering student learning as our mission and primary purpose, student affairs educators could more readily collaborate with their academic colleagues to create shared responsibility for educational quality and student success. On many occasions, feature articles from *About Campus* are used in a variety of professional development initiatives for both student affairs and academic affairs as well as in many graduate preparation programs. Along with other association initiatives, such as relocating the Association's headquarters to One DuPont Circle in Washington, D.C. other higher education associations became aware of *About Campus* and often referenced feature articles in national policy debates, discussions of institutional assessment and effectiveness and exemplary programs that improved undergraduate education by aligning curricular and co-curricular experiences in more intentional and seamless ways. Finally, the publication, in combination with the *Journal*, solidified ACPA's reputation as the premier conceptual and educational leader in student affairs nationally and internationally.

Charles Schroeder
December, 2013