STUDENT AFFAIRS LEADER

Getting Rid of 'Kid': Promoting Students' Development through Our Use of Language

Robin Davenport

The fact that a person's self-concept is influenced by language was brought home to me recently when my 11-year-old daughter objected to my calling her a "kid." "I'm not a kid. I'm a tween," she retorted.

I was disturbed to think that advertisers had succeeded in introducing a new stage into the developmental psychology lexicon. It also was unsettling for me to realize that my young girl no longer saw herself as a child but as someone similar to, but not actually, a teenager. Her insistence that I also use the term "tween" was her effort to transform my way of viewing her. To the extent that parents should assist in their children's psychological development, my daughter was trying to push me along. She was displaying a healthy attempt at individuation and autonomy by rejecting language that she perceived as infantilizing.

I've questioned whether traditional-age college students would find it an even more objectionable affront to their developing identities when they hear themselves referred to as "kids" by their professors or other college staff. It's common to hear college personnel refer to students as "kids" in many different contexts within students' earshot. Examples abound: "I've got two kids in my class who keep texting each other

during my lectures"; "I'm hoping a lot of kids show up for the program tonight"; "We have twenty-five kids on the team"; "The eight kids running for student government are top-rate students and extremely responsible."

The utterance of "kids" has become so commonplace that I imagine most college personnel don't hear themselves saying it. Furthermore, it doesn't appear that most college students, unlike my persnickety daughter, object to that designation. I've never witnessed a student vehemently protest, "With all due respect, Professor Smith, I'm an emerging adult, not a kid."

This is not all that surprising, since the dynamic between student and professor is different from that of child and parent. The traditional-age student may not feel as free as the rebellious "tween" to challenge the professor's pronouncements. Furthermore, many undergraduate students are still highly impressionable, latching on to the words of esteemed professors as if they were holy gospel. Thus, the unassuming student might reflect, perhaps at an unconscious level, "If Professor Smith thinks I'm a kid, I must be a kid."

It seems natural that the contemporary traditional-age student might comfortably embrace this "kid" designation. We're told that the millennial generation is characterized by overly doting parents

who have sheltered and protected their children during their formative years. We have heard parents described as "helicopter parents," hovering over their children as they attempt to navigate college life, and assisting their children in the academic decision-making process. Simultaneously, we have seen prior generations' tendency to strive for autonomy during the college years be replaced by this new generation's tendency toward overdependence on parental guidance.

It's no wonder, then, that today's traditional-age college students might feel perfectly at home with being called "kids," because kids typically are cared for and protected. Implicit in this designation is the ability of students to remain immature, dependent, and unaccountable for childlike behaviors. This is in marked contrast to the concept of young adulthood, which in healthy psychosocial development implies movement toward an established identity, competence, mature interpersonal relationships, and autonomy, among other qualities. (Chickering & Reisser, 1993)

As we consider the mission of institutions of higher learning, isn't it incumbent upon college administrators, staff, and faculty to promote the mature psychosocial development of college students and foster their academic attain-

ment? One way of assisting students in their identity development is by consciously referring to them as "men" and "women" rather than as "kids."

I'm reminded of my own experience as an undergraduate when a literature professor referred to the female students in the class as "women." At that point in my college career, I still was viewing

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myself as a "girl," and there was a dissonance between my seeing myself as a girl and seeing myself as a woman. As the term was repeated, and I understood that the professor had more adult expectations of the women in the class, I gradually began to embrace this more mature view of myself.

It may be a challenge for some to make this simple shift in language use, since students entering college right out of high school resemble "kids" in so many ways. They look young, their brains are still developing, and their behavior is often immature. However, as long as we see them as kids, call them kids, and expect them to act like kids, they will remain kids.

Even when college personnel refer to students as "kids" out of students' earshot, their perception of students as juveniles becomes reinforced. These per-

ceptions can be communicated to students in the most subtle ways. If we instead attempt to discipline ourselves to address college students as "men" and "women," both when speaking with our colleagues and when interacting with students directly, we will begin to develop more mature expectations of them. Students, in turn, likely will see themselves in a new, growth-enhancing light when they recognize that their professors no longer regard them as children but as young adults.

We may have limited control over certain trends in contemporary society that cause the millennial student to remain overly reliant on parental support and guidance. However, we have some ability to influence students' psychosocial development by demanding that traditional-age students see themselves as young adults through our use of language. In this way, we can "push them along" to a more mature level of development.

References

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NEWS CAPSULES

On-campus chickens: Campuses are joining the "urban chicken movement," in which people raise chickens in non-rural areas to support sustainable food production, be more environmentally friendly, and produce what they say are healthier eggs from healthier birds. Students at Pomona College are helping raise chickens on the college's organic farm (*www.pomona.edu/Magazine/PCMWin09/DEtoday10.shtml*). Swarthmore has an initiative to raise chickens at a campus animal care facility (*www.sccs.swarthmore.edu/users/12/nvogt1/*). The 10 students living in the GreenHouse residence on the campus of Sewanee: The University of the South are taking it a step further by raising a dozen chickens as part of their residential experience.

NCAA recommends student-athlete sickle-cell tests: The National Collegiate Athletic Association has recommended that colleges and universities test all student-athletes for the sickle-cell trait, a genetic trait that may cause sickle-shaped red blood cells to clump together during strenuous exercise. The recommendation comes under a settlement with the parents of a Rice University student-athlete who died in 2006 of sickle-cell anemia complications during football practice.

Online college fire safety resource: The website *www.igot2kno.org,* created by the People's Burn Foundation, features the video "To Hell and Back: College Fire Survival." The video reviews general fire safety concepts and presents a photo essay of the survivors of the 2000 Seton Hall University residence hall fire, which killed three students and injured 58.

The website also includes an FAQs page and sections on fire prevention and survival. Students must register to view the video and take a pre- and post-test, but accessing the content on the website is free. According to the website,

- Between January 2000 and August 2007, 113 people died in campus-related fires, both on and off campus, in the United States
- 80 percent of the fire fatalities occurred in off-campus housing, including fraternity and sorority housing
- Alcohol plays a role in fatal student-related fires; studies indicate that alcohol reduces sleeping students' ability to react to a smoke alarm, even after one drink.

Evaluating substance abuse and violence prevention efforts: The U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence prevention has posted new guidance on its website about evaluating campus substance and violence prevention efforts. The new website includes information on

- getting started with evaluation
- collecting and managing data
- analyzing and reporting results

The website (*www.higheredcenter.org/prevention/strategic-planning/evaluation*) also includes links to publications and field examples.

Studies on alcohol use and age: The later a campus-area bar is open, the younger the average age of its patrons becomes, dropping to a median age of 19 by a 2 a.m. closing time, according to a University of Florida study. The study also found that as closing time neared, an increasing proportion of remaining patrons planned to drive home.

In another study, Duke University researchers found that 22 percent of men and 9 percent of women aged 50 to 64 reported "binge" drinking in the previous month. (The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism places the binge drinking rate for traditional-age, U.S. college students at more than 40 percent, although the rate varies widely by campus and subpopulation.)

A recent study from the Washington University School of Medicine (as reported in the July 2009 *Journal of the Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*) found that while the binge drinking rate for college males remained relatively unchanged between 1979 and 2006, the rate for college women aged 21 to 23 increased by 40 percent.

For links to more information on the Florida and Duke studies, visit *Student Affairs Leader*'s bookmark page at *http://delicious.com/StudentAffairsLeader*. ●

responsibility to add to an already-full plate of administrative tasks. This need not be the case if a culture of assessment is built into a student affairs division, such that undertaking assessment activities is inculcated into everyday practice.

References

Welner, W.F. (July/August 2009). Establishing a culture of assessment. *Academe, http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/academe/2009/JA/Feat/wein.htm.*

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Saferide: A Strategy to Address High-Risk Behaviors Associated with Alcohol

Jesse M. Ketterman and Heather Holmes

College campuses across the country continue to identify strategies to address high-risk behaviors associated with alcohol consumption. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) estimates that among college students each year, there are 1,700 alcohol-related deaths, 97,000 alcohol-related sexual assaults, and 696,000 assaults by someone under the influence of alcohol. In addition, the NIAAA estimates that each year about 2.8 million college students drive under the influence of alcohol (*www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/1College_Bulletin-508_361C4E.pdf*).

In order to provide a safer environment for students, many campuses have implemented Saferide programs.

What is Saferide?

Saferide programs vary in structure from campus to campus, but they all operate with the goal of providing students safe rides home during late-night hours. Students call a designated phone number, give their location and home address, and are picked up by a program driver within a short time.

The first question often asked about Saferide programs is "What is the difference between Saferide and a 'drunk bus'?" The answer is simple. A "drunk bus" promotes drinking by taking individuals to and from bars, and often from bar to bar or from house party to house party. In contrast, Saferide provides a ride only to a student's home address. It also is intended for and often used by those who choose not to drink. Walking down the street late at night in a college town will show one the importance of providing this safe alternative.

Finding the best program

Approaches to operating and staffing Saferide programs differ from campus to campus. Although some programs are university-coordinated, others are out-sourced to private companies. Some programs are operated by paid staff while others are staffed by uncompensated volunteers or by volunteers in return for contributions to student organizations.

Institutions need to assess their campus cultures to determine what is best for them. Questions to consider include:
- What type of support—student, institutional, and community—is available on your campus?
- What resources are available to you—money, vehicles, volunteers?
- Is the student body interested in this type of program?
- How do you determine your program's geographic boundaries?
- Does your institutional insurance policy cover such a program?
- How will you promote the program?

Two example programs

At Frostburg State University, student Dave Tiscione led such an effort working with the campus Alcohol Task Force. As a member of the student government association, he was able to leverage the support of the student body. After receiving support from the president and Executive Committee, he was able to move forward with his proposal.

In the first year, FSU's program was operated entirely by volunteers. Students visited local bars and walked through student neighborhoods to promote the program. There was a call center established in a vacant residence hall room used to coordinate pickups. Each van was operated by two staff members, one to drive and the other to coordinate stops and observe rider behavior. In the second year, the student government association

provided compensation to student groups that volunteered with the program.

FSU's program initially was established to provide students with safe rides home at the end of the night. Soon after implementation, the campus learned of other benefits of the program. The local law enforcement agency indicated that there was a decrease in nighttime vandalism. The local neighborhood group reported that nighttime noise also had decreased. And most important, students enjoyed and used the program. With an undergraduate population around 4,500 students, average use ranges between 100 and 150 students a night on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays.

The Salisbury University student government association attended the Conference on Student Government Associations (COSGA) at Texas A&M in February 1993. In fall 1993, the association took the lead to establish a Saferide program based on the Texas A&M model, but on a much smaller scale. Students garnered support from the student body and student affairs administrators. The mission of the Salisbury program was "to support late-night safety by providing free, reliable transportation in the hope that tragedy will be averted for students and the surrounding community." Saferide addresses campus and community concerns such as drinking and driving, sexual assault, vandalism, and pedestrian safety.

Resources for starting your own program

Organizations such as BACCUS (*www.bacchusgamma.org*) provide information and tips on establishing programs. Saferide programs also network among institutions through organizations such as COSGA. We suggest that anyone inter-

Campus Law Enforcement Agencies Share Resources

Dennis R. Black

Concerns about student neighborhood crime, emergency preparedness, and the realities of budget cuts have encouraged separate law enforcement agencies to share resources. A few recent examples:

- The University of Cincinnati Police and the Cincinnati Police Department are adjusting a mutual aid agreement to give UC Police greater powers in the neighborhoods near campus. Prior to the new arrangement, UC Police jurisdiction was limited to campus. But under the new approach, UC officers now can make arrests in the surrounding communities and can supplement municipal patrols. Both departments say they have adjusted their training and tactics to take full advantage of the new agreement to address area crime, particularly burglary and theft.

- Two shootings near the campus of the University at Buffalo have prompted a new level of cooperation between the school and the city. Although they already had been working together on a series of quality-of-life initiatives for students and residents in the neighborhoods around campus, two deaths in two weeks pushed the city and school into further collaboration. The city agreed to expand regular police patrols of the areas and added dedicated patrols to focus on burglaries and robberies—common neighborhood issues. The campus expanded a Saferide van service for students and paid for additional police surveillance cameras that were installed in student neighborhoods. The municipal and campus police agencies also are planning joint patrols of the main street of activity near the city campus.

- Florida State University-Panama City now provides office space on campus for the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. The campus agreed to host the police agency in space that opened up on campus in a recently completed academic center. The agency needed new space due to budget cuts, which forced the agency to close or find new homes for 14 to 15 offices. It conducts multijurisdictional, multivictim investigations of cases involving major drugs, gangs, violence, and economic crimes. To fit into the campus climate, the state law enforcement units plan to provide student internships at the school and to offer classroom presentations.

- Massachusetts colleges Smith, Hampshire, and Mount Holyoke have decided to consolidate their security departments into one agency to avoid unnecessary duplication of services. Jobs were lost in the merger, but enhanced severance packages were offered to those employees affected by the new arrangement. Under the merger, dispatch operations will be centralized at one school, patrols will be maintained, and more officers will be available to each campus for emergencies and special events.

- East Carolina University is combining its Office of Environmental Health with its Campus Safety Department in order to bring all university safety efforts under one roof, regardless of whether the safety efforts deal with crime, violence, natural disasters, or weather. Campus officials hope that the new structure will streamline campus planning and responses to emergencies of all kinds. While the move was not planned to save money, it will allow resources to be better allocated to meet priorities. Before the consolidation, the campus police department was part of an ECU division of Academic and Student Affairs.

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ested in starting a program visit another institution with a program in operation.

An Internet search of college Saferide programs quickly shows the popularity of these programs. In fact, these programs have grown in scope beyond college campuses. A similar program was developed throughout the state of Wisconsin through which individuals can get a ride home from a tavern. Information on this program can be found at *www.tlw.org/public/saferide.shtml*. As seen on the website *www.saferidesunlimited.org*, programs have evolved in the metropolitan areas of New Jersey, New York, and Florida. Similar programs have emerged at the high school level to reduce drunk-driving risks in that population.

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perspectives

Student Affairs and the Culture of Assessment

Kathleen Manning

Calls for program-, division-, and institution-wide assessments are common during budget crises, such as the one currently affecting higher education. Although many in student affairs would prefer that our work speak for itself, in reality, creating a "culture of evidence" is an essential aspect of successful educational efforts within higher education.

Wendy Welner (2009) argues for a culture of evidence in higher education and suggests 15 elements that help identify whether or not that culture exists. Ten of Welner's principles apply to student affairs. We are well-advised to take note of these and explore where our assessment efforts intersect with these essential principles. These 10 are as follows:

- common use of assessment-related terms
- ongoing professional development
- administrative encouragement of assessment
- practical assessment plans
- systematic assessment
- setting student learning outcomes for all courses and programs
- assessment of cocurricular activities
- inclusion of assessment in plans and budgets
- celebration of successes
- responsiveness to proposals for new endeavors related to assessment

I address five of these principles below:

Common use of assessment-related terms

Student affairs as a field has been criticized by faculty, students, parents, legislators, and board members, among others, for creating jargon-laden professional language. This language, which potentially alienates those unfamiliar with the field, can isolate student affairs profes-

sionals from campus allies.

Assessment efforts provide an opportunity to unite with campus parties on an institutional-based project. An important aspect of this effort is understanding the terms used in this area of higher education administration. "Evidence," "engagement," and "value-added" are examples of terms that, if understood and used properly by student affairs and other higher education administrators, can build credibility and a climate of inclusion as well as encourage collaboration.

Administrative encouragement of assessment

Many times, assessment initiatives are placed in the context of a directive from an outside source. This source can be an upper-level administrator, a campus committee or group, a state legislature, or a government agency.

Despite the external emphasis of recent efforts, assessment has been part of student affairs for at least 40 years. In Miller and Prince's 1976 *The Future of Student Affairs* and in countless publications since, the value of building strong programs through evaluation and assessment has been promoted. The catalyst for assessment need not be external to student affairs.

Setting student learning outcomes for all courses and programs

High-quality learning and development within a student affairs context rests on a foundation of well-articulated learning objectives.

In the article cited above, Welner (2009) recommends that learning objectives be articulated through verbs described in Bloom's Taxonomy (*www.nwlink.com/~Donclark/hrd/bloom.html*). These action verbs—including "comprehends," "distinguishes," "explains," "interprets," "translates,"

"discovers," "produces," "relates," "solves," "critiques," and "supports"—are well-known to student affairs professionals. We recommend their use on résumés, in program objectives, and in divisional goals and objectives.

Assessment of cocurricular activities

In the assessment literature, "cocurricular" refers to all student affairs policies, programs, and services. Although this outdated term fails to describe the full range of practice and professionalism in student affairs, we can take heart in the fact that the assessment literature notes the value of these experiences for students.

With the knowledge that retention and engagement throughout campus is related to student affairs activities, assessment can be used to validate and reinforce the importance of our areas on college campuses. While many object to "validating our existence," all departments, including academic units, must show that they support the institutional mission and are stewards of the institutional resources allocated to them.

Responsiveness to proposals for new assessment-related endeavors

Student affairs professionals are well-versed in the administrative skills of policy making, program implementation, organization, and evaluation, among others. Each of these skills brings value to campus assessment efforts. A seat at the assessment table helps to ensure that student affairs programs, services, and policies are congruent with the larger institutional mission and recognized by the policy and decision makers on campus, particularly as related to budget.

Conclusion

Assessment may feel like one more