

Fall 1991

Focus on Student Affairs- Fall 1991

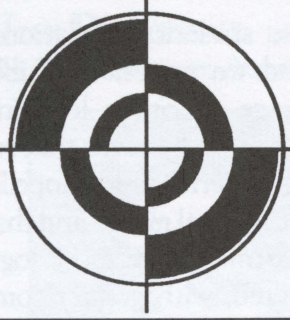
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FOCUS

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Fall '91

Past and Future: Review & Preview



by Dr. Melvin C. Terrell

Review

At the beginning of my fourth year as Vice President for Student Affairs at Northeastern, I find myself in a philosophical mood and inspired to review some of our accomplishments over the past three years. I believe that the restructuring of the Division that I undertook in my first year has contributed to some of the creative, innovative, and substantive efforts that we have launched in the past three years.

I view with considerable satisfaction the computerization and automation of various departments including Financial Aid. Here the computerization of the office under Marshall Jennings has released staff to spend more quality time with students, identifying and addressing their problems on a one-to-one basis. I also view with considerable pleasure the role of "Partners for Success," the minority student mentoring program inaugurated under my administration, in significantly increasing the retention and academic success of African-American, Latino, Asian-Pacific Island, and

American Indian students.

I have been gratified by the response of faculty, staff and administrators who volunteered for "Partners for Success." The efforts of faculty and staff mentors and project directors Kipp Hassell and Flora Llacuna have produced a retention rate of 91% and 98% respectively for freshmen in the program in the past two years. Over 85% of the first group are in good academic standing, and the second group have been similarly successful.

The mentoring program is one of several we have undertaken to improve the quality of student life. We have developed a *New Student Week* and a *Transfer Student Orientation* program to help students get the best possible start on their college careers. To these we have also added a *Parent/Family Orientation* program to help families understand their students' experiences and show them how they can be supportive.

Once students begin their college careers, we have a number of programs to enhance and support their efforts. The *Leadership Development Program* offers a weekend retreat in the spring and fall in which students can develop their potential to think analytically, communicate assertively, and work effectively with others. Although the program was in existence when I came, we have shifted the focus to those students who already hold positions of leadership. The *Student Ambassadors* program, begun under my administration, designates selected students to serve as hosts and guides at significant

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Placement Office



by Lorn Coleman

During the 1980's the job market in the Chicago area and the country as a whole became increasingly competitive. As a result, Northeastern graduates are facing an intensely competitive market. The Placement Office at Northeastern assists graduates to meet the challenges of this market.

Since 1987 the Placement Office has sponsored an annual on-campus Employer Day Career Fair, which has brought a variety of employers to campus for direct contact with students. The 1990-91 Career Fair, held in late February, brought fifty-nine employers to campus. Over four hundred Northeastern students and alumni participated. For the first time, data concerning both employer and student participants were gathered and analyzed. Nearly 75% of the employers present were interviewing applicants with any academic major, as long as the applicant was interested in a career with the interviewer's company. This survey provided concrete evidence that liberal arts majors still have a variety of career opportunities available to them.

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Focus Feature: Santos Rivera

by Dr. Margaret Duggar

Santos Rivera, Assistant Dean of Students, will head the Student Volunteer Corps Program to be inaugurated this fall at Northeastern Illinois University. The Student Volunteer Corps, recently mandated by the Illinois State Legislature, strongly encourages students in state colleges and universities to devote up to thirty hours per academic year to community service both on and off campus.

Although the time of Northeastern Illinois University students is often heavily committed, Rivera believes that all students can profit from participation in the program. "Participation in the Student Volunteer Corps will benefit the overall educational and personal development of all students," he says. "The educational process is not limited to the walls of academe; the learning community extends beyond the walls."

In the planning stage for over a year, the program will be assisted by funding from the Robert R. McCormick Charitable Trust through the Community and Management Assistance Program; this network will help to identify placement opportunities for the student volunteers.

To help launch the program, the planning committee—which included Kaylene Gebert, David Helfand, Marilyn Kuhl, Antoinette Lynch, Miriam Ocasio-Collazo, and Valerie Schiller—recently issued a questionnaire to the university community to determine the nature and extent of faculty and staff involvement in community service and what

they are doing to support students in service-related activities. "Student volunteerism will assist students to be more effective members of the citizenry," Rivera says. "It will help students to understand their role in the larger society." Rivera recently formed an advisory committee representative of on and off-campus individuals.

The Student Volunteer Program is not the only on-going project in which Rivera has been involved. He also recently spent one year developing the new Transfer Student Orientation Program. He coordinated the planning, design, and implementation of the Program.

Rivera has served in various capacities at Northeastern since 1974, including Program Coordinator, Proyecto Pa'Lante - Special Programs, 1979-86; Director of Special Programs, 1986-89; and Assistant Dean of Students since 1989. He holds the M.A. in Guidance and Counseling from Northeastern and the B.A. in Social Science from Aurora College. He was particularly inspired by a supportive professor at Aurora College who took an interest in his academic development, and he is aware of the difference a dedicated teacher or staff person can make in a student's academic and career success.

He would like to see all students become ever more "curious, analytic, creative, and receptive." "The academic world provides students with the opportunity and responsibility for self-determination," he says, "and we must make every effort to see that they take advantage of this opportunity. They must realize that they are the best facilitators of their own destiny."

Rivera first joined the Northeastern staff as a counselor in 1974 and has seen changes in the University over the years. "We now have a

more diverse student population," he says, "and we present a visible positive image to other learning communities." He believes that recently Northeastern has developed a stronger educational model and that various departments are more logically connected, with greater communication among them. "In more cases, the right hand knows what the left hand is doing," he says.

Rivera also serves as the University Examiner, administering the University's Student Conduct Code. He said he approaches this responsibility objectively without preconceived solutions and/or sanctions.

Rivera was born in Texas in the lower Rio Grande Valley. His family moved to Chicago in the early sixties, and he is a graduate of Bloom Township High School. He credits the strong model presented by his parents with the success of himself, his sister, and his four younger brothers. From his parents he learned perseverance, a lesson he would recommend to all students in academic pursuits and in life. He also learned to respect and acknowledge the humanity of all human beings, a lesson he also recommends to everyone in our diverse culture.

Rivera himself has a long history of community service and community involvement, and he can attest to the personal and communal value of volunteerism. He has seen personal and professional opportunities develop out of his own history of community service.

Focus on Student Affairs is a publication of Northeastern Illinois University Division of Student Affairs, concerned with emerging issues and programs impacting on the quality of campus life.

Dr. Margaret Duggar, Guest Editor

Dr. Duggar is a Professor of English at Chicago State University and a former BGU Fellow at NEIU.

New Directions

by Cassandra Riemer, Program Associate



New Directions, the adult re-entry program for Northeastern students, has been a part of the Women's Services Department since 1985. Returning students now make up approximately one-half of the student body at Northeastern, reflecting a nationwide trend. Adult students comprised 28% of the nation's college enrollment in 1970, 37% in 1980, and 42% in 1990.

New Directions helps to ease the transition to the University environment for returning adult students, through pre-admission counseling and academic advising. In addition, New Directions offers orientation workshops, study skills workshops, library literacy seminars, and a returning women's support group.

A New Directions Advisory Committee, consisting of six faculty and staff people and two returning adult students, assesses needs and interests of returning students. Two Town Meetings in March allowed the students to voice their concerns. Their contributions will influence future programming.

The New Directions staff invited students to design and publish a newsletter of interest to them. The students accepted the challenge and recently published the first issue of the newsletter. Dedicated to providing a voice for all returning adult students, the newsletter solicits articles, suggestions, tips, and feedback from the students.

To maintain a vital and effective program, New Directions staff and advisors will continue to incorporate the wealth of knowledge of returning students into efforts to address the needs and concerns of these students. To be responsible to its population, the New Directions Program will revise its goals when necessary to accommodate the increasing diversity of returning adult students.

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Also, during the past academic year, the Offices of Placement and Alumni Affairs joined forces to present several Alumni Career Forums. The forums were designed to assist alumni in career enhancement and advancement efforts. The topics addressed included "Interviewing for Management Level Positions" and "Understanding/Interpreting Performance Evaluations." Marketed to selected graduating classes since 1985, the forums generated a great deal of interest. As a result, the Alumni Career Forum Series will continue in the 1991-92 academic year while being marketed on a greatly expanded basis.

Direct feedback from employers visiting Northeastern during the last year indicates that applicants with well-developed employment objectives, superior grade point averages (3.5 and above), and/or internship type work experiences have a meaningful edge in the job search process. The Placement Office helps graduating students and alumni to meet these requirements in a number of ways.

It provides an effective network that allows undergraduates to secure relevant part-time and summer off-campus employment. In addition, it assists undergraduates in securing internship and cooperative work experiences in private and not-for-profit organizations.

The Placement Office mission is also achieved by sponsoring: workshops, specialized presentations, individual and group counseling, direct referral, employment vacancy mailings, on-campus interviews, and a variety of other networking opportunities with employers. A wide variety of printed and video resource material enhances and supports presentations, employer visitations, and other activities. The Placement Office provides pertinent and up-to-date information to assist students in formulating their specific objectives.

Placement Office services continue to be a vital link between the campus and a continually changing world of work for Northeastern students.

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University events and as recruiters at area high schools.

This fall, we will begin a *Student Volunteer Corps Program* directed by Santos Rivera and assisted by funding from the Volunteer Network of the Community Management Assistance Program. The program will allow students to perform both on and off-campus community service by identifying appropriate community service projects and opportunities. Our most recent *Employer Day Career Fair* held last February attracted 59 employers and over 400 students. An additional 18 employers, unable to attend, asked that resumes be collected from applicants meeting their stated qualifications, according to Lorn Coleman, Director of Placement.

In addition, we have undertaken a number of initiatives to enhance communication with the University community. In 1989, we began publication of *Focus*, the Student Affairs newsletter. We have developed and published *brochures* for each of the Divisions within Student Affairs. We have strengthened communication with the off-campus Center for Inner City Studies. We have developed a new student handbook, and we have conducted a Student Activity Needs Survey.

We have also made an effort to address some specific student needs. Under the leadership of Kipp Hassell, we have received a third year of FIPSE-funding for *Partners in Prevention*, our drug abuse prevention program, which has received nation-wide recognition for integrating substance abuse prevention into the existing curriculum. In the Counseling Center, under the new Director John Hoeppel, we have added a new counselor who is especially adept in cultural diversity issues.

The *Women's Services and Non-Traditional Student Division* under Jacquie Harper continues to offer special services to their targeted population. We have a new *Assistant Dean, Santos Rivera*, with a special affinity for concerns of Latino students. The *Grandparents' Program* at the *Child Care Center* has received city-wide favorable publicity. We participated in writing a grant proposal to the Ford Foundation for a

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program in meeting the challenges of cultural diversity on commuter campuses, which was recently funded. Of the eighteen institutions invited to submit a proposal, only five were selected, including Northeastern.

In addition to new programs, we have undertaken a number of initiatives to improve facilities for student activities. We have completed *re-modeling the Commuter Center mezzanine*, under the supervision of Mark Kipp, and architectural plans are drawn for *new offices for student organizations* in a portion of the Game Room.

In all of these activities, we have not neglected our own staff. We have sponsored a number of staff development activities, including an autumn retreat. I have also established an *annual student affairs staff development* activity. Initially, Chicago State University student affairs managers were involved. This past year we extended an invitation to Governors State University. Dr. Dan Robinson, Regional Vice President of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, was our guest facilitator.

Preview

As I look to the future, I can identify several areas in which we must concentrate our efforts as we move forward to meet new challenges. First, we must maintain our basic focus on providing *effective student services*. To do this, we

must always be concerned about campus climate. We must work to eliminate bigotry and discrimination and to build a sense of community.

We must make sure that programs and facilities serve all students—including older students, racially and ethnically diverse students, students with disabilities, and students with differing sexual orientations—equally and appropriately. We must serve the special needs of women students. We must be attuned to changes in students' needs for our services and programs and develop them appropriately.

Second, we must emphasize our role in *supporting the academic mission* of the university. We must continue our partnership with academic affairs in ways that enhance teaching and learning. We must contribute to university efforts to advance academic excellence and assist academic achievement. We must promote the academic and personal development of our students through supporting courses and programs that meet their special needs. We must contribute to curriculum evaluation and development through our special knowledge of student diversity.

Third, we must carry out our *management responsibilities* in ways that benefit the organizational structure of the university. We must be student advocates, articulating student needs and concerns and developing programs and policies that address these. We must also communicate university policies,

and procedures to students in ways that allow them to use the resources of the university to achieve their goals for personal and professional development. We must, when necessary, enforce appropriate standards of behavior and assist students in understanding and implementing these to their own advantage. We must develop student leadership potential and foster career awareness. We must guard against ignoring the human needs of students and staff in our role as managers and administrators.

Finally, we must continue to grow professionally through *research and staff development*. We must be aware of enrollment trends and how these reflect the cultural backgrounds and developmental needs of our students. We must understand how both campus and community environments affect the learning and development of our students. We must use our understanding of these issues to assist in solving problems, developing programs and policies, and making decisions that affect the quality of student life. We must explore ethical questions that influence our professional responsibilities and decisions and follow the highest standards in the practice of our profession.

I am confident that if we follow our past successes with attention to these areas, we will play an important part in making Northeastern Illinois University a vibrant institution of higher education.

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