

Collecting to the Core — Best Practices in College Student Development

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Column Editor's Note: The "Collecting to the Core" column highlights monographic works that are essential to the academic library within a particular discipline, inspired by the *Resources for College Libraries* bibliography (online at <http://www.rclweb.net>). In each essay, subject specialists introduce and explain the classic titles and topics that continue to remain relevant to the undergraduate curriculum and library collection. Disciplinary trends may shift, but some classics never go out of style. — AD

Most undergraduate students arrive at college as adolescents and leave as young adults. They come from increasingly diverse socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and gender backgrounds, which creates more and more complex campus environments. While the undergraduate experience can no longer be considered a singular phenomenon, if that was ever the case, a growing body of evidence supports the relationship between healthy student development and academic success. The expectation remains that students be transformed by the college experience and college student development research and theory is key to creating conditions for that transformation. As the core works discussed in this essay demonstrate, understanding college student development is at the heart of current best practices in higher education, making these monographs valuable additions to any undergraduate library collection.

Every librarian has experienced the patron who knows exactly which book he or she wants, but can't remember the title: "You know, the green book." *Student Services: A Handbook for the Profession* is such a book for generations of student affairs professionals who do indeed know it as "the green book."¹ Authored by scholars and practitioners, this "big picture" handbook is updated every few years and offers essential theoretical bases, organizational frameworks, historical context, and professional competencies for the student affairs profession. The sixth edition published in 2017 contains several new chapters, including one focused on college student development.

Ernest Pascarella and **Patrick Terenzini's** groundbreaking book, *How College Affects Students: Findings and Insights from Twenty Years of Research*, synthesizes more than 2,600 studies in order to understand the impact of college on students.² Together with

the second volume, *How College Affects Students: A Third Decade of Research*, more than 30 years of research findings are considered.³ Most recently, *How College Affects Students: 21st Century Evidence that Higher Education Works*, continues this work by incorporating research from 2002-2013 in a third volume.⁴ Each volume updates evidence and compares current findings to past research.

A more specialized work, *Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice*, deeply explores the range of college student development theory.⁵ The third edition of this classic text has been expanded and revised and includes new insights into emerging identity theory, including faith and gender identities. While past editions were organized chronologically, the new edition utilizes a conceptual organizational structure, which makes a dense body of theory more accessible to students, faculty, and practitioners.

The two leading student affairs professional organizations, **American College Personnel Association-College Student Educators International** (commonly known as **ACPA**) and **Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education** (commonly known as **NASPA**), collaborated to publish two influential reports intended to redefine student affairs practice and its relationship to student learning. *Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-wide Focus on the Student Experience* challenged educators to view "learning and development as intertwined, inseparable elements of the student experience."⁶ To that end, the report outlined seven transformative learning outcomes related to college student development, dimensions of those outcomes, sample developmental experiences, and theories for educators. Published shortly thereafter, *Learning Reconsidered 2: A Practical Guide to Implementing a Campus-wide Focus on the Student Experience* billed itself as a "blueprint for action" offering the "dialogue, tools, and materials necessary to put into practice the recommendations in *Learning Reconsidered*."⁷ The fact that a half-dozen professional organizations in higher education joined **ACPA** and **NASPA** in sponsoring the second report is testimony to the unified vision embraced by the higher education student affairs community.

George Kuh, the researcher who founded the widely used **National Survey of Student**

Engagement (NSSE) and developed **High Impact Educational Practices (HIPs)**, has made many significant contributions to the literature on college student success. Two titles for undergraduate academic libraries to consider are the game-changing volume *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter* and the more recent *Using Evidence of Student*

Learning to Improve Higher Education.⁸⁻⁹ The former emerged from a two-year study of twenty institutions' student success initiatives originating from the **NSSE** and dubbed **Project DEEP** (Documenting Effective Educational Practice). The revised edition revisits the same schools five years later to update the evidence of impact on students. *Using Evidence of Student Learning to Improve Higher Education* is grounded in research conducted

at the **National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA)**. Authored by **NILOA's** principal scholars, chapters advocate using student learning outcome assessment to improve student success, rather than mere compliance to accreditation standards. They examine broader relationships between outcomes assessment, academic achievement, and institutional effectiveness.

Frances Stage and **Kathleen Manning's** popular handbook, *Research in the College Context: Approaches and Methods*, was revised and updated in 2016.¹⁰ Reflecting current trends, the authors added chapters about mixed-methods research and participatory action research; expanded information about equity and justice, critical research approaches, and visual research methods; and updated methods for disseminating research results with special attention devoted to online media. The book offers practical, real-world examples of diverse approaches to researching college students and campus settings.

Charles Carney Strange and **James Banning's** *Designing for Learning: Creating Campus Environments for Student Success* is a revised and expanded edition of their earlier influential work *Educating by Design: Creating Campus Environments for Student Success*.¹¹ The authors examine how the design components of campus environments impact their learning purposes and present strategies and a practical framework that can be used to evaluate collegiate physical spaces with the intention of improving student success.

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With higher education outcomes under increased scrutiny from the public and politicians alike, this core collection of evidence-based texts is of value to any college or university and should not be overlooked by institutions simply because they do not support a student affairs program. The research about what helps college students develop and succeed is of interest to administrators, faculty, librarians, and even curious students. Indeed, today's higher education practitioners have unprecedented access to information about best practices and an open invitation to contribute to transformative student experiences. 🌱

Endnotes

1. **Schuh, John H., Susan R. Jones, and Vasti Torres.** *Student Services: A Handbook for the Profession*. 6th ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2017.*
2. **Pascarella, Ernest T., and Patrick T. Terenzini.** *How College Affects Students: Findings and Insights from Twenty Years of Research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991.*
3. **Pascarella, Ernest T., and Patrick T. Terenzini.** *How College Affects Students: A Third Decade of Research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005.*
4. **Mayhew, Matthew J., Alyssa N. Rockenbach, Nicholas A. Bowman, Tricia A. Seifert, and Gregory C. Wolniak with Ernest T. Pascarella and Patrick T. Terenzini.** *How College Affects Students: 21st Century Evidence that Higher Education Works*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016.
5. **Patton, Lori D., Kristin A. Renn, Florence Guido-DiBrito, and Stephen John Quaye.** *Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice*. 3rd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016.*
6. **Keeling, Richard P., ed.** *Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-wide Focus on the Student Experience*. ACPA, NASPA: Washington, D.C., 2004.
7. **Keeling, Richard P., ed.** *Learning Reconsidered 2: A Practical Guide to Implementing a Campus-wide Focus on the Student Experience*. ACPA, NASPA: Washington, D.C., 2006.
8. **Kuh, George D., Jillian Kinzie, John H. Schuh, and Elizabeth J. Whitt.** *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter*. Rev. ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010.*
9. **Kuh, George D., Stanley O. Ikenberry, Natasha A. Jankowski, Timothy Reese Cain, Peter T. Ewell, Pat Hutchings, and Jillian Kinzie.** *Using Evidence of Student Learning to Improve Higher Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2015.*
10. **Stage, Frances K., and Kathleen Manning.** *Research in the College Context: Approaches and Methods*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2016.
11. **Strange, Charles Carney, and James H. Banning.** *Designing for Learning: Creating Campus Environments for Student Success*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2015.*

Editor's note: An asterisk () denotes a title selected for *Resources for College Libraries*.