COMMENCEMENT CEREMONIES, with their usual speeches and long lists of names, are, for me, typically a time for meditative reflection. Herman Art Taylor, the speaker at my niece’s commencement, was different; he captured my active attention. The successful alum and former football player chose sports metaphors to describe what he had learned at his alma mater. Although I am not a big football fan, as coordinator of staff training and student development in a large residence hall system, I found his words resonating with me long after the speech was over. Taylor observed, “One of the most important things I learned here is that it doesn’t matter who’s running the ball as long as you’re all playing out of the same playbook.” A single playbook matters. I pondered my three decades of conversations with faculty and student affairs colleagues about our separate playbooks: the one for teaching and the one for everything else. One describes the learning that deserves academic credit and one describes the learning that doesn’t. Student affairs is the province for training the touchy-feely activities, while information mastery activities are the territory of academic affairs. Higher education typically operates out of playbooks that separate learning from living. In terms of winning the game, acquisition and repetition of facts score more points, or credits, than the ability to develop relationships and synthesize meaning from both classroom and non-classroom learning. Our separate playbooks have framed the higher education game for so long that most of the participants, players, coaches, managers, and fans don’t realize that the rules were constructed for a particular purpose at a particular time in the evolution of our institutions. The acquisition-and-

The rules that dictate educational practice on most campuses were written prior to the invention of movable type and long before scientists fully understood learning as an integrated and context-specific process. Jane Fried summarizes two documents that may well replace the tired old playbooks of yore.

BY JANE FRIED

Higher Education’s New Playbook: LEARNING RECONSIDERED
The repetition-of-facts playbook was designed for the period before movable type and widely available reading material. The touch-feely playbook was based on the belief that matters of the head and the heart are separate. Both certainly need major rewriting for an era of networked communication, instant text transmission, and the interconnection of learning with personal development.

Implementation of the ideas described in *Learning Reconsidered* (LR) and the recently published *Learning Reconsidered 2* (LR2), both edited by Richard Keeling, provide what amounts to a new single playbook for all of us who are concerned about student learning. *Learning Reconsidered* (published by ACPA–College Student Educators International and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators) and its companion *Learning Reconsidered 2* (published by seven professional organizations) are paradigm shifters. They describe the rules and possibilities for everyone involved in the game of higher education, regardless of their role. *Learning Reconsidered* defines learning as a transformative process that involves not only what is learned but how and where it is learned. In addition, LR offers recommendations for assessing the outcomes of this learning and contrasts transformative learning with the more traditional informative learning that focuses on the transmission of information from teacher to student. LR “is an argument for the integrated use of all of higher education’s resources in the education and preparation of the whole student” (p. 3). This approach includes—and transcends—traditional classroom learning and argues that students can learn in all domains of their lives. Across these domains, they learn to develop their identities as cognitive, affective, relational, vocational, and meaning-making humans. Envisioning learning as a transformative process overcomes the distinctions among meaning-making humans. Envisioning learning as something other than this leads to new and expanded perspectives for teaching and learning.

The integrated learning outcomes espoused by LR include construction of knowledge, construction of meaning, and construction of self in society. Construction of knowledge refers to creating a system of connected facts, while construction of meaning is concerned with constructing sequences, implications, and application of that learning, and construction of self in society involves ongoing choices individuals make that define their roles in communities. The what, how, and when of transformative learning are all represented in these outcomes. When learning is transformative, students know, can explain, and can demonstrate what they have learned. They can explain how this learning is relevant to their life and explain how this learning has changed their viewpoint on a range of topics. Because transformation is generally experienced as an “aha” moment that can happen anywhere, opportunities for this learning are best designed by collaborators working both in and outside the traditional classroom. The greater this integration, the greater the likelihood that students will experience the transformation and expansion of perspectives that educators hope for in their students. Through an integrated learning experience, a student’s picture of the world can become more comprehensive and more inclusive and, ultimately, improve their relationships and their life.

**Purpose of the New Playbook:**

**Learning-Centered Education**

In the traditional academic playbook, teaching, usually considered synonymous with talking about an academic subject, was directly connected to learning, usually regarded as synonymous with the ability to repeat what had been spoken or read. Since the invention of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) as a tool for studying brain activity, our understanding of learning as something other than this has made dramatic leaps forward. Cognitive scientists can now directly observe neurological activity associated with the learning processes in the brain. Scientists have discovered that learning is most powerful when students can place new information in the context of previously acquired meaningful information. We understand what we learn when we also know why this information may be useful to us. It has also been discovered that fear inhibits learning and that the ability to discuss information in a challenging but nonthreatening environment maximizes the likelihood that the information will be retained and applied across settings.

Research into multiple intelligences by Howard Gardner and others has also demonstrated that different people prefer different methods of acquiring and manipulating information. Approaches that use a variety of methods—for example, written word, spoken word, music, visual forms, kinesthetic activity, and mechanical manipulation—are more powerful than approaches that use only one mode. This research has been widely disseminated and applied in elementary and
Higher education typically operates out of playbooks that separate learning from living.

secondary schools. In the K–12 sector, this understanding has led to dramatic revisions in teaching methods as well as a shift in focus from teaching (input) to learning (output).

A similar shift has slowly gotten under way in higher education. Some educators, both in curriculum and cocurriculum, have known intuitively that students learn with their hearts as well as their minds, in class and out of class, through thinking and feeling and through thinking about their feelings. Unfortunately, the old playbooks ruled out discussions of connections between thinking and feeling in the classroom and made little room for academic discussions in cocurricular venues. Intuitions about the holistic nature of learning are now confirmed by brain research and are beginning to penetrate conversations and decisions about student learning.

Decisions about how to create integrated learning experiences for students take shape in the design of organizational structures at departmental and institutional levels. When the campus approach to learning is integrated and holistic, organizational structures are designed to support students as they construct knowledge, construct meaning, and construct themselves in society. Individuals working within such organizational structures perform their work with the understanding that learning is a dynamic process of interaction between self and environment, and they see their work as contributing to learning as an experience-based cycle of action and reflection as described by David Kolb in Experiential Learning.

**RULES FOR THE NEW LEARNING PLAYBOOK**

_EVERY PLAYBOOK defines the fundamental rules and methods for the game. Following are the important rules outlined by Learning Reconsidered:*

- **Experiential and cognitive components must be integrated operationally and intellectually.** Course content and processes should be planned by faculty members in collaboration with the supervisors and designers of other learning experiences across campus.
- **Collaborators should identify a shared set of integrated learning outcomes for students before launching new programs or policies.** For example, in a program designed to encourage civic engagement, students might learn about (1) political democracy; (2) speaking in public; (3) the history, values, and political beliefs of some constituencies; (4) methods for organizing and presenting evidence in support of arguments for particular positions; and (5) active listening skills and management of emotions. The range of learning outcomes demonstrates the integration of the learning process across multiple domains; some outcomes are cognitive, some are affective, and some are behavioral. In other cases, learning outcomes may be spiritual.
  - **Learning opportunities for students should be designed with the understanding that learning, development, and identity formation are interactive and interconnected.** Reflection by students on how their knowledge can be integrated into the broad context of their life is central to learning.
  - **Transformative learning enables students, with guidance from mentors, to take responsibility for their learning.** The impersonal teacher should become a coach, a learning facilitator, an advisor who is personally concerned about the welfare of students and encourages students to take responsibility for their own educational journey.
  - **Educators must realize that they are also learning a new process and a new language.** This process involves listening carefully to other educators and understanding different approaches to teaching and learning and different methods of assessing learning outcomes. Categorical separations between “hard” and “soft” learning, academic learning and social or developmental learning must be faced and ultimately overcome in an atmosphere of mutual respect.
  - **Questions of purpose and meaning are an integral part of the learning process.** In the classroom and in out-of-class settings, students, teachers, advisors, and mentors should repeatedly ask themselves why learning a particular idea or skill matters to them personally and what difference this knowledge may make in the ways in which they live in their communities.

**NEW LEARNING PLAYBOOK STRATEGIES**

_LEARNING RECONSIDERED 2 summarizes developments in the understanding of learning as a transformative and integrated process and_
offers strategies for implementing approaches to teaching and learning based on this understanding.

**Strategy 1: Convene Dialogues About Research on Learning.** *LR2* proposes that academic faculty and student affairs educators convene conversations on changes in understanding about the processes of learning. These conversations would begin with a discussion of the difference between learning about external phenomena (that is, information transfer) and learning about the integration of knowledge, self, and society and constructing patterns of meaning that permit deeper understanding and application of knowledge (that is, transformation). Historically, information transfer learning has been dominant in the classroom, while construction of personal meaning has occurred outside the classroom. For example, students learn the facts of biology in the classroom and the laboratory. They learn about personal health, an applied dimension of biology, through fitness activities, nutrition programs, stress management workshops, and other activities. Cross-campus conversations about learning would involve asking how learning across domains could be integrated, an integration that would allow students to see connections between their knowledge and their life.

Convening these conversations on a campus traditionally separated into academic and cocurricular functions will likely not be an easy task. New skills will need to be developed as these conversations, which are far from typical on most campuses, are held. A primary function of this dialogue is relationship building among cross-functional planners of integrated learning experiences. Through these relationships—which are as important as the anticipated learning outcomes of the programs—academic faculty and student affairs educators will define learning outcomes together, identify the places and processes of learning, and make joint decisions about the use of resources. In this approach, neither informational nor transformational aspects of learning are considered primary. Neither is treated as an add-on or as a secondary element.

Learning communities are one powerful opportunity for this kind of cross-functional collaboration to occur. A learning community is two or more thematically linked courses enrolling a single cohort of students, who often live in a single residence hall and participate in cocurricular activities together. As such, learning communities can help students make numerous connections between information and personal meaning, between in-class discussions and out-of-class experiences, and between thinking and feeling. Cross-functional conversations about the learning process as described in *LR* and *LR2* are designed to inform educators across campus about the benefits of learning communities or other integrative practices and to diminish resistance to integration. Such conversations also build relationships between student affairs educators and academic faculty around subjects of mutual interest: student learning, engagement, and success.

**Strategy 2: Launch Innovative Pilot Programs to Link Learning Experiences.** Cross-divisional dialogue offers an initial strategy for changing approaches to learning. A second strategy is initiation of small projects that integrate domains of student life around clearly identified learning outcomes. Small pilot programs build momentum and offer relatively low-risk opportunities to learn about the elements of successful program design. *LR* provides a map that identifies three campus contexts in which learning occurs: the academic, the social, and the institutional. Students learn in the classroom and the laboratory; in their relationships with others; in clubs, organizations, and student government; in advising and career counseling; in residence halls; and in interactions with other segments of the institution, including the registrar’s office, the bursar, the dining hall, and student employment. In strategy 2, questions are posed about what and how students are learning in these contexts and what might be done to enhance that learning through an integrated process of experience and reflection. Creation of successful and potentially transformative integrated learning experiences will

Envisioning learning as a transformative process overcomes the distinctions among developing a sense of personal identity, building relationships, and acquiring and using academic information to form beliefs.
depend on the strength of relationships built through strategy 1. Ongoing collaboration across functions is central to successfully launching and sustaining these pilot and full-scale learning enhancement projects.

**Strategy 3: Establish Explicit Learning Outcomes for Every Program.** LR offers a typical list of institution-wide student learning outcomes, including knowledge acquisition, integration, and application; humanitarianism; civic engagement; and interpersonal and intrapersonal competence. LR2 illustrates methods for articulating, operationalizing, and assessing these and other learning outcomes. Developing a list of outcomes is an essential early step in creation of integrated learning strategies, and a review of the institutional mission statement should be a first order of business in outcomes development. Some of the learning outcomes offered earlier may appear on an individual institution’s list. All the outcomes chosen should be driven by the mission of the individual institution.

Civic engagement offers one example of how a clearly defined learning outcome can inform practice. LR describes civic engagement as the development of a sense of civic responsibility, a commitment to public life, the ability to engage in principled dissent, and the ability to lead. Integrated approaches to achieving this learning outcome might encourage students to participate in organizations, hold leadership positions, engage in public speaking, write articles or edit publications that address community issues, or organize student groups to perform community service. In an integrated approach, students would participate in these activities and, at the same time, would be involved in reflection or classroom-based learning that would amplify the learning gained through these experiences. Cocurricular civic engagement experiences might be augmented by classroom debates and discussions; enrollment in courses offered through relevant disciplines in the humanities or in the social, behavioral, physical, or environmental sciences; conversations or work with experienced members of the community; or class-linked service to community agencies such as Habitat for Humanity or elementary and secondary schools. In faith-based institutions, learning about constructive citizenship might also come through study of scripture or examination of theological instructions about civic responsibility.

**Organizational Dynamics to Support the New Learning Playbook**

**A**DOPTING a single playbook focused on student learning will require shifts in organizational structures and processes. Typical campus structures are designed to support functions from the perspective of those responsible for carrying them out: academic affairs, student affairs, facilities, finance, and public relations. Each institution has a slightly different way of organizing to accomplish these functions, but most modes of organization lead to widespread “silo” thinking, in which each department carries on its own business with limited awareness of the activities, needs, and resources of other divisions and departments. A shared focus on student learning may require structural shifts; however, it is generally not productive to make organizational changes before articulating the unique rationale for a particular institution.

Margaret Wheatley describes the process of institutional transformation as a shift away from structure and toward an approach she calls a self-organizing system. “Neither form nor function alone dictates how the system is organized. [These systems] are process structures, reorganizing into different forms in order to maintain their identity. . . . Stability comes from a deepening center, a clarity about who [the system] is, what it needs, and what is required to survive in its environment” (pp. 82–83). As institutional identity re-forms around student learning, reorganization of institutional structures will follow. The shift called for in *Learning Reconsidered* begins with enhancing relationships and building trust, which

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Learning is a dynamic process of interaction between self and environment, an experience-based cycle of action and reflection.

will then dictate development of new organizational structures. As identity shifts, methods of organizing will be modified to achieve newly articulated or reframed outcomes.

**A New Playbook for a New Era**

In 1995, in *Shifting Paradigms in Student Affairs*, my colleagues and I called for all educators, including those in student affairs, to see their central task as enhancement of student learning. At about the same time, scientists and practitioners began to understand that learning is a contextual process of knowledge acquisition, inference, connection, and meaning making. Together, LR and LR2 represent a single playbook for fostering this type of learning in the classroom, outside the classroom, in the field, and in online learning environments. Through implementation of the rules of this playbook, students will be afforded opportunities to see themselves as learning and reflecting in many contexts. They will have a range of educational experiences that teaches them how to develop the cognitive complexity and range of skills involved in what Robert Kegan describes as the curriculum of modern life. Integrated learning experiences streamline the demands of modern life and teach students how to learn from their own experience, how to become lifelong learners, and how to make decisions based on effective reflection. These benefits may also accrue to educators, who are being asked to work in an increasingly complex environment. The task now is to develop new ways of describing, delivering, and assessing learning experiences and to reconstruct the roles of all educators. Depending on when one starts counting, the traditional playbooks have been in use for three hundred to nine hundred years. While change may be unnerving and disorienting, it may lead to a greater comprehension of our own learning abilities, to the strengthening of a belief in the human capacity to create meaning, and to broader and more constructive worldviews.

### Notes


