# COMPLIANCE, COMPETENCIES, AND PRACTICES AMONG STUDENT AFFAIRS AND SERVICES PRACTITIONERS

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**Abstract**: This descriptive study determined the compliance, competencies, and practices of 390 student affairs and services practitioners in the state universities and colleges. The study utilized the mean, standard deviation, t-test, ANOVA, and Pearson r. Findings revealed that practitioners had very high compliance and competencies, and outstanding practices. SUCs with level 4 status and those from state universities had higher-level competencies and better practices. The type of SUCs and SUC leveling contribute to a higher level of compliance, competencies, and practices of student affairs and services practitioners.

**Keywords:** student affairs, compliance, competencies, practices, practitioners, services

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Office of Student Affairs is the pillar in every institution. The services it offers are essential to student's holistic development, especially in diagnosis and learning. Student affairs professionals have endless opportunities to provide essential support to students in making important life decisions. They possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and personal traits for active student affairs practice (Reynolds & Pope, 2015).

In response to a range of higher education trends, challenges, and paradigm shifts, the interest in developing measures of student affairs practitioners has increased. The primary concern of every institution is how to gear up the practitioners, policymakers, and scholarly audiences. The student affairs administrators in higher education have reported the issues that explore various higher education-related topics of importance to students' affairs professionals and postsecondary decision-makers. Other reports or policy memos focused on critical public policy questions, specific student populations, or investigation of some aspect of student affairs as a profession (NASPA, 2019).

According to (Morse, 2018) the higher education institution may be a target for its compliance on the vital work to educate an increasingly diverse society for lives of purpose and opportunity, but the practice remains unchanged. Student affairs practitioners or officers are in charge of the division that provides services, support, and

education that enhances students' academic, social and personal development which strive to foster inclusion and work to strengthen a sustainable educationally diverse co-curricular environment where all students have access and the support they need to achieve their pedagogical goals. In this case, they are also responsible for ensuring effective student service delivery and student development efforts (NASDEV, 2015).

However, the challenges focus on compliance to institutional philosophy, which impacts staffing, resourcing, role ambiguity, role conflict, and balancing advocacy, managerialism, and student affairs personnel development programs.

Student affairs practitioners should possess essential learning, skills, competencies, and proficiency in critical thinking, creativity, verbal and written communications skill, position, rank, or expertise associated with human and professional development (Eanes et al., 2015).

The continuing professional development as student affairs practitioners is a big challenge to maintain the right to practice and the existing practices of higher student affairs practitioners. According to Arsenault (2016), there is currently no mechanism to ensure consistent practices among student affairs practitioners. Hence, it becomes each practitioner's responsibility to take part in what practices may engage a specific institution.

In this regard, nurturing quality services requires the realistic assessment necessary to gauge the compliance, competencies, and even existing practices of student affairs practitioners. The department's quality of services and programs are influenced by an array of internal and external factors. For this reason, this study was pursued to determine the compliance, competencies, and practices of the student affairs and services practitioners in the State Universities and Colleges in the Province of Iloilo, Philippines.

The study sought to answer the following questions: (1) What is the degree of compliance, level of competencies, and level of practices of student affairs and services practitioners in the state universities and colleges in Iloilo Province, Philippines?,

(2) Are there significant differences in the degree of compliance, level of competencies, and practices of student affairs and services practitioners when classified according to SUC leveling and type of SUCs?, (3) Is there a significant relationship between and among compliance, competencies, and practices of the student affairs and services practitioners?

## 2. RELATED LITERATURE

Some studies give support to the current investigation. Hall (2016) revealed that professionals with less experience and entry-level classification had low-level

competencies and higher self-awareness. The more experienced ones and a mid to senior-level classification had more excellent self-perceived competencies and less perceived self-awareness.

Pokornowski (2018) found a correlation between perceived leadership competence and satisfaction and a correlation between perceived organizational and human resources competence and satisfaction. Cho & Sriram (2016) stressed the role of collaboration as competency in student affairs practice. Institutional collaborative culture predicts individual collaborative competency of student affairs professionals. The student affairs professionals' collaborative competency included education, level of position, and institutional collaborative culture.

Dixon (2018) suggested the need for continuous capacity building among staff related to assessment, additional fiscal and human resources, and an environment where assessment is communicated effectively and efficiently among all staff members. There is a need to increasingly professionalize student affairs work through credentialing so that more practitioners were familiar with scholarly research and can build instruments to understand how student affairs contribute to learning. Professional associations and accrediting agencies could set techniques and outcomes that demarcated student learning or, at best, the intention of strategic plans and assessment documents (Carter, 2014).

Love (2018) encouraged student affairs practitioners to develop policies and practices that allow students to stay connected to each other and the institution in the face of technological and societal trends that will increasingly foster disconnectedness. According to Lundquist (2019), student affairs offices provide entertainment for students, and that real learning occurs only in the academic classroom. Even focusing on helping students develop the "soft skills" so critical for the workplace can be devalued. This narrow perspective contradicts the reality of student affairs practitioners as educators. Creating rich co-curricular learning environments and facilitating student engagement and personal growth is an invaluable contribution to the college experience.

Gallenero (2018) found that lack of preparation and formal training for the job; no documents for them to start with; no administrative support regarding decision making, appropriate recognition, and no budget for operations were some problems in students' affairs. Student affairs practitioners coped with the challenges by their proper attitude, like considering their job as a mission and being creative and dynamic in addressing the needs of Millennials or Generation Z.

Gatan (2018) indicated a significant relationship in school counselors' preparedness and competencies in servicing students with special needs. More competent the school counselors, the more they were likely prepared in maintaining students with special needs.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The descriptive-survey method of research was used in this study. The purpose of this study was to find out the level of compliance, level of competencies, and practices of student affairs and services practitioners in the different State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in the Province of Iloilo as a basis for the enhancement program..

The respondents of this study were the student affairs and services practitioners in the different State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in the Province of Iloilo namely; Iloilo Science and Technology University (ISAT U), Iloilo State College of Fisheries (ISCOF), Northern Iloilo Polytechnic State College (NIPSC) and West Visayas State University (WVSU). They were selected through purposive sampling.  The researcher selected three hundred ninety (390)  student affairs and services practitioners including faculty members and students who comprised the directors, deans, heads and other student affairs and services providers, faculty members, and students who were presidents, and editor-in-chief.

The research instrument used for compliance was the  modified and adapted survey-questionnaire based on the requirements in the CMO No. 09 series of 2013 otherwise known as the Enhanced Policies and Guidelines on Student Affairs, and Services, while for competencies, the student affairs and services practitioners, the  Questionnaire of Caranto (2010) was used.

For practices, it was based on the concepts and related literature of student affairs and services practitioners, hence the present researcher had formulated the following dimension of practices of the student affairs and services practitioners such as engaging student in active learning, helping students develop coherent values and ethical standards, setting and communicating high expectation for learning, using systematic inquiry to improve student and institution performance, using resources effectively to achieve institutional mission and goals, forging educational partnership that advances student learning and building supportive and inclusive communities.

The research instrument had undergone validity procedure by the experts in the field of research, and at the same time, there were panel members of this study using the criteria set by Good and Scates. The experts agreed that the research instrument was valid and  appropriate to answer the problems of the study. Then, the validated researcher instrument was subjected to reliability testing at Guimaras State College utilizing 30 respondents in the pilot testing. The result of the reliability testing resulted to 0.919 as to compliance; 0.946 as to competencies; and 0.954 as to practices with the overall result of 0.977, interpreted as very highly reliable using the Cronbach's Alpha computation.

In the conduct of this study, permission was obtained from the president of the different

State Universities and Colleges and Campus Administrators of the external campuses. Before distributing the research instrument to the target respondents, the information about the names and department where they belong were secured from the Office of the Director/Head of the Office of Student Affairs and Services and other designated personnel for assistance. To gather data for this study, the research instrument was personally administered and retrieved by the researcher himself. After the retrieval of the accomplished instrument, the data were statistically tallied, analyzed, and interpreted with the help of the expert statistician for the statistical computations.

After completing the data collection from the target respondents, the present researcher then proceeded with the coding, summarization, and tabulation. This was followed by the statistical analysis, interpretation of data, and finally writing the research manuscript. The present researcher encountered problems during the process of data gathering considering the distance of the SUCs in the Province of Iloilo and the schedule of classes of the respondents were the burden in the collection of data, but still, the researcher was able to manage these problems. Hence, the collection of data was attained and ready for the analysis.

The study used Frequency and Percentage, Mean, t-test, and ANOVA as statistical tools.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Following are the results of the study presented in the descriptive and inferential data analyses.

Table 1. Respondents' Level of Compliance as a whole and when classified according to Type of SUCs and SUC Levelling

| Variables | Mean | Description |
|---|---|---|
| As a whole | 4.42 | Very High |
| Type of SUCs | | |
|   State College | 4.35 | Very High |
|   State University | 4.54 | Very High |
| SUC Levelling | | |
|   SUC Level 1 | 4.29 | Very High |
|   SUC Level 2 | 4.35 | Very High |
|   SUC Level 3 | 4.54 | Very High |
|   SUC Level 4 | 4.56 | Very High |

Scale: Very High Compliance=4.21-5.00; High Compliance=3.41-4.20;
Moderate Compliance=2.61-3.40; Low Compliance=1.81-2.60;
Very Low Compliance=1.00-1.80

Table1 shows the level of compliance of the OSAS practitioners in terms of the type of SUCs.

Practitioners from state universities (M= 4.54) had better compliance levels than state colleges (M= 4.35). This means that university OSA practitioners complied well in all the areas of student affairs compared with those coming from the colleges. University compliance with the operations and systems is more stable than in the colleges. NASDEV (2015) found that restructuring- reallocation of functional areas on the student affairs should be initiated to focus on the success of the students and the institution.

Practitioners from SUC level 4 institutions (M= 4.56) had complied well with the CHED requirements compared with those coming from institutions with Level 1 (M= 4.29), Level 2 (M= 4.35), and level 3 status (M= 4.54). This implies that the higher the SUC level status, the higher is the compliance level in the office of student affairs offices. This supports what CACUSS (2017) emphasized that the core of the work in the office of student affairs are professionals who support student growth and development. Student affairs work is enhanced by the scholarship of student development, learning theory, and a range of discipline-specific expertise.

Table 2. Respondents' Level of Competencies as a whole when classified according to Type of SUCs and SUC Leveling

| Variables | Mean | Description |
|---|---|---|
| As a Whole | 4.43 | Very High |
| Type of SUCs | | |
| State College | 4.38 | Very High |
| State University | 4.53 | Very High |
| SUC Levelling | | |
| SUC Level 1 | 4.45 | Very High |
| SUC Level 2 | 4.36 | Very High |
| SUC Level 3 | 4.53 | Very High |
| SUC Level 4 | 4.58 | Very High |

Scale: Very High Competencies=4.21-5.00; High Competencies=3.41-4.20; Moderate Competencies =2.61-3.40; Low Competencies =1.81-2.60; Very Low Competencies =1.00-1.80

Table 2 shows that the respondents manifested a very high competencies, M= 4.43. Practitioners from state universities (M= 4.53) were more competent than those coming from state colleges (M= 4.38). This means that university OSAS practitioners possess better skills especially in all the areas of the student affairs. Practitioners from state colleges need to strengthen collaboration with other practitioners especially from the universities to improve their competence in OSAS. This supports Cho & Sriram (2016) who stressed the important role of collaboration as a competency in student affairs practice. Institutional collaborative culture could be the greatest predictor of individual collaborative competency of student affairs professionals.

Practitioners in level 4 status exhibited better competence (M= 4.58) than those coming from SUC's with level 1 (M= 4.45), level 2, (M= 4.36), and level 3, (M= 4.53) status. This means that being in SUC with level 4 status contributed to high level competence in managing the office of student affairs. SUC's produced more skillful and competent OSA practitioners, since they were exposed to more seminars and trainings, and more support may have been given to them. Practitioners coming SUC's with Level 1 status need to develop their competence especially in the areas where trainings and exposure are required. This supports Cho & Sriram (2016) who stressed the important role of collaboration as a competency in student affairs practice.

Table 3. Respondents' Level of Practices as a whole when classified
according to Type of SUCs and SUC Levelling

| Variables | Mean | Description |
|---|---|---|
| As a Whole | 4.48 | Very Highly Practiced |
| **Type of SUCs** | | |
| State College | 4.41 | Very Highly Practiced |
| State University | 4.58 | Very Highly Practiced |
| **SUC Levelling** | | |
| SUC Level 1 | 4.59 | Very Highly Practiced |
| SUC Level 2 | 4.41 | Very Highly Practiced |
| SUC Level 3 | 4.58 | Very Highly Practiced |
| SUC Level 4 | 4.56 | Very Highly Practiced |

Scale: Very Highly Practiced=4.21-5.00; Highly Practiced =3.41-4.20; Moderately Practiced=2.61-3.40;
Less Practiced =1.81-2.60; Not Practiced =1.00-1.80

Table 3 shows the practitioners' level of practices when classified according to type of SUCs.

Best practices were shown by the practitioners connected with state universities, (M= 4.58) compared with those serving in the state colleges, (M= 4.41). This means that practitioners from state universities possess skills that are shown in the best practices in the OSAS and university office of student affairs are more stable having more trained and qualified practitioners, compared with that of the state colleges.

This supports the goals of the Student Affairs and Services as stated in the CHED Memorandum Orders No. 09, series of 2013, that OSAS practitioners should be competent in providing activities and programs towards holistic development for each of the students. They should be provided with academic support services or those that relate to student welfare, student development and those that relate to institutional programs and services. Implementation of these services should be unique to an institution.

Practitioners from institutions with level 4 status (M=4.58) showed best practices compared with those coming from institutions with low level status as level 1 (M=4.35), level 2 (M= 4.45), and level 3 (M= 4.42). This means that practitioners connected with state universities with level 4 statuses performed well for they possess qualities and qualifications required by CHED. Furthermore, the higher the level of the institution, the more it produces competent practitioners who show best practices in line with the office of student affairs.

Table 4. Significant Differences in the Level of Compliance among Students Affairs and Services Practitioners classified according to Type of SUCs and SUC Levelling

| Variables | t-ratio | p-value | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|
| Type of SUCs | | | |
| State College | -3.858 | 0.000 | Significant |
| State University | | | |
| SUC Levelling | | | |
| Between Groups | 5.419 | 0.001 | Significant |
| Within Groups | | | |

When classified according to the type of SUC's , p=0.000 < .05, therefore the null hypothesis which states that there is significant difference in the level of compliance of student affairs and services practitioners when classified according to type of SUCs, is not rejected. As to SUC levelling, p= 0.001 < .05, therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is significant difference in the level of compliance of student affairs and

services practitioners when classified according to SUC levelling, is not rejected. Whereas, the type of SUCs and SUC levelling significantly affects the OSA's level of compliance or how they manage their office. This implies that the budget of the OSA differed as the university may have higher allocation compared to those in colleges. Similarly, those universities with higher level status offer quality services to their beneficiaries. They may have more sustained operations resulting to better services. This supports what Hall (2016) observed that one university achieve significantly lower attrition rates than those found across the sector because of cost-cutting decisions on the elements have been embedded at an institutional level resulting in these trends and challenges to their sustainability. Further, Maher & Macallister (2013) noted that the fund allocated provides continuity of support, easy access for students to academic staff, and extends professional experience among the practitioners as well as in comprehensive mentoring of students.

Table 5. Significant Differences in the Level of Competencies among Students Affairs and Services Practitioners classified according to Type of SUCs and SUC Levelling

| Variables | t-ratio | p-value | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|
| Type of SUCs State College State University | -3.021 | 0.003 | Significant |
| SUC Levelling Between Groups Within Groups | 4.468 | 0.004 | Significant |

A significant differences existed in the practitioners' level of competencies as to length of service (p=0.003 < .05), highest degree attained, (p=0.023 <.05) to type of SUCs(p=0.005 < .05), and SUC levelling ( p=0.004 < .05), therefore the null hypothesis states that there is significant difference in the level of competencies of student affairs and services practitioners when classified according to highest degree attained, length of service, SUC levelling, and type of SCU's is therefore, not rejected.

This implies that OSA practitioners with more years in service, especially linked with the universities and with higher level status have better opportunities to be trained in order to become skillful in their tasks than those who are working in colleges.

This finding is supported by ACPA College Student Educators International (n.d.), the Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Practitioners is a set of

"Professional Competency Areas" which is intended to define the broad professional knowledge, skills, and for some competencies, attitudes expected of student affairs professionals regardless of their area of specialization or positional role within the field. All student affairs professionals should be able to demonstrate their ability to meet the basic list of outcomes under each competency area regardless of how they entered the profession. Thus, this was a design of professional development opportunities for student affairs professionals by providing findings which can be incorporated into the design of specific curriculum and training opportunities. Additionally, if student affairs professionals desire to grow in a particular competency area, they can examine expected learning and skills in the intermediate and advanced level.

Further, this supports Gatan (2018) who stressed that school counselors possessed the needed competencies as seen in their primary skills, professional disposition, and professional behavior area.

In contrast, this finding disagrees with what Dixon (2018) found that the need for improved implementation and support for student affairs, especially in terms of culture of assessment, is critical. There is a need for continuous capacity building among staff related to assessment, additional fiscal and human resources, and an environment where assessment is communicated effectively and efficiently among all staff members.

Table 6. Significant Differences in the Level of Practices among Students Affairs and Services Practitioners classified according to Type of SUCs and SUC Levelling

| Variables | t-ratio | p-value | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|
| Type of SUCs State College State University | -2.864 | 0.004 | Significant |
| SUC Levelling Between Groups Within Groups | 2.664 | 0.048 | Significant |

As to type of SUC's (p= 0.004 <.05), and SUC levelling (p=0.048 < .05) , the null hypothesis  states that there is  significant difference in the level of practices of student affairs and services practitioners when classified according of length of service,  type of SUCs, and SUC levelling, is therefore, not rejected.

This means that the type of SUCs, SUC levelling, and length of services are important factors to the best practices in the office of student affairs and services office. This

implies that OSA practitioners, who served longer in the SUCs, especially with higher level status were more trained and performed well to attain the goals of the office. This finding supports what Seifert & Burrow (2013) stressed that the student affairs and services staff members' skills and performance result in students' success.

Although practices and implementation of these services may  be unique in an institution, there is a standard quality of SAS programs output and outcomes in any university or college that are concerned with non-academic experiences of students to attain total student development (Mercado, Jr. et al. , 2015). On the other hand, Hardwick (2001) stressed that collaborative practices help integrate student learning in and out of the classroom.


## 5. FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS


### Findings
The student affairs and services practitioners in the different State Universities and Colleges in the Province of Iloilo had a very high compliance, very high competencies, and outstanding practices, especially those coming from SUCs with level 4 status.
 Significant differences existed in the practitioners 'levels of compliance, competencies, and practices in terms of SUC leveling,  type of SUCs, and highest degree attained OSA practitioners show competence in their work as reflected in their best practices which students as recipients of the services. This practice may be evident in the universities as commissioned by higher education. Compliance with what the state colleges and universities require in the OSAs operation and system may result in the practitioners' higher level competence in their job. Colleges and universities need to reach higher status SUC leveling to maintain or improve their services to the students.


### Conclusions
Based on the findings obtained from the study, the following conclusions are made:
The type of SUCs and SUC levelling contribute to the level of compliance, competencies and practices of student affairs and services practitioners.
Compliance with what the state colleges and universities require in the OSAs operation and system may result in the practitioners' higher level competence in their job. One's good performance may also result in better services extended among the students, which is expected at every office. These variables are interrelated; each supports the other for the better end results and attainment of the OSAS goals.
Student affairs and services practitioners are student-centered on the activities and services that complement academic instructions which are anticipated to support holistic student development for active involvement through various programs of the institution.
Practitioners showed better compliance, competencies, and best practices in many

areas in the office of student affairs, however, they need to improve in some areas to produce clientele satisfaction in terms of services.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendation is presented:

The student affairs and services practitioners may collaborate with the students and the administration to ensure a harmonious relationship between them, thus, attaining altogether the goals of the office.

The beneficiaries under the office of student affairs and services should be objectively assessing its individual indicator's success and contribution in achieving the goals and objectives of the office. Thus, the existing program should be enhanced to continuously serve the end-users.

Colleges and universities need to reach higher status SUC levelling in order to maintain or improve further their services to the students.

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