

Book Review / Recension d'ouvrage

Hardy Cox, D. & Strange, C. C. (Eds.) (2010). *Achieving student success: Effective student services in Canadian higher education*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press. 297 pages, ISBN: 9780773536210 (Hardcover), 9780773536227 (Paper).

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This is an edited book that encompasses 17 chapters by 16 contributing authors, including chapters by editors Donna Hardy Cox and C. Carney Strange, who provide introductions to each of the book's four sections. The book's dual project is captured in its title and subtitle. The central chapters provide accounts of the functioning of the contemporary (circa 2008) "Student Services" of the main title, ranging from Admissions through Orientation, Housing, Counselling, Student Leadership, Judicial Affairs, Health, Career, and Wellness in Canadian universities. These contributions are framed by conceptual chapters: two chapters at the beginning by the editors—the first of which is historical, tracing the development of student services in Canadian universities, and the second of which is theoretical, providing a conceptual framework for the achievement of the "Student Success" in the main title. Framing the collection at the back end is an additional conceptual chapter, again by the editors, "Principles and Strategies of Good Practice in Student Services." The book is uniformly well researched—a final References section spans thirty-seven pages and (helpfully) includes a section on Web Resources, organized around the various student services and further including the location of the web presence of their national (and in some cases, international) associations. Much of the content, research, and the frame of reference for the authors is Canadian—another real strength of the book.

It is the conceptual/framing chapters, and particularly the early chapter on "Theoretical Foundations of Student Success," that I found most informative. Here, Strange combines a synthesis of well-established models of psycho-social identity formation, including Levinson and Levinson and Chickering and Reisser, with an overview of theories of cognitive-structural development, exemplified by Piaget, Kohlberg, Perry, and others. To these, Strange adds a consideration of the literature on "personal preferences, styles and types," including Myers Briggs and others, and references to campus environment theory to produce a full conceptual framework within which to consider what the "success" of young adult learners might look like in a Canadian university context.

The central chapters on the services vary in the degree of specific reference to the conceptual framework and the titular theme of "Achieving Student Success." All provide good descriptions of the functioning of the particular service or range of services, and some lend themselves better than others to developing the theme of the main title—how do these services (or this group of services), as currently functioning in Canadian universities, contribute to student success? This is not really a criticism; some areas of student services just don't lend themselves as readily to the theme. For instance, Neuman's chapter on a range of Matriculation Services (enrolment, admissions, registrarial)—well-informed and well-written by a senior Canadian academic in the field—just does not provide much occasion to make the link to achieving student success explicit. Clearly university students would not "succeed," at least in

the simplest sense of gaining accreditation, if there were not services in place to admit them to universities and enrol them in courses, but there's not much incentive to elaborate on that obvious point, so such a chapter emphasizes instead the nature of these services and the ways in which their delivery has evolved in Canadian universities. On the other hand, chapters such as those on "Counselling Services" and "Career and Employment Services" are more explicitly focused on the ways in which these services contribute to student success. I think different kinds of readers—both those interested in knowing how student services have evolved in Canadian universities and those interested in a definition of success in student learning, expanded so as to encompass the service side of Canadian universities as well as the curricular/academic side—will feel well-served by the book.

The book also offers a nice combination of the approaches to understanding that Northrop Frye termed "diachronic" (historical) and "synchronic" (structural). Understanding of some phenomena really is aided by a diachronic unfolding—for instance, it's striking in Hardy Cox's "Foundations of Student Services in Canadian Higher Education" the degree to which student services have been shaped by the perceived needs of veterans returning to Canadian universities after World War II. It's also true that providing chapters on the principle student services, focused on how they function now, is extremely useful.

There is a particularly good summary chapter, "Student Services In Universities" in the third section of the book, in which Michel Ouellette considers the profile of student services in different kinds of Canadian universities, including those focused on undergraduate teaching as well as those more focused on research and graduate study. Not included in the "Contributors" section is the fact that, between writing his chapter and the publication of the book, Michel died at a tragically young age in June of 2009. I did not know Michel well, he preceded me at the University of New Brunswick, and we had a collegial relationship during his tenure as Canadian representative for the Association of College and University Housing Officers-International, ACUHO-I. His chapter captures particularly well his knowledge of the field, his professionalism, and his commitment to students, and these topics—research, professionalism, and commitment to student learning—resonate throughout all the chapters of this book.