Perceptions of the Work of Deans of Students in Selected Ghanaian Universities

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Michael Boakye-Yiadom
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This dissertation titled
Perceptions of the Work of Deans of Students in Selected Ghanaian Universities

by

MICHAEL BOAKYE-YIADOM

has been approved for
the Department of Counseling and Higher Education
and The Patton College of Education by

Peter C. Mather
Associate Professor of Counseling and Higher Education

Renée A. Middleton
Dean, The Patton College of Education
Abstract

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Perceptions of the Work of Deans of Students in Selected Ghanaian Universities

Director of Dissertation: Peter C. Mather

Available research and scholarship to serve as the basis for improving student services in Ghanaian universities are limited. The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions of the work by deans of students at Ghanaian universities and to further understand the ways in which their experiences, values and philosophy influence their roles on campus. In particular, the deans of students’ understanding of their work in providing student services, promoting student learning, student engagement, student development and success is of special interest in this study.

Available literature on traditional and innovative models of student affairs practices in the United States served as the theoretical framework of the study. Interviews, observations, and document analysis were used as sources of data collection in four selected Ghanaian universities.

Research findings from the data analysis showed that the traditional leadership mindset of many Ghanaian university staff members conflicted with the more liberal orientation of many students, leading to student-staff tension on the university campuses. I also found out that many deans of students’ offices in Ghanaian universities use an administrative-centered model of student affairs practice which is often bureaucratic and less student-centered.
Again, the study revealed that many students were not satisfied with the services provided by the deans of students’ offices. While the deans of students perceive students as children who need parental care on campus, students are demanding more innovative and progressive approaches to providing student services on campus. Both students and staff acknowledged inadequate resources as a major challenge in the service delivery efforts of the deans of students.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

In fall 1997, I started my college education at a public university in Ghana with very exciting expectations. It did not take long for me to revise my hopes, having realized that my wishes could differ from realities. I had expected a week’s orientation of activities to introduce me to the campus environment. I had also wanted to meet some university staff members for regular interactions to help me know available campus resources that could help me become successful as a college student. Above all, my dream was to have a memorable college experience that I could refer to as a life-long legacy.

Weeks and months into the academic year, the only university staff members that I had interacted with were my professors whom I had met in the classroom. Life outside the classroom seemed to be nobody’s business. I had seen the Office of the Hall Master (HM) and the Hall Administrator (HA) in the residence hall but had no idea about the services those offices offered. Even though I had also seen the Office of the Dean of Students, I had no idea of how that office related to students. Throughout my freshman year, I never had any interaction with either the HM or the HA. My first interaction with them was during the latter part of my sophomore year when I was elected as a member of the hall executive committee.

As secretary to the hall executive body, I became a member of the student senate, which afforded me the opportunity to meet the Dean of Students. It was at this point of my college life that I realized the Dean of Students was in charge of the Division of
Student Affairs which was expected to provide student services. In addition, I got to know that the conduct of student senate elections was the major annual task of the dean of students. Even though I was assigned to a hall counselor, the only time I met him was during end of semester get-together for counselees. I remember a sad incident when a friend of mine lost his two roommates on the same day through drowning. The friend did not receive much support from the dean of students’ office. Even though it was obvious he needed grief counseling, the office of the dean of students did not provide any counseling services for him. He left his room and lived in my room for the rest of the academic year. The only organized programs in the halls were the annual hall weeks, organized by individual hall executive bodies. The office of the dean of students’ interaction with students was very limited. My personal observation was that many students had frustrated college experiences. My greatest frustration was the fact that the dean of students’ office lacked adequate resources to serve students. This college experience inspired me to pursue a career in higher education and student affairs to help college students have better experience than I did.

My career path and research interests have been shaped by my undergraduate college experience in a Ghanaian public university. While working in a public university in Ghana between 2001 and 2007 as a hall administrator, I tried to help students have a better college experience by promoting programs that fostered their engagement in out-of-class learning. I always wondered how the dean of students’ office could make the university “a home and a community” for the students; and my current position at Ohio University as residential coordinator of Residential Housing in the Division of Student
Affairs has offered me the opportunity to understand and appreciate the significance of student involvement and engagement in the life of college students. The doctoral program in higher education I am pursuing at Ohio University further increased my interest in the work of deans of students. My understanding of higher education and student affairs theories, models and concepts has influenced my appreciation of student success. Throughout my doctoral studies, I have continued to ask myself how the role, experiences and perspectives of a dean of students are related to student services, student engagement, student success and the overall development of the college student.

My aim was to understand the role and perceptions of the work of deans of students in selected Ghanaian universities in relation to student services, student engagement and student success. I was also interested in understanding the deans of students’ experiences and philosophy that relate to their work. In particular, I looked at how these relationships affect the holistic development of the college student in making one a socially-responsible citizen capable of contributing to the success of Ghana’s developing democracy. A successful Ghanaian college student could become a responsible citizen with the potential to contribute positively to Ghana’s socio-economic development and also help to alleviate poverty in the nation.

**Globalization and Higher Education**

Many scholars around the World have argued that higher education is critical in global socio-economic development (Schuller, Preston, Hammond, Brassett-Grundy & Bynner, 2004). Many countries of the World have continued to prioritize the development of and access to higher education on their national agenda (David, 2007).
Sometimes, one wonders whether increased access to higher education is a social benefit or an individual asset (David). This debate has been part of the development of higher education for many years. As the World continues to become a global village, with higher education potentially providing the needed human resource, developing countries cannot afford to be left behind with limited access to higher education (World Bank, 2000). Accordingly, the World Bank, over the past decade, has encouraged governments and national institutions to increase budgetary allocations to the development of higher education (Manuh, 2002).

Globally, many people seem to compete for participation in higher education. Students in many countries strive for limited places in colleges and universities. Access to top-ranked universities has become a challenge for many students; funding continues to be a problem for many universities and colleges; and various levels and forms of competition exist among universities (UNESCO, 2009). As much as competition could be a catalyst for academic excellence, it could also lead to disunity and antagonism within academia (UNESCO).

Globalization has significantly influenced higher education in the 21st century (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). This reality has been partly influenced by collaborations and partnerships among universities, increased access to the internet, the social media, improved modern communication gadgets, and increased literacy rates in many countries. International organizations, national governments, and educational institutions have responded to globalization through the implementation of policies and programs such as exchange programs, study abroad opportunities, local and international
branch campuses, and the documentation of memorandum of understanding among universities (Altbach et al., 2009).

Available data indicate that the world’s higher education enrollment rate increased between 2000 and 2007 from 19% to 26% (UNESCO, 2009). Enrollment rates in many developing countries, however, recorded only about 2% increase from 2000 to 2007. Sub-Saharan Africa experienced about 5% higher education enrollment rate within the same period (UNESCO).

![Figure 1. Tertiary gross enrolment ratio by geographical region, 2000 and 2007](image)

Source: UNESCO, 2009

Research has shown that even though the introduction of policies by local and national governments have increased participation in and access to higher education in
many countries, the rich continue to have more access than the poor (UNESCO, 2009). According to the UNESCO report, national governments need to tackle socio-cultural and historical issues, and address economic undertones of societal inequalities if they are committed to providing a level-playing field for societal competition in the area of access to higher education.

**Higher Education, Wealth Creation and Poverty Reduction**

Studies have shown that higher education has the potential of creating wealth for the individual and the society (Morley, 2005). Therefore, higher education is often perceived as a poverty reduction tool. Again, available data indicate that all things being equal, one’s income increases with each additional year of education (Morley). This seems to justify that higher education potentially leads to poverty reduction, and one significant way to fight poverty reduction in the Sub-Saharan part of Africa is to increase access to and participation in higher education. Poverty often deprives people from reaching their full potentials, and that the poor is denied access to things they value and cherish in life (Sen, 1997). Higher education is the panacea to reducing poverty - it equips individuals to harness their potentials and capabilities.

**Demand and Supply of Higher Education in Ghana**

Ghanaian higher education suffers a basic capacity defect, with demand exceeding supply. According to Effah (2007), Ghana has seven public and thirty two private universities. Sixteen of these private universities are degree-awarding institutions. Higher education reforms in Ghana in the 1990s, coupled with government’s resolve to expand facilities in the nation’s universities, have led to an increase in enrolment rates
(Effah, 2003). Available data at the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) reveal that enrolment in Ghana’s universities is about 97,942 (NCTE, 2006, 2007). Indications are that higher education will continue to be the driving force in sustaining democratic principles needed for Ghana’s socio-economic development. University leadership in Ghana therefore has a responsibility to help students succeed in their college experience by ensuring that the Division of Student Affairs is well-resourced and oriented towards serving the needs of the students.

**Evolution of Student Affairs in the United States**

Contemporary student affairs practice in the United States has evolved from an era where practitioners were uncertain about the nature of their profession and responsibilities to a period of clearly-stated job descriptions, large disciplined staff, and well-defined organizational structure (Rhatigan, 2000). The Student Personnel Point of View (American Council on Education [ACE], 1937) and The Student Personnel Point of View (ACE, 1949) were two of the significant foundational documents that helped to define student affairs practice in the United States. Nuss (2003) opined that even though the 1937 version of The Student Personnel Point of View significantly influenced the core values of student affairs practice, it failed to offer an organizational structure for student affairs practitioners. The document observed the need for various units in an institution to coordinate and collaborate in the provision of such services as orientation, housing and dining, and extracurricular activities in order to avoid duplication (ACE, 1937). Furthermore, the document emphasized the holistic development of the student. The 1949 version of The Student Personnel Point of View, an updated version of the
1937 edition, identified certain areas as part of student personnel work. These included campus resources; organization of specialized functions; participation of students and student affairs practitioners in institutional administration; and the evaluation of programs (ACE, 1949). A significant recommendation of the 1949 document was the need to appoint “a single administrative head” (NASPA, 1989, p. 40) as leader of the college student personnel program.

As student affairs practice continued to evolve in US higher education, students began to agitate for increased attention and recognition which partly influenced the redefinition of the rights and responsibilities of American universities (Bickel & Lake, 1999). Many students were ready to take responsibility for their actions and demanded to be treated as adults. This led to the end of *in loco parentis* (in place of parents) in the 1960s and the 1970s, an era in US higher education when the colleges and universities were perceived as playing the role of parents (Bickel & Lake).

Prior to the introduction of these documents and events, faculty members served as deans of men and deans of women and performed similar roles as current student affairs practitioners (Rhatigan & Schuh, 1993). However, the emergence of research universities and faculty specialization gradually reduced faculty members’ involvement and interest in student affairs (Rudolph, 1990). Additionally, events such as the need to re-train war veterans led to the development of personality and career assessments (Thelin, 2004). Furthermore, the emergence of student development theorists in the late 1960s such as Arthur Chickering and James Marcia became catalysts for the need and call for student affairs as a profession (Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998).
Student councils and student personnel movements were advocating for the training of student affairs professionals (Rentz & Associates, 1996). Between 1945 and 1985, student affairs developed significantly in American higher education (Komives, Woodard & Associates, 2003). Many American colleges and universities now have full-time student affairs professionals helping to enrich student experiences during their college life (Komives, Woodard & Associates, 2003). In many institutions, the faculty’s involvement in students’ out of class lives is now limited.

**Statement of the Problem**

In contrast to research universities in the United States, faculty members at Ghanaian universities from a variety of disciplines play leading roles in student affairs units (UNESCO, 2004). In Ghana, for instance, professors are appointed by the Vice Chancellors to serve as deans of students in the universities. These deans of students generally continue their faculty appointments on a part-time basis, and, thus, have limited time to attend to the needs of students.

Perceptions and knowledge of the work of deans of students in Ghanaian universities in relation to student services and student success have not been researched. Due to this, there are limited available data to serve as the basis for improving student services and student success on college campuses in Ghana. In particular, information is lacking concerning why the dean of students in a Ghanaian university has limited interaction with students. Furthermore, literature concerning the philosophical foundations that shape deans’ work is unavailable. Therefore, it is important to develop a
model and a concept aimed at providing a well-defined partnership, collaboration, and relationship between the dean of students and the Ghanaian college student.

In many African countries, including Ghana, the dean of students is a regular faculty (professor) who spends a couple of hours a week in the division of student affairs to address student concerns. In my experience and with my interaction with many members of the Ghanaian university community, many students do not have access to the dean of students, and the office hardly organizes programs for students. Many areas of higher education such as funding, cost, access, affordability, and quality have been studied by Ghanaian researchers. It is timely and important to investigate the role and experiences of deans of students in relation to student services and student success. This challenge necessitates the involvement of educational leaders, scholars, and policymakers to systematically examine and understand the role and real-life experiences of deans of students in Ghanaian higher education for the provision of efficient and reliable student services for the facilitation of student success.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to understand the perceptions of the work by deans of students at Ghanaian universities and to further understand the ways in which their experiences, values and philosophy influence their roles on campus. In particular, the deans of students’ understanding of their work in providing student services, promoting student learning, student engagement, student development and success is of special interest in the study.
Research Questions

In the light of the above-stated purpose of the study, the following research questions guided the study:

1. How does the university community perceive the work of the dean of students?
   a. The Vice Chancellor / President
   b. The Pro-Vice Chancellor / Vice President
   c. Faculty
   d. Staff at the deans of students offices
   e. Students

2. How do the deans of students describe the performance of their duties?
   a. Philosophies and values
   b. Student needs as interpreted by the deans of students, staff at the deans’ offices, and students
   c. The offices of the deans of students response to student needs
   d. The challenges the deans of students face in the discharge of their duties, and how they work through the challenges

3. How do the deans of students perceive changes and the future of their offices?

Significance of the Study

Research has shown that positive student interaction and engagement on college campus potentially could result in the holistic development of the college student and prepare one to become a responsible global citizen (Manning, Kinzie & Schuh, 2006). Such a citizen has the potential to contribute positively to a country’s democratic
governance and the socio-economic development of the country. The leadership style and student affairs philosophy of the dean of students can significantly influence the kind of interaction that takes place between the student affairs division and the students. Again, the availability of the dean of students and the quality of services the office provides are important elements in student development.

The significance of the study is echoed in its analysis of the role and experiences of the deans of students in relation to perceptions and identification of themes. Also, the study makes recommendations for Ghanaian higher education leadership to redefine the mission of student affairs divisions for the achievement of more quality student experiences on campus. It also offers research opportunities for other related student affairs areas. Additionally, it serves as a research document and reference for university leadership and student affairs professionals to serve students in a more professional manner.

**Delimitations and Limitations of the Study**

This study focuses on how the research participants perceive the work of the deans of students in the selected Ghanaian universities. Typical of qualitative research, the findings are not generalized to other contexts because of the restriction to only four universities in Ghana. My goal is to have a deeper understanding of the area under study to provide baseline knowledge for student development through positive interactions with the deans of students. Notwithstanding this delimitation, the findings could be useful since universities in Ghana and other African countries share many similarities.
One identified limitation of the study was that the two months time frame designated for field work may be perceived as not sufficient to do comprehensive follow-up interviews. Staying a little longer on the field might have been helpful to interact more with the research participants. I am confident that the two months were enough to meet the goals of the research.

The success of the study depended on the willingness of the research participants to be involved in the research. However, certain problems related to interview research were difficult to prevent. I sought ways to reduce potential problems by seeking acceptance and approval of the research participants.

**Definition of Terms**

Higher Education – Usually referred to as tertiary education in Ghana, is education at all postsecondary educational institutions. Examples of higher education institutions are universities, colleges, polytechnics, technical schools, teacher and nursing training colleges, etc.

Division of Student Affairs – Generally referred to as the Office of Dean of Students in Ghana, coordinates the various student services on campus in collaboration with relevant university offices.

Vice Chancellor – Refers to the President of the University.

Hall Master – Refers to a part-time director of a residence hall. The hall master may be a faculty member or an administrator who has been given an additional responsibility by the Vice Chancellor to supervise the management of a residence hall.
Hall Administrator – Coordinates and manages the day-to-day administration of a residence hall, and reports to the Master.

Student Involvement/Engagement – Activities that offer students the opportunity to stay connected to the overall college experience aimed at complementing scholarly work, student development, and preparing students to be global citizens.

Student Success – Refers to retention, graduation, and educational attainment.

Student Services – Refers to programs and activities aimed at the holistic well-being, growth and development of students. In Ghana, they include student orientation, counseling and health services, conduct of student senate elections, and other related services in the halls of residence and at the Dean of Students’ Office.

Chapter Summary

Chapter one was the introduction to the study. I explained the background of the study which set the tone for the statement of the problem. Other major sub topics I addressed in chapter one included the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the significance of the study. I also discussed the delimitations and limitations of the study. Finally, I defined selected terms to help the reader understand the use of the terms in the context of Ghanaian higher education.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The main objective of this study is to understand the role and experiences of selected deans of students in Ghanaian universities. The study specifically explores the philosophies and values of deans of students; the student affairs models at the deans’ offices; perceived student needs and services; and the challenges facing student affairs in Ghana. This chapter focuses on review of related literature and theoretical framework that offers student affairs models to guide the study. The review of related literature includes the use of relevant scholarly publications and documents to help understand the experiences of selected deans of students in Ghanaian universities. The literature review section in this chapter is organized in six main thematic areas:

1. Chieftaincy and Traditional Leadership in Ghana
2. History and the State of Higher Education in Ghana
3. Higher Education and Student Affairs in the United States
4. Higher Education and Development
5. Challenges Facing Student Affairs Professionals
6. Theoretical Framework: Models of Student Affairs Practice

Chieftaincy and Traditional Leadership in Ghana

Magolda and Baxter Magolda (2011) view culture as a representation of the sociopolitical context.

Culture is neither universal nor unchanging. Culture shapes our lives, but our lives also shape culture. Language informs every aspect of culture.
How we communicate, what we communicate about, and what we omit in communication reveal our cultural understandings and values while simultaneously creating them. When individuals create communities in resistance to certain values or norms of the dominant culture, subcultures form (p. 155).

One aspect of Ghanaian culture that seems to have shaped aspects of educational leadership is chieftaincy (Sarpong, 1974). Many people in Ghana revere the chieftaincy institution which has survived the test of time. The 1992 Constitution of Ghana recognizes the institution chieftaincy in Article 277 (Kludze, 2000). A chief is a person from a royal family, identified by the kingmakers as heir to the throne, nominated and selected, kept in a secret place for a period of time and trained, and ultimately crowned as chief as custom demands (Constitution of Ghana, 1992).

The history of chieftaincy in Ghana has it that prior to contemporary national democratic governance, the chief symbolized the three arms of government, the executive, the legislature and the judiciary (Obeng, 1986). Similar to previous constitutions of the Republic of Ghana, the 1992 Constitution recognizes chieftaincy. The roles of traditional councils, regional houses of chiefs, and the National House of Chiefs have been specified in the 1992 Constitution of Ghana. Chiefs in Ghana are barred from active partisan politics (Constitution of Ghana, 1992). Article 272 of Ghana’s constitution provides the functions of the Regional Houses of Chiefs and the National House of Chiefs. These institutions are recognized as the traditional forms of governance in their respective traditional areas. Among others, the chiefs play significant roles in the
development of their towns and villages. Ghana’s Local Government Act has made provision for traditional rulers to be appointed to serve on their respective Local Government Assemblies (Constitution of Ghana, 1992).

Chiefs in Ghana are the custodians of communal lands and natural resources. The societal expectation is that chiefs must use these resources to help develop their towns and villages. Some of the major challenges faced by the chieftaincy institution in Ghana are government interference, lack of accountability in some palaces, corruption and embezzlement of communal resources, and conflicts (Obeng, 1986). Chiefs need to realize that they are accountable to their people and that their role in the socio-economic development of their localities is very crucial. Therefore, one expects them to demonstrate participatory decision-making process (Obeng).

**History and the State of Higher Education in Ghana**

Higher education institutions are post-secondary colleges that aim at producing high quality skills, knowledge, and competencies needed for development (World Bank, 2010). These institutions include universities, community colleges, polytechnics, nursing and teacher training colleges, technical and vocational institutes, etc. Different countries have different types and structure of higher education institutions. Available reports, data, and documents have revealed that the World Bank has been supportive of the development of higher education in many countries (World Bank, 2010). Between 1990 and 2009, the Bank provided financial support and higher education reform initiatives to many regions of the world including Latin America, the Caribbean, East Asia, the Pacific, and Africa. Others are South and Central Asia, Middle East, and Europe (World
Bank). Examples of initiatives identified in the report were the Life Long and Training Project in Argentina, and the Second Higher Education Project in Nepal and Vietnam.

In many African countries, the demand for higher education far outweighs its supply (Bloom, Canning, & Chan. 2006). According to Bloom et al., many African countries including Malawi, Mozambique, Angola, Mauritania, Benin and Ghana have such situations as overcrowded residence halls and lecture theaters; inadequate resources to support faculty, administrators and students; and lack of transparency in the decision-making process. Anamuah-Mensah (2007) stated that African universities need a paradigm shift from “conventional approaches to alternative (out-of-the-box)” (p. 14) approaches to teacher education. He explained that faculty and staff need not present themselves as bosses but friends and mentors. He added that students should not be referred to as only knowledge consumers, but problem solvers capable of contributing to the decision-making process.

Historically, higher education in Ghana was modeled after the British system generally characterized by teacher-centered activities and programs where students are perceived as knowledge consumers (Effah, 2007). This model, which is less student-centered, has shaped the campus environment of many universities in Ghana. In comparison to the quality of African higher education, Paul Effah (2007) “attributed the strengths of the US higher education system to competition, strategic leadership, and limited but vital role accorded to the state” (p. 19).

Higher education in Ghana, as compared to that of the United States, is very young (Yesufu, 1973). Even though one can argue that Ghana had exposure to university
education in the 19th century in terms of the popular utilization of higher education, the actual growth and development of college education began in the 20th century (Effah, 2003; Saint, 1992). The then colonial government established Achimota College in 1924, to offer elementary, middle, and secondary school education (Effah, 2003). Achimota College also provided pre-college courses in engineering (Effah). In 1948, the University College of the Gold Coast (UCGC) which was affiliated with the University of London was established (Teferra & Altbach, 2003). UCGC attained full university status in 1961 with the autonomy to award degrees. With this academic independence and authority, its name was changed to the University of Ghana (Teferra & Altbach). Contrary to the colonial government’s practice of regionalizing higher education institutions where the then University College of Gold Coast (University of Ghana), for instance, catered for many English speaking West African countries, Ghana established two additional public universities immediately after independence (Auala, 1991).

The Kumasi College of Technology, founded in October 1951 by the then Colonial Government, was the second higher education institution in Ghana. It was upgraded in 1961 (four years after independence) to university status with a new name – University of Science and Technology (Effah, 2003). The University of Science and Technology (UST) was renamed the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in 1998. The University College of Cape Coast (UCCC) was established in 1962, and it became Ghana’s third university. It was granted autonomy in 1971 as the University of Cape Coast (UCC).
Four new public universities, Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA); University for Development Studies (UDS); University of Education, Winneba (UEW); and University of Mines and Technology, Tarkwa, have been established (Effah, 2007). Student enrollment in the various Ghanaian universities increased by about 165% from 1992 to 1999 (Effah, 2007). Postgraduate students represented 6% of total enrollment in 2000 at the University of Cape Coast. In addition to the seven public universities, sixteen of the thirty two private universities in Ghana are degree-awarding. Prominent among these private universities are Central University; Valley View University; Ashesi University; Wisconsin University College of Ghana; Methodist University College; Catholic University College of Ghana; Islamic University; Methodist University College; and the Presbyterian University College (NCHE, 2009).

Ishumi (1990) argues that the development of higher education in post-colonial Ghana was necessary for many reasons: to produce well-educated and functionally-competent human and social capital to manage various sectors of the national economy; to create and imprint a positive international image for the country by establishing new and expanding existing institutions of higher education to cater for increasing student enrollments; and to ultimately eradicate mass illiteracy and create within the national community a literate and innovative citizens whose productivity and skills would form an asset in the production and accumulation of national wealth.

The development of higher education and student affairs in the United States was the product of the dynamic evolution of democratic society (ACE, 1937, 1949; Rudolph, 1990), and this same factor influenced the development and sustenance of higher
education in Ghana (Gyimah-Boadi, 1994). Kunz (1995) describes civil society as a group of individuals, often referred to as pressure group, with a common goal of advocating for an end to autocracy and the introduction of accountability. During the 1970s and the 1980s, Ghana experienced various levels of political instability through many coups d’état, and noble civil society groups courageously championed the development of higher (post-secondary) education and the sustenance of academic freedom. These included the University Teachers Association of Ghana (UTAG), National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS), the Ghana Bar Association (GBA), the Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCB), the Christian Council of Ghana (CCB), and the Association of Recognized Professional Bodies (ARPB) (Gyimah-Boadi, 1994). In my opinion, the ultimate goal of both higher education and civil society in the Ghanaian context is the betterment of society. This is a necessary condition for the growth and development of Ghana’s higher education sector in the 21st century. Ghana’s higher education is still evolving, and it continues to draw from the experiences of the British and the American systems of higher education.

**Higher Education and Student Affairs in the United States**

The development of higher education in the United States started with the establishment of the first American Colleges by religious groups as centers for the propagation of the faith (Thelin, 2004). These colleges had liberal arts curriculum. The faith-based institutions did not last for too long – secular-based institutions soon took over. The oldest university in the United States, Harvard University, graduated more
clergymen in the 17th century, but the percentage of graduating clergymen declined with time (Thelin, 2004).

The development of student affairs takes its roots from Harvard University in 1890, when the institution appointed its first dean of men (Thelin). Many of the residential colleges at the time had lived-in tutors where the tutors lived in staff apartments in the residence halls. LeBaron Russell Briggs was the first dean of men responsible for academic advising and student discipline. The dean of men therefore handled the regular student-related issues on daily basis. The University of Chicago, in an attempt to replicate Harvard University’s practice, appointed Alice Freeman Palmer in 1892 as its first dean of women (Komives, Woodard & Associates, 2003). The first meeting of the various deans of men and women in some US universities was held in December 1918. Among the attendees were Robert Rienow who was the dean of men at the University of Iowa and the dean of men at the University of Illinois, Thomas Arkle Clark. Many higher education experts and student affairs practitioners believe that this meeting gave birth to NASPA (Student Affairs Administration in Higher Education) (Komives, Woodard & Associates).

The evolution of student affairs in the US became evident in 1968 when state and federal laws empowered 18 year olds with voting rights (Westmeyer, 1985). Student affairs continued to evolve with debates that centered on universities’ responsibilities to students and their relationship with students, to the extent of the role modeling expectations of university staff (Westmeyer, 1985). There were other debates that related
to the availability of graduate programs in US universities that prepared people for student affairs as a profession (Komives, Woodard & Associates, 2003).

Many student affairs positions have Master’s degrees in Higher Education, College Student Personnel, Counseling, and other related graduate degrees as the minimum requirements (Komives et al., 2003). Also, many senior and middle level higher education and student affairs positions have a Ph.D. or Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration, Student Affairs, Educational Leadership or College Counseling as the required qualifications (Komives et al.). The constantly changing characteristics of college students confirm the significance of student affairs as a profession not only in American higher education, but in some parts of Europe and Africa. That notwithstanding, student continues to face challenges due to emerging trends in the field.

**Higher Education and Development**

Higher education is seen as possessing both private and public benefits (UNESCO, 1998). Morley (2007) pointed out that as a public good “it contributes to wealth creation, the development of civil society, social security and peace; [and as private good], it has the potential to enhance the wealth and life choices of graduates” (p.198).

Studies have shown that higher education benefits include private economic and social benefits as well as public economic and social benefits (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 1998). Table 1, retrieved from http://www.ihep.org/assets/files/publications/mr/ReapingTheBenefits.pdf, shows examples of these benefits.
Table 1. The Array of Higher Education Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic: Increased revenues, greater productivity, increased consumption, increased workforce flexibility, decreased reliance on government financial support.</td>
<td>Higher salaries and benefits, employment, higher savings levels, improved working conditions, personal/professional mobility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social: Reduced crime rates, increased charitable giving/community service, increased quality of civic life, improved ability to adapt to and use technology.</td>
<td>Improved health/life expectancy, improved quality of life for offspring, better consumer decision making, increased personal status, more hobbies and leisure activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Various international organizations, governments, national organizations, and research/academic institutions have made efforts to create awareness about the benefits of higher education through the publication of research findings and other related reports (College Board, 2004; National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2004).
The globalised knowledge economy has resulted in a situation in which more people desire to acquire higher skills and competencies (Brock-Utne, 1999). This has led to the demand for higher education exceeding the supply of higher education in many countries. Morley (2007) noted that the global realization of the significance of higher education in national and international politics has led to an increased participation in higher education across the globe. Africa recognizes the danger and risk to the continent’s development if it ignores higher as a priority area. In 2002, the World Bank recognized “the need to embrace a more balanced, holistic approach to . . . the entire lifelong education system, irrespective of a country’s income level” (World Bank, 2002, p. x). Available literature on higher education in Africa has revealed many significant concerns (Makhubu, 1998; Mlama, 1998). Prominent among them are the role of higher education in wealth creation, higher education financing, the development of private higher educational institutions, and issues of leadership, and inadequate qualified personnel due to brain drain (Morley 2007).

For several decades, donor governments focused their attention on early grades education. However, the World Bank and other donor organizations are now increasing their attention on the development of higher education in less developed countries such as countries in sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2010). In 2003, the former United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, at a Regional Capacity Building Conference on Tertiary Education in Africa, said access to higher education should be Africa’s key to economic growth and development. Mr. Annan emphasized the role of African universities to develop curriculum capable of equipping university students with the knowledge, skills,
and competencies needed to function as global citizens. He charged African scholars to be role models and train the youth with potentials to diagnose Africa’s problems and recommend solutions to the many challenges confronting Africa (United Nations Information Service, 2004).

In April 2008, the US State Department sponsored and convened an international higher education summit aimed at bringing stakeholders from different higher education institutions all over the world (USAID, 2008). The main goal was to form partnerships and strengthen the resource capacity of universities abroad. Many participants at the summit acknowledged that the challenges of Sub-Saharan Africa’s higher education needed to be addressed with the urgency they deserved. The then President of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, Peter McPherson said that many African universities were struggling with inadequate resources, including staffing. He added that many professors did not have terminal degrees and lacked the experience and expertise to adequately prepare students for the global market. Peter McPherson called for support in areas of partnerships, collaborations, and scholarships to help strengthen the human resource capacity of African universities (USAID, 2008).

Studies have shown that well-resourced universities and access to higher education are critical to economic development and poverty reduction (Bloom, Canning, &Chan, 2006). Many African countries, including Ghana, need to provide services and programs capable of enriching student experiences on campus while engaging them in activities aimed at making them successful college students. This a necessary condition
for training students to acquire knowledge, skills and competencies needed for national economic development.

**Challenges Facing Student Affairs Professionals**

Among the major challenges faced by student affairs practitioners and professionals in the United States today are the influxes of technology, parental involvement, changing characteristics of student populations, and the commercialization of higher education. The influx of technology into student affairs has created a need for increased technological literacy. It is every practitioner’s responsibility to become computer literate. Simply knowing how to use word processing programs is not the answer. Computer literacy means being able to access the internet and whatever it evolves into; knowing how to use email and listservs to converse with colleagues, researchers in the field, and students and staff; and working with campus technicians to improve student services (US Department of Education, 2006). Technological changes are here to stay, and because of this, student affairs practitioners are faced with a new responsibility of being knowledgeable about the changing uses of technology. Student affairs practitioners need to take responsibility to become knowledgeable and begin to develop competency in this field because it will be a core competency in the next century (US Department of Education, 2006).

A US nationwide study has confirmed that many university students have become over reliant on computers, the internet, and the social media (Gohn & Albin, 2006). Recognizing that students have become increasingly dependent on technology provides rationale for student affairs administrators to be more vigilant in their focus of the
services they offer students. The increased student dependency on technology has caused a tremendous need for student affairs practitioners to provide technologically-based services (Urcraft, 2003). This trend also makes it the responsibility of student personnel administration programs to provide future professionals with knowledge of the trends and issues regarding technology.

Parents’ involvement with their children in colleges poses a challenge for student affairs professionals. This involvement is influenced by students’ rights and privacy, rising tuition costs and consumerism, accountability movement in higher education, and advances in technology (Cutright, 2008). Parents are unsure of the rights of their children as adults and students. Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA) requirements confuse some parents (Cutright, 2008). In their attempt to understand these acts, parents tend to be perceived as being overly involved. Many parents become involved as advocates because they want the best return for their investment and may assert purchasing or property rights (US Department of Education, 2006). Magolda and Baxter Magolda (2011) said:

Today’ college students “…seem more highly receptive to this parental involvement than collegians during the previous four decades. …This increased parental involvement is not solely a result of parental desires but is coupled with technology (e.g. cell phones, video conferencing) that facilitates near constant contact with their children” (p. 195).

Parents’ expectations of college are affected by consumerism (NSSE, 2008). Values have shifted from the perceived societal good of college education to the view that
college education is a personal investment. Rising costs of tuition have increasingly outpaced inflation. In many recognized magazine reviews and popular rankings, education is now regarded as an expensive commodity that both the poor and the rich aspire to invest in (NSSE).

College student demographics continue to change, resulting in changing student needs and services (Gohn & Albin, 2006). The number of non-traditional students is increasing in many US colleges, and more international students are enrolling in American higher education, resulting in changing student characteristics (Andres & Finlay, 2004). Student affairs professionals therefore have to create intentional, innovative programs to meet these changing needs. The need for regular professional development in the wake of these emerging trends cannot be over-emphasized. However, the current economic difficulties have made it almost impossible for many colleges to adequately support the professional development needs of student affairs professionals (Magolda & Baxter Magolda, 2011). My interactions with some student affairs practitioners from many institutions in Ohio, in the United States, suggest that professional development funds have been cut by many schools, making it difficult for some student affairs practitioners to attend regular conferences. Student affairs divisions are now embarking on fund-raising activities to support their budget, and for many of them, the slogan has been “doing more with less resources.”

Even though higher education administrators in Ghana may share similar challenges with their United States counterparts, it will be presumed that some of the
issues and needs facing the former may be different. The study should uncover particular challenges facing student affairs practice in Ghana.

**Theoretical Framework: Models of Student Affairs Practice**

In the United States, higher education has experienced increased levels of public concern over the past two decades. Prominent among these concerns are calls for improved undergraduate experience and greater accountability for student learning outcomes (Manning, Kinzie & Schuh, 2006). Many articles and publications have called for action plans to help bolster student involvement and engagement on college campuses. Examples of such publications are *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), *Student Learning Imperative* (American College Personnel Association, 1996), and *Learning Reconsidered* (American College Personnel Association [ACPA] & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators [NASPA], 2004) The ultimate goal, according to these publications, is to offer intentional student services that facilitate the achievement of student success, which Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, and Associates (2005) refer to as retention, graduation, and educational attainment.

In a tradition espousing the importance of student engagement, Astin (1983); Pace (1982) and the National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE] (2002) have provided substantial evidence that student engagement is a significant factor for student success. According to NSSE (2002), the on-campus activities that students are involved in and the levels of their engagement in these activities are necessary conditions for student success. The formal academic curriculum and the out-of-class involvements provide different but
complementary experiences for student engagement. Academic units may offer orientation sessions for freshmen different from what student affairs may offer in the residence halls. Residence halls staff may engage students in community service, while faculty may also involve students in service-learning. Even though these may be planned and designed differently and separately, the ultimate goal for both interactions is to achieve student engagement and success. Manning et al. (2006) defined student engagement as the “time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities” (p. 24). The impact a college experience has on a student depends on one’s involvement in the available curricular and co-curricular activities (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). In many instances, when the campus environment is perceived by students as supportive and congenial for the overall learning experience, student engagement occurs (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

In an attempt to relate the campus environment to student engagement, student success, and student services, the Documenting Effective Educational Practice (DEEP) project was launched in 2002 (Manning et al., 2006). This project was aimed at identifying best student affairs practices and models in colleges and universities that had achieved significant levels of student engagement, success, and graduation higher than predicted rates. Also, the project was aimed at discovering, documenting, and describing the various intentional programs and activities that distinguish high achieving institutions from other universities and colleges whose levels of effectiveness are relatively low. According to Kuh et al. (2005), many of the DEEP institutions employed innovative
homegrown ideas and student affairs models that uniquely distinguished them from other institutions. These models define the student services they offer.

Manning et al. (2006) identify six traditional models of student affairs practice from available literature. The DEEP project, on the other hand, offers five innovative models of student affairs practice that have yielded positive results in the DEEP institutions. The six traditional models are: extracurricular; functional silos; student services; co-curricular; seamless learning; and competitive models. The five innovative models are: student-centered ethic of care; student-driven; student agency; academic and student affairs collaboration; and academic-centered. The extracurricular model “rests on a foundation of psychosocial student development and leadership theory” (Manning et al., 2006, p. 43). This model tends to support out-of-class programs and activities. Rhatigan (2003) opines that the model is rooted in the 1937 Student Personnel Point of View (ACE, 1937), which outlined many uncoordinated services which were united through a broad educational philosophy. Furthermore, the extracurricular model helps with the expansion of programs and policies; and also offers faculty the opportunity to concentrate on teaching and research (Manning et al., 2006). The functional silo model depicts student affairs practice involving minimal collaboration with other units. The Student Learning Imperative (ACPA, 1996) suggests that each functional unit is decentralized and autonomous. This offers specialized expertise for student services. This model seems to be administration-centered rather than student-centered.

The student services model usually has clustered functions and services (Manning et al, 2006). In this model, one assumes that the purpose of student affairs is to offer
student services; and that provision and promotion of student services and student
development respectively are separate and can be handled by different educators. Even
though this model seems to be convenient in terms of access to services, it lacks
integration of various functions and services (Kuh et al., 2005). The co-curricular model
distinguishes out-of-class programs from the formal classroom curricular, and further
expects student affairs professionals and the faculty to place greater emphasis and
concentrate on their respective areas of expertise (Brown, 1972). This model does not
view student affairs and academic affairs as complementary to each other. The seamless
learning model recognizes the need for collaboration in student learning experiences, and
is consistent with the philosophy espoused in The Student Learning Imperative (ACPA,
1996). Both student affairs and academic affairs collaborate for improved student
involvement and engagement. The competitive model sets an agenda for rivalry between
student affairs and academic units. This model discourages collaboration and could lead
to unhealthy and unnecessary competition which could work against the overall student
learning experience. In this model, many student affairs professionals care less about how
their programs affect and relate to services at academic units.

The student-centered ethic of care emphasizes on care and relationships, and
responds to those in need (Gulligan, 1982; Nodding, 1984). Caring involves entering into
others’ frame of reference. When there is care, one prioritizes the needs and expectations
of other people (Nodding, 1984). The level of service available in this model is driven by
the ability of student affairs to devote time to students in need. There is compassionate
means of response and a climate where each member is valued. This leads to the
development of an environment of trust. Critics of this model suggest that the student-centered ethic of care has the tendency to treat students like children and is less efficient than some alternative models, such as the student driven model.

The student-driven model assumes trust in students’ ability to manage collegiate functions (Manning et al., 2006). This creates an “environment of belief in empowered students” (p. 103). The model promotes student involvement, engagement, and success. It works best among traditional students in traditional college settings— that is, where students spend much of their time, and have the greatest potential to invest time in the social and cultural, as well as the academic dimensions of university life. The student-driven model both relies on and encourages personal agency among students. According to Bandura (2001), the concept of personal agency involves one’s ability to have control over one’s life. Bandura (2001) further asserts that in the student agency model, students are in charge of programs and activities that directly affect their out-of-class experiences. Also, students collaborate with faculty and staff as equal partners. The strength of this model lies in students’ motivation to be involved and contribute as educators. External stakeholders such as parents may question the rationale of this model because it tends to empower and allow students to take control over their life with.

The academic-student affairs collaboration model takes its roots from The Student Learning Imperative (ACPA, 1996), which recognized the need for a joint commitment to student learning. The document encouraged student affairs and academic units to collaborate in shared responsibility for better student involvement and success (Kuh et al., 2005). In the academic-centered model, student affairs division is very active in the
provision of support systems to make academics work for students (NSSE, 2003).

Student affairs professionals understand the emphasis on promoting academic environment. They therefore are committed to the academic mission of the institution.

**Conclusion**

Available literature seems to indicate that the purpose of higher education is to promote the holistic growth and development of college students through the acquisition of knowledge to make them effective citizens for development. Formal academic curricular and co-curricular activities play significant role in student engagement and success. Academic staff and student affairs professionals need to collaborate to enhance student success. Whereas research findings in the United States have provided data to enhance the collaboration between academic units and students affairs, there is almost no data on student affairs in Ghanaian higher education. My hope is that this study will be a motivation for other researchers to focus their attention on student affairs in Ghana. I am also hopeful that I may be able to get additional information during the fieldwork.

**Chapter Summary**

In chapter two, I reviewed and discussed available, relevant, and related literature to the study. In particular, I reviewed literature related to the following sub topics: Chieftaincy and traditional leadership in Ghana; history and the state of higher education in Ghana; higher education and student affairs in the United States; and higher education and development. The others were challenges facing student affairs professionals, and the theoretical framework that guided the study. The theoretical framework I discussed was the models of student affairs practice.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology that I used in the study and it also provides rationale for the selection of the methodology. The chapter provides a brief description of the sample size, sampling technique, data collection sources and procedure, and data analysis procedure. I conducted basic interpretive qualitative study, and used multi interpretive case studies. Also, grounded theory analytical procedure was used for data analysis. The purpose of the study was to understand the perceptions of the work of deans of students in Ghanaian universities as they provide student services and interact with students.

The main research interest was to find out the university community’s perception of the work of the deans of students; and to understand the deans’ experiences, values and philosophy in relation to their work. The research questions included: How does the university community perceive the work of the dean of students? How do the deans of students describe the performance of their duties? How do the deans of students perceive changes and the future of their offices?

Research Design

The research questions were investigated through qualitative research design that consisted of interviews of deans of students, staff at the deans’ offices, vice chancellors (presidents), and focus groups of students. Observations were also used to help me experience the different types of interactions that take place in the offices of the deans of students. The observations were more opportunistic and informal than planned. I used
documents, in addition to the interviews and the focus group interviews for data triangulation, which Patton (2002) describes as the “use of a variety of data sources in a study” (p. 247). Marshall and Rossman (1989) underscore the need for flexibility in the data collection process in qualitative research. Patton (2002) suggests that one could change the research design when appropriate and offer justification for modifying the design. There were few times during the fieldwork that I made changes to the interview guide in response to particular data collection needs. Patton (2002) noted “that certain purposes, questions, problems, and situations are more consonant with qualitative methods than others” (p. 145). Due to the purpose of this study, qualitative inquiry seems to be the most ideal research design to help answer and address the research questions.

In using qualitative inquiry for this study, I conducted the study in a natural setting and had no intention to manipulate the environment or the participants of interest. Patton (2002) indicated that “the phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally in that it has no predetermined course established by and for the researcher such as would occur in a laboratory or other controlled setting” (p. 39). I visited the sites where my research participants lived and interacted with them in their natural settings through interviews, observations and focus group interviews.

The questions I asked the participants were open-ended. I recorded the views of the participants with the goal of understanding the experiences of deans of students in Ghanaian universities. I conducted basic interpretive qualitative study, which Merriam (1998) described as one of the most commonly used form of qualitative inquiry in educational research where the researcher “seeks to discover and understand a
phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved” (p. 11). I used interpretive case studies that facilitated the development of conceptual categories from the data which I used to compare the theoretical framework in chapter two. The case studies involved four higher education institutions in Ghana.

Furthermore, I used grounded theory analytical procedures for the study. Glaser and Strauss (1967) proposed “the constant comparative method of data analysis” (p. 159) to help develop grounded theory; and “because the basic strategy of the constant comparative method is compatible with the inductive, concept-building orientation of all qualitative research, the constant comparative method of data analysis has been adopted by many researchers who are not seeking to build substantive theory” (p. 159).

**Pilot Study**

Pilot studies help to clarify aspects of the main study, and they are alleged to be worth the time and effort (Light, Singer & Willet, 1990). Therefore, I conducted a pilot study and interviewed the dean of students of the University of Development Studies, Tamale, Ghana. The telephone interview lasted about two hours. The pilot study enabled me to test my interview protocol and my recording device. It also helped me have a fair idea of the potential duration of the interviews and possible follow-up questions. Even though it was a telephone interview, which did not represent a natural setting for the dean of students, it still served a very good purpose. It boosted my confidence for the fieldwork, and helped me to shape the interview guide.
Research Sites

Glesne (1998) states that a researcher’s interest, focus, expected learning outcome and the purpose and significance of the study usually determine the number of research sites. Being aware of my interest, my expected learning outcome, and the purpose and significance of the study, I limited the study to three public universities and one private university in Ghana. My data collection expectations and the type and sources data that I needed for the research further determined the selection of the research sites (Adusah-Karikari, 2008; Atuahene, 2006).

Currently, Ghana has six public universities: The University of Ghana, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), the University of Cape Coast (UCC), the University of Mines and Technology (UMT), the University of Development Studies (UDS) and the University of Education, Winneba. In addition to these public universities are about 18 private universities in Ghana. Limited resources, including time, would make it practically unrealistic to focus on all the colleges and universities in Ghana. Patton (2002) said:

No rule of thumb exists to tell a researcher precisely how to focus a study.

The extent to which, a research or evaluation study is broad or narrow depends on the purpose, the resources available, the interests of those involved (p. 228).

Using Patton's (2002) "critical case sampling procedure” (p. 236), three public universities, namely, Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, and the University of Cape
Coast were selected. Additionally, one private university, the Central University College was also selected. These sites were selected as “critical cases” (p. 236) for the study.

The importance of the critical case process was emphasized by Patton (2002) who said:

Looking for the critical case is particularly important where resources may limit the evaluation to the study of only a single site. Under such conditions, it makes strategic sense to pick the site that would yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge. While studying one or a few critical cases does not technically permit broad generalizations to all possible cases, logical generalization can often be made from weight of evidence produced in studying a single, critical case (p. 236).

The University of Cape Coast (UCC) is located in Cape Coast, a historic town and the tourist hub of Ghana. UCC’s College of Education and the Center for Continuing Education seem to be its centers of attraction. The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) is located in Kumasi, Ghana’s second largest city. KNUST has a Medical School and a very popular School of Engineering. GIMPA is a public university located in Accra. A majority of its students are non-traditional and commuters. GIMPA has recently hired a full-time administrator as the Director of Student Affairs. GIMPA was chosen as one of the research sites so that I could interview the new Director of Student Affairs, to help me understand why they moved away from using faculty as dean of students. The Central University is a private higher education
institution established by the International Central Gospel Church. The University is proud of its Information Technology programs and business-related courses.

**Sampling**

The sample for the study consisted of 36 participants from 4 case institutions, whose characteristics are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Research Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Participant</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vice Chancellor (President)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Vice Chancellor (Provost)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean of Students</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Dean of Students</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education Expert</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff at the Deans of Students’ Offices</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sampling Method**

Purposeful or purposive sampling was used for the selection of participants for the research. Merriam (1998) indicates that “purposive sampling is based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore one needs to select a
sample from which one can learn most” (p.48). Again, one can refer to purposeful
sampling as criterion sampling due to the researcher’s role of setting the criteria for the
selection of the respondents. There are 16 types of purposeful sampling that are available
for use qualitative studies (Patton, 2002). Three main purposeful sampling methods were
used in this study: Criterion sampling was used for selecting the vice chancellor, the pro
vice chancellor, the deans of students, and staff at the deans’ offices. Snowball, also
known as chain sampling, and stratified purposeful sampling were used for the student
participants. The choice of these methods for the study was influenced by the varying
characteristics of the various groups of participants involved in some of the sample
categories. Snowball helped me to identify students who could provide useful data for the
study; and since the students had different class ranks and gender, stratified purposeful
sampling was also helpful.

**Data Collection Sources and Procedures**

Data collection sources and procedures play a significant role in determining the
final product and outcome of a study (Patton, 2002). For this qualitative research, I used
different data collection sources such as face to face interviews, focus group interviews,
observations, and institutional documents. Qualitative research thrives on three main
sources of data collection: open-ended interviews; observations; and institutional
documents (Patton). While on the field, I used face-to-face interviews to gather data from
the Vice Chancellor, the Pro Vice Chancellor, the 4 deans of students, and the 8 staff
members at the deans’ offices. Additionally, I used focus group interviews in collecting
data from 18 students. These interviews were guided by an interview protocol and
conducted at locations identified as most convenient for the participants. Audio recording devices were used together with notes taking of observations. I also used documents from the institutions’ library.

**The Researcher**

I served as the researcher in this study. In many qualitative studies, data are collected through interviews and observations by the researcher (Hoepfl, 1997). The advantages of the researcher’s direct immersion in the data collection process include the exciting interaction with the setting, the overall awareness of the situation, and the ability to collect data and analyze them at the time. Other merits are the immediate provision of feedback, and the ability to modify the interview questions to respond to unexpected situations (Hoepfl).

**Data Recording**

An effective data recording procedure is a necessary condition for achieving an efficient data analysis process. Both the interviews and focus group sessions were tape-recorded. I sought the permission of the participants to have interview sessions and focus group interviews recorded. I used verbal statement and letters of consent to assure participants of their confidentiality. The limitation of tape recording is the fact that it is unable to capture significant non-verbal information that might be observed. To reduce the effect of this limitation, I kept two diaries: one was used to take field notes and the other for my personal reflections. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed from the resulting text.
Case Studies

I used the case study approach to qualitative analysis for data collection, organization and analysis. Patton (2002) refers to case analysis as “organizing the data by specific cases for in-depth study and comparison” (p. 447). He continues that “well-constructed case studies are holistic and context sensitive” (p. 447). Eisenhardt (1989) describes case study as a research approach that offers an understanding of the features, opportunities, and challenges of a particular setting or environment. A case study may involve an individual or a group. Similarly, communities, particular programs, selected institutions or countries may be the focus case studies. A case study can either be an analytical process or an outcome of the analysis (Patton, 2002). The process of analysis in a case study includes data collection, data organization, and data analysis; and the result or outcome of the analytical process is the case study. The purpose of case studies “is to gather comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth information about each case of interest” (p. 447). Each of my research sites constituted a case study.

Patton (2002) explained three steps in the process of constructing case studies. The first step is to collect and group the data. These data include all the information collected through interviews, observations, and documents. Secondly, one has to write a case record, involving the documentation of the organized data into a manageable document. The third step is a report of the final case study story. This final step is the case story, a well-written report that tells the story of the case study through the voices of the participants. All the three steps need to come together and flow together for an exciting case story that readers would find worth reading.
During the fieldwork, I recorded all the interviews with my digital voice recorder and also took notes. I recorded all my observations in my notebook. I then spent time each night and transcribed the recorded data. Next, I organized the raw data into categories of manageable data, and started grouping them into themes. This was a very significant part of my field experience and I enjoyed every bit of it.

Eisenhardt (1989) further notes that case studies can be used to offer a descriptive analysis of a phenomenon, test theory, or generate theory. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), the simultaneous processes of data analysis and data collection are very significant elements of generating theory from case studies in many qualitative studies. Therefore, they argue for joint collection, coding, and analysis of data in an attempt to take advantage of the overlap. Merriam (1998) perceives interpretive case studies as deep, rich and thick descriptive data which can be used to describe, and also argue for or against various societal assumptions, norms and models prior to data collection. According to Yin (2003), a case study is an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13). Therefore, a case study is a holistic research tool that offers an understanding of the research design, the procedures for data collection, and various techniques of data analysis (Yin, 2003).

Data Analysis

Data analysis involves all the steps and process of arranging data into organized and structured themes that give meaning to the collected data from the field (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Qualitative researchers often return from the field with voluminous
data, which need to be edited and organized into meaningful story for readers. This section describes the data analysis procedure I used to construct meaning out of the data I collected from the field. Data gathered through my field work was analyzed using the grounded theory method. The tenet of grounded theory approach is that emerging themes from the data gathered should guide the discussion (Straus & Corbin, 1998).

The various processes of using grounded theory for my analysis is illustrated in figure 2. There are six main steps in using grounded theory for data analysis. These are data collection, note-taking, coding, memoing, sorting and categorization, and data writing and presentation. Data collection, note-taking, coding, memoing was done simultaneously while I was still on the field collecting data.

![Diagram of Grounded Theory Steps]

Figure 2. Step by Step process to using Grounded Theory


Charmaz (2006), a contemporary grounded theorist, described coding as grouping data into categorized segments with a short inscription that simultaneously gives a summarized account of each piece of data. The codes guide the researcher to select,
separate, and sort data for analysis. Charmaz (2006) further outlines coding in grounded theory practice into the following stages: Initial coding; focused coding; axial coding; and theoretical coding. Initial codes are “provisional, comparative, and grounded in the theory” (p. 48). They help the researcher to identify areas where data is lacking. Furthermore, Charmaz (2006) argues that the researcher needs to remain open-minded during the initial coding. Focused coding involves the use of initial codes that appear to be most significant and frequent to help sort out large volumes of data.

At this stage, the researcher needs to decide on which initial codes are most significant for further incisive categorization. Axial coding establishes relationships between categories and subcategories. According to Creswell (1998), axial coding aims at sorting, synthesizing, and organizing large amounts of data into more defined categories. Theoretical coding is more complex and it tends to specify potential relationships between the categories identified during focus coding (Glaser, 1978). Theoretical coding may therefore help the researcher to identify trends in generating theories from the data; and may further help in telling a more coherent analytic story. The use of grounded theory for the data analysis provided valuable guidance in developing conceptual categories from the data which made this study very exciting and significant.

In using the grounded theory method for my data analysis, I made sure the data were professionally recorded and transcribed. I transcribed all the individual interviews myself. Transcription of the focus group interviews were done by a professional transcriptionist. My next step was coding which provided the basis for sorting and categorizing the data for analysis. The initial coding was done to help me find out if I
needed additional data. I made two telephone calls to one of the deans I had interviewed for additional data on how tradition had shaped his leadership style. Some of the coded data were named administrators, faculty, students, services, needs, tradition and culture, opposing mindsets, etc. Focused coding helped me to pay attention to the most useful data. It also helped me to properly sort out the voluminous data into manageable, well organized document. I used inscriptions and colors to code the data into broad categories, and with axial coding, major themes began to emerge.

**Credibility and Trustworthiness**

Patton (2002) argues that the credibility of qualitative research is dependent on the methods of conducting the fieldwork, the researcher’s credibility, and one’s ideological position in qualitative research. Using the grounded theory analytic process supported the trustworthiness and credibility of the development of my findings. Charmaz (2006) viewed the “grounded theory process as an integral part of the product” (p. 182). Throughout the grounded theory analytic process, I made systematic comparisons between observations and between categories. I member-checked the data with participants through e-mails and telephone calls after my initial write-up. Merriam (1998) indicates that member checking should be performed with some participants to ensure that there is sufficient data to merit one’s claim. Since the deans of students I interviewed were my primary data source, I provided them with critical portions of my findings in order to check my interpretation and representation of their interviews. I also checked interpretations with representatives of both the staff and students in each site studied.
As noted earlier, triangulation is another form of ensuring credibility and trustworthiness. Triangulation strengthens a study by the combination of methods (Patton, 2002). Patton explained that triangulation is not used to reinforce and validate earlier forms of data, but to gain different lenses on the same phenomenon. Patton (2002) said:

A rich variety of methodological combinations can be employed to illuminate an inquiry question. Some studies intermix interviewing, observation, and document analysis. Others rely more on interviews than observations, and vice versa. Studies that use only one method are more vulnerable to errors linked to that particular method … than studies that use multiple methods in which different types of data provide cross-data validity checks” (p. 248).

The use of interviews, observations, and document analysis afforded me the opportunity to have different perspectives from students, faculty, and administrators. This further ensured credibility and trustworthiness. I shared my transcriptions and analysis with my dissertation advisor, in order to check my interpretation of the data.

**Chapter Summary**

The main research interest was to find out the selected Ghanaian university communities’ perception of the work of the deans of students; and to understand the deans’ experiences, values and philosophy in relation to their work. The chapter described the methodology I used in conducting the study. It also provided rationale for the selection of the methodology. I conducted a pilot study prior to the fieldwork.
Moreover, I gave a brief description of the sample size, sampling technique, data collection sources and procedure, and data analysis procedure. The sample consisted of 36 participants from four Ghanaian higher education institutions. The sampling methods included purposeful sampling, stratified sampling and snowball. I used interviews, observation, and document analysis as sources of data collection. I conducted basic interpretive qualitative study, and used multi interpretive case studies. Also, grounded theory analytical procedure was used for data analysis.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the four case studies and the cross-case analysis that were obtained from document reviews, observations by the researcher, face-to-face interviews and focus group interviews. The purpose of the study was to understand the perceptions of the work of deans of students at Ghanaian universities and to find out the ways in which their experiences, values and philosophy influence their roles on campus. In particular, the extent to which deans of students understand their work in providing student services, promoting student learning, student engagement, student development and success is of particular interest in this study. The following topics, derived from the research questions, offered a theoretical framework for the study.

1. The university community’s perceptions of the work of the deans of students
   a. Vice Chancellor / President
   b. Pro Vice Chancellor / Vice President
   c. Faculty
   d. Staff at the deans of students office

2. The deans of students’ description of the performance of their duties
   a. How the deans of students articulate their philosophies and values in relation to their work;
   b. Student needs as interpreted by the deans of students, staff at the deans’ offices, and students;
c. The extent to which the offices of the deans of students respond to student needs;

d. Challenges that the deans of students face in the discharge of their duties, and how they work through the challenges; and

3. How the deans of students perceive changes and the future of their offices.

In this chapter, I have attempted to represent the participants' voices. The participants' voices, gathered from the interviews, along with data collected through documents and observations, form the bases for the themes. Finally, the chapter provides an analysis of the cases, focusing on the perceptions of the work of the deans of students at the University of Cape Coast (UCC), the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), and the Central University College (CUC).

At the heart of the study are the perceptions of various groups in the university community – vice chancellor/president, pro vice chancellor/vice president, deans of students, staff at the deans’ office, faculty and students. While coding the large volume of data, I identified several thematic patterns. It is important to point out from the beginning that the various groups in the university community that I interviewed had different and sometimes conflicting perceptions about the work of the deans of students. These conflicts are shared in the reporting of the findings. The organization of this chapter includes descriptions of the four research sites, a discussion of the interviews and observations from my visits to the sites, and a cross-case analysis.
Background of Sample

I interviewed a total of 36 participants from four campuses: UCC, KNUST, GIMPA, and CUC. This included 1 vice chancellor/president; 1 vice president/provost; 4 deans of students; 1 former dean of students; 8 staff at the deans’ offices; 2 faculty members; 18 students; and 1 former executive secretary of the National Council on Tertiary Education (NCTE) and currently a staff of GIMPA. The vice chancellor/president, the vice president, 2 of the deans of students and the former dean of students have a PhD. The 2 faculty members hold PhDs as well. The remaining 2 deans have Master’s degree. Again, out of the 4 deans, only one is a full-time administrator.

The remaining 3 are faculty members who serve as deans of students on part-time basis. 2 of the staff at the deans’ offices have Master’s degree, 2 have Bachelor’s, and 4 have Associate degrees. The 18 students involved in the focus group interviews consisted of 10 men and 8 women, and were all undergraduate students from various majors and class ranks. The former executive secretary of NCTE has a Master’s degree. These participants were represented by pseudonyms.

University of Cape Coast (UCC)

The University of Cape Coast (UCC) was founded in October, 1962 (UCC Annual Bulletin, 2008). It started as a University College affiliated to the University of Ghana, Legon. In October 1971, UCC attained full university status. This was done through a legislative instrument, the University of Cape Coast Act 1971 (Act 390). By this Act, UCC was given the autonomy to confer its own degrees, diplomas and other academic certificates. The University was established to transform students into men and
women with knowledge, skills and competencies capable of providing leadership and the required skills to support Ghana’s socio-economic development (UCC Annual Bulletin, 2009).

In its early years, UCC was mandated to train professional teachers for Ghana's senior high schools. This was to support the Ministry of Education’s accelerated education program at the time (UCC Annual Bulletin, 2010). Changing societal needs, modernization and globalization have led to programs diversification and the expansion of academic and residential facilities. Today, the University of Cape Coast has the resources and capacity to train students for the human resource needs of various governmental and non-governmental agencies and departments. For instance UCC continues to train teachers for the Ghana Education Service (UCC Annual Bulletin). UCC’s annual student enrolment in 1963 was about 155. In 2010, the total student population of the University was about 35,922 (UCC Annual Bulletin).

The University of Cape Coast’s remedial science program, the special entrance examination for mature students and the admissions quota reserved for students from economically-disadvantaged schools have helped many people to gain access to higher education. These students are typically identified by the Joint Admissions Board (UCC Annual Bulletin, 2010). During the 2008/2009 academic year, the University admitted about 80 students from many less endowed schools and communities in Ghana.

Additionally, brilliant students from surrounding communities of the University who cannot afford the tuition fees have access to various scholarship schemes by individuals and traditional councils, and corporate organizations. The Trust Bank and the
Asanteman Council have established scholarship schemes in the University. In an effort to effectively promote distance learning, the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) has sites in seven regions of Ghana for the establishment of distance education learning centers (UCC Annual Bulletin, 2009). These centers would serve as UCC regional campuses to run some campus-based programs. The University now has about 15,000 traditional students and about 20,000 non-traditional students.

I went to the University of Cape Coast (UCC) one day after my arrival in Ghana. UCC always brings memories of my prior association with the institution. As an alumnus and a former employee, I was excited about having UCC as one of my research sites. I realized on my arrival that the campus environment had not changed very much. Even though I saw few physical changes in terms of infrastructure and landscaping, the social interaction among students, faculty and administrators had not changed. Interaction between faculty and students was still formal. I first went to the cafeteria for lunch, and realized that faculty and administrators have tables reserved for them at a separate location within the cafeteria. After lunch, I went to the dean of students’ office for my scheduled interview with him.

**Dean of Students**

The dean of students’ office at UCC is on the ground floor of the Central Administration Block located at the north campus of the University. There are no directional signs to help locate the office. The only sign I saw was directly in front of the office’s main entrance with the inscription “Office of the Dean of Students.” The about 35 feet by 30 feet office space is divided into three: the general office, the assistant
registrar’s office, and the dean’s office. The general office is shared by 4 staff: a senior administrative assistant (SAA), 2 administrative associates, and 1 messenger. The messenger runs errands for the office, including the distribution of incoming mails and the dispatch of outgoing mails. The assistant registrar (AR) and the dean use the other two respective offices. The AR’s office has a wall hanging with a quote from the Bible, while the dean’s office has photos of previous deans of students. The Dean of Students Office therefore has a total of 6 staff. While the dean has a PhD in Theology, the AR has a Master’s degree in Educational Administration. The SAA, on the other hand, has a Bachelor’s degree in Social Sciences. The two administrative associates have Associate degrees, and the messenger has a Senior High School Certificate.

The general office, which also serves as the reception and the information desk, is relatively small as compared to the other two offices. I saw a poster on the wall that seemed to promote tolerance. The office is congested and does not have a waiting space for students who come to the office. Students have to wait for their turn in the hall way. The staff looked happy as they attended to students. The administrative associates are the first to attend to students, who then refer them to either the SAA or the AR. Students who need to see the dean are scheduled to meet him at specific times. The staff members work in collaboration with UCC’s Counseling Center, and sometimes refer students for counseling services. In addition to the dean, I interviewed the AR and one of the administrative associates. The selection of the administrative associate and the AR as research participants was influenced by their respective roles in the office. While the administrative associate has the first direct contact with students, the AR handles the day-
to-day administration of the office. I was convinced that their experiences would be beneficial for the study.

My interaction with the dean took place in his office and it lasted for about two hours. It was very convenient for him since he felt relaxed in his own office. After the usual initial introductions, I started the interview with Mensah, the dean. He said:

I see myself as a teacher, an educator, a counselor and a spiritual director tasked with the responsibility of helping over 15,000 students to succeed in college. The students are many and the available resources to provide for their needs are very limited. I am however positive that my staff and I are doing our best. I must acknowledge that time spent with students has never been enough.

This was Mensah’s initial reaction when asked about his perception of the nature of the dean of students’ work. Mensah is an Associate Professor at the Department of Religion and Moral Education, a Reverend Minister of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, and has been the dean of students since September 2007.

Mensah identified counseling, academic advising, mediation, and financial issues as the major student needs. To emphasize this, he stated that “many students cannot even afford three square meals a day, are unsure of what to do and where to go when they are faced with academic and social challenges; and because of limited resources, there are many students with needs that we are unable to identify and help.” He lamented the inadequate number of qualified staff in his office. Despite these challenges, he shared some success stories where his office was able to help some students. One example was a
situation where a female student was struggling with emotional challenges due to sexual abuse at home. Once his office identified the student, they collaborated with counselors at the University’s Counseling Center who were able to help the student to the admiration of family members and friends.

Mensah was not specific about the philosophy that influences his interaction with students, even though he expected students to be respectful, humble and honest. He mentioned dishonesty, irresponsibility and indiscipline as some of the major challenges, and was quick to add that his office would not hesitate in dealing with student indiscipline. He recounted numerous times in the past two years where conflicts between halls of residence had led to the destruction of university property.

On change, Mensah expressed his desire for “positive change at the right time.” He indicated his support for the status quo where faculty serves as dean of students since students, according to him, “tend to listen and respect the views of their professors.” He suggested that the dean of students’ office should have a vice dean, additional qualified staff, and a more formalized collaboration between the office and the Counseling Center. He also advocated for a more convenient office space; and called for support from faculty and student leadership.

Staff at the Dean of Students’ Office

I arranged and met the two staff members at the dean’s office at separate times at the Cape Coast Polytechnic Club House. This was their preferred location since they wanted the interview to be conducted outside the UCC campus. Akosua, a staff member at the dean of students’ office described the nature of the dean’s work by saying that “the
dean serves as the students’ parent when they are on campus, and therefore I expect him to care for them and listen to their needs.”

Akwasi, another staff at the dean’s office perceives the nature of the dean’s work as a “tiger father-son relationship where the son has no voice and is always expected to listen without questioning.” When asked to further explain his perception, he added that, “generally, deans of students in many Ghanaian universities often perceive students as irresponsible children who need to be disciplined.” Akwasi indicated these perceptions do not attract students to the office. Both Akosua and Akwasi shared some success stories about how the office had supported some students in the past. Their stories centered on conflict resolution and mediation. Akwasi recounted an incident last year which involved a male off-campus student and his landlady. The student had been accused of impregnating the landlady’s daughter and non-payment of rent. The dean of students’ office successfully mediated in the case.

According to these staff members, their interactions with students had been positive and cordial, but they were quick to add that the office needed more qualified staff and additional resources. Akwasi said:

There is no way that 6 staff members can serve and provide quality services to about 15,000 students. It is obvious and we know that majority of our students do not have any interaction with our office throughout their stay on campus. This is bad, but with our current capacity, there are many things that we are unable to do.
Akosua and Akwasi perceive lack of support from university leadership and faculty, and inadequate student-focused programs as the major challenges. They are both receptive to change but are also apprehensive about the uncertainties of change. The staff supported the idea of having a full-time administrator as the dean of students. They were not sure about the structure of an ideal dean of students’ office, but welcomed any change that would make the office more resourceful.

**Faculty**

While I was observing student-staff interactions at the office of the dean of students, two faculty members came to the office wanting to meet the dean. They met the dean but were visibly upset. When they were leaving, I followed them, introduced myself and asked if I could meet them for interviews for my research. They were both willing so they gave me their telephone numbers to call for appointment. I learned that they were following up on some incidents of student indiscipline which they had reported to the dean’s office but were not getting any feedback. One has a PhD in Zoology, and the other one’s PhD is in Development Studies. They wanted to have the interview together so we met in a study room at the Institute for Development Studies.

The two faculty members perceive the dean of students’ work as “providing the out-of-class needs of the students.” They therefore did not see the need for faculty involvement in the dean’s work. In their opinion, the office should continue to be headed by faculty members who have the “patience to interact with students in an out-of-class setting.” The faculty perceives student needs as academic advising, counseling, and issues involving financing their education. They were not sure about the future of the
dean of students’ office and sometimes think that “the university can survive without that office.”

**Students**

The focus group interviews with the students were held at the conference room of the Student Senate Office, and they were very informative. The students generally perceive the dean’s work as being the mediator between them and the university leadership, but thought that the dean, in most cases, supports the university leadership more than students. They see this as a betrayal of students’ trust and confidence in the dean of students’ office. Kojo, a student leader at UCC acknowledged that even though the dean’s office offers a platform for students’ concerns, many students are not motivated to take advantage of the few services available in the office. They identified counseling, academic advising, sources of funding their education, and student-centered programs as some of the major student needs.

Adwoa, a 3rd year undergraduate student who had had some interactions with the dean’s office when her laptop was stolen, was complimentary of the professionalism with which the staff handled her case. Adwoa thought the office could serve students better if well resourced. She indicated that if the office were to have more staff members, more computers, more spacious offices, and a more private way of receiving student concerns and complaints, the office would serve students better. “There is the willingness to serve students better among the staff, but how well can they deliver these services if supporting resources are woefully inadequate?”, Adwoa quizzed.
Another student disagreed with Adwoa saying that last year, she reported inappropriate sexual advances towards her by a teaching assistant but nothing had been done about it. The students indicated that the dean had been using the university’s radio station to address them once in a while, but added that many of those interactions had cast negative images about students to the public. They wanted the dean of students to be positive sometimes about students’ behavior. They also wished the dean could be more available and visible. The students suggested that the office needed to be headed by a full-time administrator and be staffed with more qualified people who would respect the views of students.

**Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST)**

The University of Science and Technology was initially called the Kumasi College of Technology (KCT). In October, 1961 KCT was established by a Government Ordinance (KNUST Annual Report, 2008). It was officially inaugurated on January 22, 1952. The first batch of students was transferred teacher trainees from Achimota School. The School of Engineering and the Department of Commerce were established in October 1952 (KNUST Annual Report). In January 1953, the Department of Pharmacy was established to provide health professionals for Ghana’s Ministry of Health and the Ghana Health Service. Other colleges such as Agriculture, General Studies, Architecture and Planning, etc. were also established. On August 22 1961, the Kumasi College of Technology became a full-fledged by an Act of Parliament. Its name was subsequently changed to the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST Annual Bulletin). Interestingly, the name was changed to the University of Science and
Technology (UST) after the February 24 1966 coup d’état in Ghana. Through a legislative instrument, Act 559 of 1998, the UCT’s name was changed to the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST).

KNUST was mandated to prioritize its derived science and technology in its curriculum. The University focuses on the provision of quality higher education, undertaking relevant research, disseminating knowledge and fostering partnerships and collaborations with local, national, and international institutions (KNUST Statutes, 1998).

KNUST’s vision is

To be globally recognized as the premier center of excellence in Africa for teaching in science and technology for development; producing high caliber graduates with knowledge and expertise to support the industrial and socio-economic development of Ghana and Africa (KNUST Statutes, 1998, p. 2).

My visit to KNUST in Kumasi, the second largest city in Ghana, was also a visit home. I grew up in Kumasi and had my basic and high school education in that city. As a child, I had visited KNUST on many occasions, so this visit brought back some childhood memories. The first thing that caught my attention was the KNUST motto, *Nyansapo Wosane No Badwenma*, meaning *only the wise can untie the knot of wisdom*. It naturally reminded me that I had entered an academic institution and my goal was to collect relevant data for my research. I felt mentally prepared for the task ahead.
**Vice Chancellor (VC)**

The Vice Chancellor’s office is located on the third floor of KNUST’s main administration block. The security check point on the third floor was an indication of the authority of that office. The receptionist welcomed me and gave me a seat in a waiting room. After about ten minutes the Senior Assistant Registrar (SAR) in the VC’s office came to welcome me. I learned from the SAR that the office was managed by ten staff members: The VC, SAR, and Chief Administrative Assistant (CAA). The others are Senior Administrative Assistant (SAA), Administrative Assistant (AA), two clerks, a receptionist and two messengers. One enters through the reception to the waiting room. The next office, which has the AA, the clerks and the messengers, is followed by the office of the CAA and the SAA. Next is the SAR’s office, which is followed by the VC office. I saw some leadership and Christian quotes in all these offices. The VC came to the waiting room and led me into the Council Chamber, which is next to the VC’s office. The Council Chamber is reserved for University Council (Board of Trustees) meetings. There were pictures of past VCs in the Council Chamber.

The setting looked very formal so I began with a short joke which made us laugh to set the ball rolling for what became a very informal and interesting interview. In response to his perception of the nature of the work of the Dean of Students, the VC said:

I perceive the DOS to be the liaison officer between the KNUST leadership and the students. He receives student complaints and concerns and addresses them. The office coordinates student elections and monitors
students’ out-of-class activities such as hall weeks, Student Senate week, etc.

He cited many instances where the DOS’ office had collaborated with the Counseling Center and the Disciplinary Committee to help address student concerns. One of those instances was a situation in fall 2010 when a female student refused to attend classes claiming that God had revealed to her to marry a particular pastor so they could both become “fishers of men.” With the collaborative efforts of the DOS’ office and the Counseling Center, this female student received help and continued her degree program.

The VC indicated that due the nature of the DOS’ work, he needed to appoint a dedicated faculty member to such a position. When asked to explain further, he said:

I look out for God-fearing men and women for this position. I need a family man and a person of good character who can serve as a father and/or a mother to these students. I need somebody that students will respect. We will continue to have faculty members serve as DOS since students generally show more respect to faculty due to their classroom interactions with them.

The VC described a successful DOS as one who is able to instill discipline among students, prevent student unrests, and manage the DOS office such that students are comfortable to use the services of that office. He added that “a successful DOS should have the capacity and resources to help transform students into productive global citizens.” The VC was quick to add that the DOS office was woefully understaffed and under-resourced. He acknowledged that the relatively small office space and the few staff
members were unable to serve students effectively. He mentioned a plan to relocate the
DOS office to a more spacious space and potentially hire additional qualified staff to help
serve students better. He was specific about hiring additional counselors in the immediate
future to support the work of the DOS office. As a relatively new VC, he was unable to
evaluate the performance of the DOS, but indicated that he admired his innovation,
energy and enthusiasm. He highlighted some of the DOS’ initiatives such his staff’s
regular interaction with faculty and his attempt to involve parents as strategic
stakeholders in the provision of student services. He was positive about the future of
student affairs in Ghana, and recommended that university leadership needed to learn
more about contemporary student affairs practice and replicate some of the viable
practices in Ghanaian higher education.

**Dean of Students (DOS)**

The DOS’ office is located at the busy commercial area of KNUST. The
commercial area has three banks, about 6 supermarkets, a post office, a bookshop, cab
(taxi) station, car park, etc. The only thing that helps to locate the DOS’ office within that
busy environment is the small green wooden signage with the inscription “Dean of
Students’ Office.” It is located in a one-story u-shaped building that looks like a
traditional courtyard house in Ghana. Traditional courtyard houses in Ghana are generally
u-shaped with the middle of the “u” serving as a common area. I was unable to find out if
there was a particular reason for that design.

There were 6 office spaces and a conference room. The DOS office has 4
counselors who are also Assistant Registrars (ARs), 1 Senior Administrative Assistant
(SAA), 2 Administrative Assistants (AAs), a clerk, a messenger/driver, an Assistant DOS and the DOS. Both the DOS and his female assistant are faculty members with PhD. The counselors have Master’s degrees, the SAA has a bachelor’s degree, and the AAs have associate degrees. The clerk and the messenger/driver have certificates in their respective areas of specialization. The front desk has a big Christian poster with a quote from the bible. I saw similar biblical quotes in almost all the office. Throughout my visits to this office, there were always students waiting at the front desk to either lodge a complaint or see a counselor on an issue.

My interaction with the DOS of KNUST was one of the highlights of my data collection experience. The interview, which was one of my best, was done in his conference room. I admired his energy and his open door policy. He had his PhD in the United States and therefore had a very fair idea of how student affairs work in the US. Even though he acknowledged lack of support from many stakeholders, he was committed to serve students to the best of his ability. I found him to be a charismatic leader who relates very well with his staff, university leadership and students.

He has excellent communicative skills and is a great facilitator. He raises awareness about issues he deals with to get public support, forms working groups of people knowledgeable about the issue, creates strategies and options for action, and sustains action. These tasks that he facilitates regularly were his perception of the nature of the work of the DOS. He said:

The nature of the DOS’ work is service and teamwork. It includes the identification of relevant student services and the ability to raise awareness
and involve stakeholders in the provision of these services to students.

One needs to network, learn about contemporary student affairs practice, and most importantly, care about students.

In his examples, he gave instances where he had formed working groups to help address issues of student indiscipline, examination malpractices, theft cases among students, and issues of supporting financially challenged students. He has initiated a system where his office guarantees payment plans to help students pay their academic and residential facility user fees. He described a successful DOS as one who cares about students, supports them and believes in their potentials as college student.

He was emphatic that his leadership style had defined the organizational culture of the office. His goal is to help institutionalize this culture so it does not center on his personality. His assessment of the quality of service delivery in his office was that with the available limited resources, the office was doing quite well. He cited many instances where parents had called the office to show appreciation for the office’s support and care for students. Even though the office has no structured assessment tool for evaluating their work, he indicated that “feedback from students, faculty, and parents provide an informal tool for assessing our work. We also use this feedback to improve our performance.” He identified inadequate resources as the major challenge, and added that:

The office continues to use innovative ideas to maximize the efficient use of the limited resources. Our counselors are training some students to serve as peer counselors to support our efforts. This is voluntary, and the trainees will start working at the beginning of the 2011-2012 academic
year. If this is successful, we will expand it and recommend it to our friends in other universities to replicate the idea.

The DOS values change but cautioned that it needed to be gradual so one could have enough time to raise awareness about the potentials of the change. He believes in the gradual redefining of student affairs in Ghanaian universities. He recommended a strategic plan to help train more student affairs practitioners to serve the many needs of students and gradually take over from faculty as DOS. He described an ideal DOS’ office as the one with full-time DOS and deputy DOS with enough resources to serve students. He indicated that:

Students are gradually becoming conscious of what to expect from the DOS office and may soon demand some level of accountability. When that time comes, Ghanaian universities will sit up and commit themselves to the provision of better student services with clear outcomes and desired results.

Staff at the Dean of Students (DOS) Office

I met two staff members of the DOS in their conference room on a day when both the dean and his deputy were out of town for a meeting. The two were a counselor and the SAA. Prior to the interview, I had met them and briefed them about the purpose of the interview. I was impressed with their interest to participate in the interview. Both of them perceived the nature of the work of the DOS as helping students to be “happy while away from home.” The counselor was particular about the need for the DOS to empower students and help make them more responsible to decide for themselves.
They shared with me an incident in fall 2010 when a student who had lost both parents in a car crash the previous semester was struggling and constantly feeling lonely. This student’s roommate first reported this to the DOS office, and the quick intervention by the counselors saved the student from a potential suicide. They later found out that she had drafted suicide notes and was having serious suicidal thoughts. They both indicated that the office listens and cares about students and their style is “to relate very well with students so we can build trust. Mutual respect and trust are important ingredients for serving students better.”

According to them, the most common student needs are financial challenges, counseling services, career services, mediation and conflict resolution. They were happy to say that the office provides services to serve those needs. They perceive their interactions with students and the DOS as very positive. The SAA said that the DOS had helped to improve the image of the office with many initiatives. She cited the payment plan initiative as her favorite since it had supported many students to effectively manage the payment of their fees. They identified the large number of students in relation to the limited resources at their disposal as the major challenge. They described the DOS as somebody who enjoys and values interaction with students. These informal interactions, according to them, continue to provide vital feedback and information to the DOS.

They shared an interesting story when one of such informal interactions with students helped the office to report suspected drug dealers to the police for further investigation. The police investigation uncovered a group of students who were involved in the practice of dealing in drugs. They wanted the office to be well-resourced and be
offered regular in-services to help them provide quality services to students. They were very optimistic about the future of student affairs in Ghana, and recommended gradual positive changes that would benefit students.

**Faculty**

I had the opportunity to observe a meeting involving staff of the DOS office and faculty members of the College of Engineering, KNUST. The meeting was held at the conference room of the College about a week prior to the end of semester examinations. The purpose of the meeting was to create awareness among faculty about the work of the DOS and to solicit support for collaboration. Out of a total of about 120 faculty members in the College, only 28 were at the meeting. I learned that poor publicity, timing of the meeting, and faculty’s lukewarm attitude towards the work of the DOS accounted for the low turn-out. Even though few faculty members showed interest and participated in the discussions, most of them were visibly not enthused and were in a hurry to get out of the meeting.

One faculty member commended the DOS and said, “This is a great initiative since we are all serving students in different capacities. We need to collaborate and support our students in their college life.” Another faculty member retorted that, “I don’t see why the DOS wants us to do his work for him. We are committed to teaching and research. The students’ out-of-class issues are none of our business. If you need more staff, please contact the registrar to hire more for your office.” The DOS explained that he only needed them to observe students’ classroom behavior and notify his office of any concerns for follow-up. He added that “if classroom behavioral concerns are noticed and
reported to my office early, we will be in a position to help students become more successful.”

After the meeting, I approached a faculty member who was an active participant of the meeting and requested for an interview in front of the conference room. He perceived the work of the DOS as helping students to succeed in college, and quickly added that faculty needed to support and collaborate with the DOS office to serve students better. He was of the view that the DOS had to be a full-time position with a full-time vice dean to enable the staff offer excellent services to students. His suggestion was that the office needed to embark on both structured and unstructured educational campaign in the University to create awareness of the work that they do.

**Students**

I conducted two focus group interviews with students at KNUST. Selection of participants was done with the snowball method. A staff member at the DOS office and the Student Senate President introduced me to one student, who also helped me to identify other students. These students further recommended more students to me till I had eleven students for the two focus group interviews.

The first group of six students had had previous interaction/experience with the DOS office, and it was made up of four males and two females. There were two seniors, two juniors, one sophomore, and one freshman. The second group of five students had never had any interaction/experience with the DOS office, and it consisted of three males and two females. There were two seniors, one junior, one sophomore, and one freshman.
I conducted both focus group interviews in the conference room of an off-campus student hostel.

Prior to the interview, the students were visibly excited about the interview and many of them were wondering how the outcome of the study would be beneficial to them. I assured them that I would share results of the study with higher education leadership in Ghana, and was hopeful of a positive impact.

The first group perceived the work of the DOS as counselor, advocate, and a mediator. Owusu recounted an incident in December 2010, when the DOS office was able to negotiate with his academic department so he could write the end of semester exams even though he had an outstanding balance on his student account. He added that “the DOS office helped me to arrange a payment plan with the bursar’s office, for which I am grateful.” Anna also shared a physical abuse incident involving her friend and a male student from another university. According to her, the DOS office was so supportive of her friend’s condition that counselors from the office visited the friend at the hospital, while other staff from the office accompanied the friend to all the court hearings. Additionally, the DOS collaborated with the DOS of the alleged perpetrator’s college till justice was done. Anna added that “the support and encouragement from the DOS office was overwhelming.” Participants identified academic advising, career opportunities, customer service, financial challenges, and conflict resolution as the major student needs; but were unsure of how the DOS office identified the needs.

They considered as challenging the fact that one needed to physically be at the DOS office to access the few available services. Frimpong suggested the use of
technology to help make access to services easier and more convenient. “Why can’t we have a well-resourced website that students can access and contact the DOS office by e-mail, and report concerns without physically walking to the office?,” Frimpong asked.

Participants described the quality of service delivery by the DOS’ office as satisfactory, considering the available limited resources. They indicated that the DOS was friendly and cared about the welfare of students. They however added that the staff could do better in the areas of customer service and records keeping.

Abena shared an instance when a report she had written to the office got missing after two weeks. “When I questioned how that was possible, an administrative assistant in the office was annoyed and all that she could tell me was to write it again if I wanted my concern to be addressed,” Abena added. Abena was concerned about how some staff members easily got offended when questioned by students. She argued that sometimes, “The DOS and his staff behave as if they are chiefs in a traditional area where their views should not and cannot be challenged, forgetting that they work in an academic environment.” Participants were not happy with delays in having their concerns addressed by the office. While acknowledging the many students the office has to interact with, they argued that the use of modern technology could help the current situation.

Participants wanted to see a more structured DOS office equipped with more qualified staff. They also wanted to have at least one student affairs person or counselor at each academic department. Again, participants recommended that the office needed to collaborate more with faculty and student leaders to identify student needs and design appropriate services to satisfy the needs.
The second group knew very little about the work of the DOS, and perceived the work as gathering information about students to the leadership of the University. Some of the participants did not even know where the office was located, but added that they could find it if need be. They wanted the DOS office to embark on an educational campaign and create awareness among students about their work and how students could access their services. Participants acknowledged the many student needs and suggested that various constituents of the university community needed to support the DOS office to help serve students better.

**Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA)**

The Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), is situated about twenty miles north of the city of Accra, and within few miles from the University of Ghana, Legon (GIMPA Annual Report, 2008).

GIMPA is a public non-traditional higher education institution. It was established in 1961 with academic, financial and administrative autonomy (GIMPA Annual Report, 2009). GIMPA is acclaimed as the leading management development institution in Ghana, providing leadership training, and facilitating workshops and seminars in business and public administration. It also offers a platform for addressing many national and international emerging trends and contemporary issues in the fields of public policy and management. It is common knowledge that the Government of Ghana and other public and private agencies use GIMPA’s resources for various workshops, seminars, and in-services for to help support the professional development of Ministers of State, officials, and staff.
GIMPA’s goal is to become an internationally-recognized citadel of excellence for public policy leadership and business management training, professional consultancy services and research. GIMPA’s mission is to become

“A center of excellence for training in public and business administration, by continuously enhancing the capability of middle and top level executives in public and private sectors, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) both in Ghana and [abroad] to manage their institutions and enterprises efficiently and effectively” (GIMPA Annual Report, 2009, p. 3).

GIMPA is the first and currently the only institution of higher education in Ghana that has a full-time administrator as Director of Student Affairs (DOSA) (GIMPA Annual Report, 2010). Realizing that a faculty member who acted as Dean of Students had time constraints in meeting the demands of the office, the Rector of GIMPA recommended for the appointment of a full-time Director of Student Affairs. The University Council accordingly appointed the first Director of Student Affairs in September 2010. The DOSA is responsible to the Rector for the establishment of student support systems of GIMPA. The DOSA promotes individual student learning and self actualization through programs that accommodate and stimulate the learning process. She initiates and facilitates the provision of student services that promote social and academic wellness. Again, the DOSA is responsible for fostering a campus community that promotes total student development for responsible citizenship and nation building.
Director of Student Affairs (DOSA)

Until her appointment, the DOSA was a Senior Assistant Registrar at the Division of Human Resource. She has a Bachelor’s degree in Linguistics and a Master’s degree in Public Administration. My interaction with her took place in her old office at the Human Resource Department since her new office location was still not ready for move-in. This denied me the opportunity to observe her new office, even though I saw the location and later interviewed 2 staff members of the DOSA’s office. In her introductory remarks, Mrs. Julie Appiah, the DOSA said, “I have always been interested in student activities on campus and have been involved in many student organizations as an advisor. I am excited about the position.”

Mrs. Appiah perceives the nature of her work as finding innovative ways of engaging and supporting students to help make them responsible citizens of the world. She indicated that because many of the students are working adults, they tend to have peculiar needs. She mentioned the various meetings she had had with different student groups to help identify student needs. The DOSA stated that, “Through my interactions with the students, I have realized that the needs of many GIMPA students are different from those of students from other universities in Ghana. Many of the needs are family-related.” She cited instances where some female students with children and husbands needed help to effectively combine their academic work with family responsibilities. In one particular instance, Mrs. Appiah described how urgent a female student needed counseling since “her parents and husband did not understand why she wanted to pursue higher education.” The DOSA added that, “while her parents discouraged her, the
husband threatened her with divorce.” The counselors from the DOSA’s office ultimately
arranged and met the student’s husband. After series of counseling sessions for both the
student and her husband, the family issues were successfully resolved.

The DOSA perceives the major student needs as gender-based. According to her,
“the male students have financial needs as first on their list, while the female students
need support in combining their academic work with family responsibilities.” She added
that, “In a culture where female success is generally based on family life, societal support
for married women who decide to pursue higher education is remote.” She determines her
success based on the feedback she receives from students, and stated that that it was too
early for her to talk about successes even though she was positive of success.

She shared with me the experiences of her three weeks working visit to Morgan
State University in the United States where she met the Dean of Students and interacted
with student affairs professionals. “It was a great experience that has changed my
approach in working with students and my leadership style. I have become more student-
centered.” She said she would replicate Morgan State’s Peer Counseling concept at
GIMPA and advocate for the establishment of a well-resourced counseling unit. She also
had plans of establishing a student services center where the various units providing
student services would be located. “It is my hope that the center will have a saloon and
baby-friendly rooms to support our female students,” Mrs. Appiah said.

The DOSA perceives issues of time and schedule conflicts among students and
occasional student protests as the major challenges. Mrs. Appiah cited instances where
students’ class and work schedules conflict making some students miss classes and
examinations sometimes. In one particular case, a male student missed an end of semester examination due to work commitment outside the country. The professor did not want to make alternative arrangement for the student to take the examination at a different time. According to the DOSA, “my office had to intervene for the professor to allow the student to write the examination at a later date.” Mrs. Appiah recounted occasional student protests against tuition increases. In most of these protests, students had argued that their representatives were not involved in the decision-making process.

She also expressed concern about issues of marital infidelity among some students that her office has to deal with. She shared an example where the wife of a student reported to her office that her husband was going out with a married female student. According to her, the issue got more complicated when the complainant disclosed the alleged affair to the husband of the woman her husband was alleged to be going out with. To her admiration, the counselors in her office were successful in helping to mediate in the issue. Mrs. Appiah was positive about the potentials of her new position and indicated that “I will continue to advocate for incremental positive change that fosters a campus community that values student involvement, development and success.”

Former Executive Secretary of Ghana’s National Council for Tertiary Education

Mr. Paul Effah, the former Executive Secretary of the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) is currently a senior lecturer and consultant at GIMPA. Mr. Effah has authored many books, book chapters and articles on higher education governance and leadership in Ghana and Africa. He has attended and presented at many professional conferences on African Higher Education. He continues to be a resource and
consultant for many Ghanaian and African universities. I met Mr. Effah at his office in GIMPA. Apart from books in a shelf, I did not observe anything that represented his interest in higher education governance and leadership. Mr. Effah traced the history of Ghana’s higher education and talked about the current changing trends. He described how the establishment of private universities and specialized professional institutions such as business schools, medical schools, and law schools “remains a potential challenge for the governance of public universities.” According to Mr. Effah, “The public universities seem to be less customer-service oriented and less student-centered as compared to the private universities.” Mr. Effah opines that “while the former continues to religiously hold onto the traditional role of the DOS, the later tends to regularly redefine the traditional role of the DOS to make it responsive to emerging trends in higher education.”

Mr. Paul Effah perceives the nature of the work of the DOS as “responding to both the traditional and non-traditional needs of the Ghanaian college student.” Mr. Effah describes the traditional needs as conflict resolution and mediation, counseling, and issuance of introductory letters. The non-traditional needs include issues of health, safety and security; career services and internship opportunities; and programs that help students to be more engaged on campus. Mr. Effah suggested that universities need to consider the use of student employees as a way of engaging students on campus.

The former Executive Secretary of the NCTE strongly and passionately believes that “the nature of the DOS’ work should be influenced by the changing college student characteristics and the emerging trends in higher education. The DOS’ work is evolving
and any DOS who is not conscious of this evolution must be dreaming.” He gave instances of workshops he had facilitated for public university leadership (including DOS) where some of the leaders seem to be immune to change. He was however happy about the changes he had seen in some of the private universities and few of the public university. He cited the many training workshops he had facilitated for university leaders as an example. Another example he gave was efforts being made by university leadership to collaborate with European and American universities. He cautioned religious leaders of the religious-based private universities against potential intrusion of the church in the professional administration of the universities. He was full of praise for GIMPA’s appointment of a full-time DOS and hoped that other public universities may consider that as an option.

He advised university leadership “to be more specific about the academic and professional requirements for DOS’ position. There should be very clear expectations for the office.” He advocated for continuous stakeholders’ discussion on the issue of having either a part-time faculty or a full-time administrator as the DOS. He was positive about the future of student affairs in Ghana and suggested that “university leadership needs to be more supportive of the DOS’ office. The DOS must be aware of student characteristics and assess the needs of their students so they can serve them better.” He continued that “the DOS should not be afraid of change, and they must be willing to adopt innovative and non-traditional ways of providing student services.”
Staff at the Director of Student Affairs (DOSA) Office

Bernice and Tom were the two staff members I interviewed at the DOSA’s office. Bernice, a middle-aged woman had worked at GIMPA for about 15 years and knew the history of the institution quite well. Tom, however, has been an employee of GIMPA since August 2008. They were both very enthusiastic about the interview. We met at their preferred quiet restaurant on a Saturday night. They perceive the work of the DOSA as “identifying student needs and providing innovative services to satisfy the needs.” Bernice was excited about the full-time status of the current DOSA and thought that “she has enough time to meet and serve students. She is mostly available and visible and her demeanor makes it easier for students to want to interact with her. She has the trust and confidence of the students. It’s exciting.” Both Bernice and Tom indicated that the office had assumed a new image as being more student-friendly. They added that “they continue to receive very positive feedback from students.”

The major student needs were conflict resolution and mediation, counseling, and resolution of theft cases. They shared an alleged theft case they had reported to the police that week. According to them, a student gave a ride to another student and later found out that his digital camera which was in the car was missing. The suspect later confessed to a counselor at the DOSA’s office and returned the camera. The case was therefore withdrawn from the police and resolved amicably in the office.

The staff members were concerned about the lack of in-service training for staff, limited available resources (personnel and office materials/equipment), but hoped that the new DOSA would be supported by the university leadership to address those concerns.
They were positive about the future of student affairs in Ghana and Bernice sounded more optimistic and said, “We have come a long within the past 15 years and I know it can only get better. It has been a very progressive positive evolution and I am sure there is no turning back. Forward ever, backwards never!”

**Central University College (CUC)**

Central University College (CUC) is a not for profit higher educational institution owned by the International Central Gospel Church (ICGC). CUC offers Christian-based higher education “for the expansion of God's Kingdom” (CUC Annual Report, 2008, p. 3). It began functioning as a small training college for pastors in 1988 by ICGC. It was renamed the Central Bible College in June 1991. In 1993, its name was changed to the Central Christian College. Realizing the need to expand its programs to support the higher education needs of Ghana, the College reviewed its programs and curriculum to include internship-oriented business and information communication and technology (ICT) academic programs. This led to the establishment of the School of Business Management and Administration. In 1997, its name was changed to the Central University College (CUC) to confirm its new status as a liberal arts university.

The University is a “corporate body with perpetual succession and a common seal, committed to the fulfillment of Jesus Christ in its multifaceted dimensions” (CUC Annual Report, p. 7). To this effect, CUC’s goal is to provide an opportunity for its students to acquire knowledge, skills, and competencies to become morally upright African scholars with an indebt understanding of the challenges confronting the continent. Education at CUC enables the citizenry to serve in various leadership positions.
in different sectors of the economy. CUC aims to achieve this goal through effective training, intentional extension programs, relevant research and advisory services. CUC’s emphasis is on producing committed, effective leaders, executives, analysts and entrepreneurs willing and capable of meeting the challenges the 21 Century and beyond (CUC Annual Report)

**Vice President (Provost)**

The Vice President (VP) of CUC is a Physics Professor who has had many years of teaching experience at the University of Ghana. Prior to becoming the Vice President, he had been the Head of the Physics Department at the University of Ghana. He is a senior pastor of the ICGC. Prior to the interview, he arranged for his secretary to give me a tour of the Tema Campus of the CUC, where the central administration is located. Visually, one could easily tell that it is a Christian university. There were Christian posters at many places on the campus. Various offices had Christian posters and calendars of the ICGC. The interview happened in the VP’s office, and he looked very excited about the interview. He gracefully thanked me for deciding to include the university as one of my case studies. It was a very nice office with biblical quotes on the walls and the crucifix and a bible on his desk. He said a prayer before the interview.

The VP perceives the nature of the work of the DOS as an intermediary between management and students, adding that “the DOS should be the representative of management and also of students. This dual role makes the work very challenging.” He believes that the DOS should be an embodiment of the university’s motto of **Faith, Integrity and Excellence**. In appointing the DOS, the VP said “I look out for a
man/woman of God, a counselor, an alumnus/alumna, a former student leader, a person with knowledge of student development theories, and a faculty member.” He also expected the DOS to be honest, compassionate, and accountable. He identified counseling and issues of finance as the major student needs, and added that “the DOS office provides services to meet the needs. I must however acknowledge that inadequate resources are a challenge to our ability to effectively provide these services.”

He emphasized the university leadership’s commitment to continue to support the DOS office to come out with innovative ways of providing student services. Describing their strengths, the VP said “we believe in caring for our students. We are committed to excellent customer service, and that is where we seem to have an urge over the traditional public universities. We are the pacesetters in educational customer service.” He mentioned that “other units in the University such as the Chaplaincy Unit and the Disciplinary Board collaborate with the DOS office to provide student services. The VP was also very positive about the future of student of affairs in Ghanaian universities.

Dean of Students (DOS)

The DOS is a pastor of the ICGC, and alumnus of the CUC, and a faculty member. He serves as a part-time DOS. He has a Master’s degree. The interview was held in his office, which had Christian posters and a calendar on the walls. He also had a crucifix and a bible on his desk. It was not a surprise when he led a prayer before the start of the interview. He perceives the nature of his work as “a liaison between management and students in matters relating to general student welfare on campus.” According to him, “my office helps students to identify internships. We also vet, approve, and monitor
students’ on and off-campus activities including activities of student organizations. Again, we inform and educate students about university policies.”

The DOS identified financial challenges and access to examination results as some of the major student needs. The DOS described how his office supports students and said, “My office has coordinated the establishment of a fund to provide some financial support to brilliant but needy students.” He also said that his office was advocating for the purchase of better software for processing examination results to avoid delays in accessing examination results.

The DOS was concerned about the high incidence of examination malpractices among students, reports of theft cases, and indecent dressing among students, especially female students. He hoped that his office would be more resourced with additional counselors and modern office equipment so they could serve students better. He was positive about the support of the University leadership.”

Some of the student services his office provides include orientation for freshmen, helping students to apply for student loans and national service postings. The DOS explained, “We also issue introductory letters to students and provide valuable counseling services. The Chaplaincy Unit provides prayer sessions when necessary.” He was happy about the progress they had made in educating students about university policies, adding that “the awareness we have created has made it easier to enforce the policies.” He was specific about the dress code and how the incidence of indecent dressing had reduced considerably. He was however disappointed that examination malpractice continues to be a big concern.
The DOS was satisfied with his interaction with students and said that “students he had interacted with have provided very positive feedback.” He said he had reserved two hours a week on his schedule for students to just walk-in for interaction. He expressed how fulfilling those interactions have always been. Even though he had seen significant improvement in the enforcement of the dress code, he added that “it remains a challenge since we continue to receive reports of indecent dressing from faculty, staff and students. As a pastor it worries me. Another challenge is how to control and monitor student organizations’ off-campus activities.”

The DOS suggested that student services be delinked from the registrar’s office to his office. He also advocated for separate student senates for each of their three campuses. He was positive about the future of student affairs in Ghana, and indicated that “the private universities are committed to providing a model for others to replicate.”

**Staff at the Dean of Students Office**

Both Lucy and Joe have been employees of the CUC since 1998. They were both transferred from the registrar’s office to the DOS in 2005. They told me they find their current positions more satisfying because “one can directly feel the impact on students. When students come with a concern, and we are able to resolve them, we share in their joy. We find this most fulfilling.” Lucy manages the front desk. She receives, records, and files all student concerns and complaints. She processes them and makes referrals. Joe is the Assistant Registrar and directly assists the DOS and supervises the other staff member.
We had the interview in their office after working hours. They perceive the nature of the DOS’ work as “providing services to meet student needs, and sending regular feedback and reports to management.” The staff members perceive the major student needs as counseling and providing resources for financial support. They had very positive impression about the way the DOS interacted with student. They said that “the students trust him because they know he is an honest man of God. They share very personal information with him, and he advises them. He genuinely loves his work.”

They recommended for the hiring of additional staff to help serve students better. “The students are many and we are constrained by inadequate resources. We try to do our best with what we have.” They described the students as “generally responsible young men and women who understand and appreciate our challenges. There is mutual respect among us. They also advocated for more in-service training for the staff to equip them with skills and competencies to serve students better. They were equally positive about the future of student affairs in Ghana, adding that “we need to redefine and create our own model that can serve the peculiar needs of the Ghanaian student.” When I asked Joe to further explain this he said “I wish we do not replicate blindly. We cannot forget the peculiar nature and culture of our campus environment.”

**Students**

The focus group interview at the CUC involved 6 students. They were 3 woman and 3 men. I had 2 each from second year, third year and fourth year. The interview was held at the student senate conference room. The students perceived the nature of the work of the DOS as “our mediator at the management level. He is our campus father and we
trust him to represent our interests at the management level.” They identified the major student needs as resources for financial support, career and internship opportunities, and counseling. Even though they expressed general satisfaction with the work of the DOS, they suggested that “the office needs to be more resourced to help students identify career paths related to their majors. The DOS office also needs to collaborate with businesses to offer internships to students.”

They argued that there was no justification for not hiring more staff for the DOS office. They explained, “We pay high tuition fees and we deserve the best student services. Our number increases every year, but the number of staff members hardly increases. This is unacceptable.” They were positive about their interactions with the DOS office. They said that “the DOS and his staff are a delight to interact with. They genuinely care for students. Even though they do not always serve our needs, one always leaves the office with satisfaction.” They were optimistic that the office would potentially provide excellent student services if well-resourced. Just as the other students from the other case study institutions, they were positive about the future of student affairs in Ghana.

**Cross-Case Analysis: Major Findings**

This qualitative study had as its focus the experiences of deans of students (DOS) in selected universities in Ghana by using the voices of a vice chancellor, a pro-vice chancellor, DOS, administrators, faculty, and students. As stated in chapter 1, the goal of the study was to understand the perceptions of the work of deans of students at Ghanaian universities and to appreciate the ways in which their experiences, values and philosophy
influence their roles on campus. In particular, the extent to which deans of students understood their work in providing student services, promoting student learning, student engagement, student development and success was of special interest in this study. Lykes and Coquillon (2007) indicate that methods of qualitative research are intentionally designed to preserve and value the inputs and voices participants’ peculiar circumstances, experiences, culture, perceptions, and stories. The cross-case analysis addresses the specifics of the voices of the participants.

Figure 3. Findings
Ghanaian Culture/Tradition

Culture and tradition are very important aspects of the social interactions in Ghana, and these interactions are manifested in many sectors including educational institutions (Sarpong, 1974). Some of the Ghanaian cultural and traditional practices that have influenced interactions, perceptions, philosophies, values, and experiences in higher education include chieftaincy, extended family system, and the rites of passage.

Chieftaincy in Ghana is the traditional system of governance where the chief is the leader/ruler of a tribal society, village, town, or a traditional area (Chieftaincy Act, 1971). Chieftaincy is enshrined in Chapter 22 Article 270 of Ghana’s 1992 Constitution (Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992). Between 2001 and 2008, Ghana had a Ministry of Chieftaincy and Culture charged with the responsibility of preserving, sustaining and integrating traditional and cultural values and practices to accelerate wealth creation and harmony for national development.

It was evident at the various research sites that culture and tradition had shaped values, philosophies, practices, experiences and perceptions of many of the research participants, including their perception of the work of the Dean of Students (DOS).

Traditional Leadership as Parenthood

Many of the participants exhibited a traditional leadership style, where decisions are made at the top and disseminated from top to bottom. Decisions made by traditional leaders in Ghana are hardly questioned, which seems to echo a Ghanaian traditional saying that *Nana kasa a obiara nka bi*, meaning, “When the chief speaks, there is no challenger.” Traditionally, the chief is perceived as the repertoire of wisdom and
everybody’s father. In describing his interactions with students, the Dean of Students of one of the public universities in Ghana said:

Many students these days do not listen and as such they are unable to learn from the elderly. They do not take advice. This makes it difficult for my staff and me to have positive interactions with some of our students. Student leaders are sometimes disrespectful and antagonistic. They tend to ask too many unnecessary questions. I remember how humble and obedient we were to university leadership when we were students. We regarded the university as our parent. Times have changed.

This illustrates that the DOS expects students to listen without questioning just as the chief’s subjects listen to him with absolute humility and sometimes fear. The DOS also wanted to serve as parents, similar to the in loco parentis era of American higher education prior to the 1960s. However, during a focus group interview at the University of Cape Coast (UCC), a student expressed her frustration with how the DOS office interacts with students:

The DOS is always threatening us with disciplinary action. He wants to treat us like children, but we are matured young adults capable of making informed decisions. The university should not assume the role of parents. The university authority now wants to control our lives including what to wear. Some professors have adopted the habit of dismissing some female students from their class for wearing what they describe as indecent/provocative dresses. It’s absurd! They are not our parents, and we
do not expect them to be. They are our leaders and we expect mutual
respect and collaboration.

Clearly, these students do not appreciate the parental approach the DOS offices
take on college campuses, and strongly argue that current college students do not need
that relationship. Ironically, in describing the nature of their work, all the four deans of
students I interviewed perceived themselves as serving as parents to the students. The
DOS of the Central University College said:

As a Pastor and a father of three, I see the students as my children and I
am committed to serve them as a parent. Unfortunately, many of our
students do not seem to understand this role.

This opposing view between students and university leadership in relation to the role of
the DOS as a parent remains a challenge and represents a source of many conflicts
between students and university leadership. Even though some faculty and staff do not
support the traditional leadership style approach to interacting with students, they are
unable to openly criticize it for fear of being tagged as supporting student indiscipline.
The director of student affairs (DOSA) of the Ghana Institute of Management and Public
Administration (GIMPA) called for a careful combination of tradition and modern
practices in interacting with students. She said:

Times have changed. The way we interacted with students in the 1970s
and the 1980s were different from how we did it in the 2000s. It should be
definitely different from how we want to do it this decade. We cannot
assume the role of parents and treat college students as a group of
uninformed children. We should not be immune to change. Our students have a voice and we need to listen to them.

It is important to note that most of the deans of students expect students to recognize and appreciate their parental approach; and in many instances staff members of the DOS’ offices are quick to accuse students of not appreciating their parental role. Students, on the other hand, are of the view that the DOS should not serve as parent, but a campus resource capable of helping them to get more involved on campus. It was clear during the interviews that the DOS perceive the parental role is well-intended, but students view it as misplaced and unnecessary.

**Communal Living**

Ghana’s extended family system describes members of the family as not only parents and siblings, but also grandparents, cousins, nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, etc. The family system promotes communal living and community ownership, concern and care for community members, and protection of one another. The Ghanaian culture is very hospitable. It is common in many Ghanaian cultures to find an adult disciplining any child of the community for wrongdoing. The perception is that children are God’s gift to members of the community. In such cultures, mediation and forgiveness become the preferred method of conflict resolution.

The campus environment does not seem to portray the culture of communal living even though attempts are made by university leadership to advocate for such a culture. Expressing his concern, a DOS said:
College students have become too individualistic, contrary to our cherished value of communal living. Many students are less patriotic and have no regard for the protection and safety of fellow students and university property. Theft, conflicts, demonstrations, damage to university property, and unwillingness to forgive are things that we deal with on daily basis. Many students now prefer legal action to mediation as a method of conflict resolution.

This attitude was echoed by the Vice Chancellor of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) when he said:

Students’ commitment to communal living has decreased leading to lack of trust among students. This has made mediation a challenging tool for resolving conflicts among students.

A student at the Central University College explained why many students no longer admire communal living as a value worth upholding on college campus in these words:

It is difficult to trust some students these days. Theft, deceit, fraud, and other vices are common on campus. How does one uphold communal living in such an environment? It is better to share with the few friends that one can trust. We need to redefine what we traditionally refer to as communal living. It thrives on trust!

I realized during the focus group interviews that students generally value communal living as an important aspect of the Ghanaian culture, but more carefully live by its tenets than a few years ago. Many students indicated that community cohesion is
more popular and common in the rural areas than the urban centers and college campuses. According to them, people know each other better in the villages than in the big cities, where the universities are located. This, according to many students, makes it easier to build trust in the villages than in the big cities.

Another thing that came up during the focus group interviews was the issue of nuclear and extended family systems. Traditionally, many Ghanaians see the value in maintaining the extended family system. In the past, many Ghanaian residential buildings were the courtyard design, a U-shaped or L-shaped building with many rooms and a gathering space (courtyard in the middle). This was appropriate for the extended family system where siblings, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, etc. lived together in one house. In the past decade, the configuration of buildings seemed to have changed. Many residential buildings are designed for the nuclear family (parents and siblings) with about three or four bedrooms. This development, according to many students, seemed to have reduced the opportunity for community engagement. Student participants explained that these designs were also reflective of societal changes in that many Ghanaian families are becoming more insular and this has influenced students’ perception of the traditional communal living.

**Perceived Role of the Dean of Students**

This section focuses on the first research question: the university community’s perception of the work of the dean of students. In answering this research question, it was important to understand how the experiences of the vice chancellor (president), pro-vice chancellor/vice president (pro-vost), deans of students, faculty and students had shaped
their perception of the work of the dean of students. Participants recounted some of the experiences which had influenced their perception of the work of the dean of students.

**Representative of the Vice Chancellor (President)**

Apart from the DOS of GIMPA, the other three DOS that I interviewed at UCC, KNUST, and CUC were faculty members who were directly appointed by the Vice Chancellor (President) to serve as DOS. The appointing officers therefore have their personal expectations. The vice chancellor of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) noted:

In appointing the dean of students, I look out for a responsible senior faculty member, an assistant or associate professor who can ably represent me among students. I expect the dean of students to instill discipline among students by sanctioning them when they violate the student code of conduct. The dean of students’ office also receives student concerns and finds ways of addressing them in collaboration with related on and off campus offices. You see, because many parents are least involved in the college lives of their children, I believe that the dean of students serves as the on-campus father of students, and I expect him/her to be a disciplinarian.

In addition to the Vice Chancellor’s expectations, the DOS may have personal expectations of his/her work. Other important constituents of the campus environment such as students and faculty may have different expectations. These conflicting
expectations have the potential of negatively affecting the quality of student services. A student from KNUST described his expectation of the DOS in these words:

I expect the DOS and his staff to be available and visible so they can listen to our concerns and help us address them. I expect the office to provide resources that will help students enjoy their college experience.

In expressing his expectation of the DOS’ work, a faculty member of KNUST’s College of Engineering said:

The DOS should facilitate the out-of-class activities of students by collaborating with on and off campus units to provide the needed services and support as a compliment to what the academic units provide.

Sometimes, the DOS struggles with these diverse expectations, and wonders how to equally serve the interest of the Vice Chancellor who appointed him and the students whom he is expected to serve. Many students are aware of this dilemma and are of the view that in many instances the DOS’ office is more committed to the Vice Chancellor than students.

Even though all the DOS disagree with this perception, they acknowledge that it remains a challenge that they are dealing with. Some of the students suggested the need to review the criteria for appointing the DOS. They advocated for opening the position up for advertisement, application, and interviewing so that interested qualified candidates would compete for the position.
The Dean of Students as Parent

All the DOS I interviewed perceive themselves as campus parents of students. They therefore expect students to relate with them as such. This perception was confirmed by the Vice Chancellor of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) when he said:

As the Vice Chancellor who appointed the DOS, my expectation is that he serves as parent to the students. Many parents I have interacted with expect this from the DOS. Once parents are assured of this role by the DOS, they become confident that their children are safe and in good hands on campus. As a parent myself, I know how it feels and I am committed to supporting the DOS to provide this parental service to our students.

The assertion that many Ghanaian parents are uninvolved in the college life of their children differs from what Cutright (2008) described of parents’ involvement in the lives of college students in the United States. Involvement in the USA is influenced by students’ rights and privacy, rising tuition costs and consumerism, accountability movement in higher education, and advances in technology. Parents are unsure of the rights of their children as adults and students. Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA) confuse some parents (Cutright, 2008). In their attempt to understand these acts with the hope of helping their children to better understand them, they tend to be perceived as being overly involved. Many parents become involved as advocates. In Ghana, however, the KNUST vice chancellor perceives the work of the dean of students as a father and a disciplinarian
of students due to his assertion that many Ghanaian parents are not involved in the
college life of their children.

Many students shared that their parents had never visited them on campus, and
they asserted that their experience was common among their peers. Despite this, they
resisted the DOS’ role as substitute for their parents. Indeed fall opening of the residence
halls of the research sites is not as glamorous as we see on many US College campuses.
Few parents accompany their children to campus during opening. Many Ghanaian parents
did not see the need to be involved in fall opening and the universities do not provide the
conditions to encourage parents’ involvement. Apart from orientation for students, there
are no planned programs and activities to make fall opening attractive to relatives of
students.

Many students said that at their age, they were capable of taking care of
themselves on campus and did not need parental care from the DOS. These opposing
expectations remain a challenge.

**Morality among Students and Discipline**

Some university leaders believe that morality among students has to do with
religion, obedience and respect for authority; and that morality is directly related to
discipline. Many staff and faculty I interviewed were of the view that morally upright
students were generally disciplined and would hardly violate university regulations. They
further argue that students who uphold these moral values are often successful in college.
Interestingly, many students are advocating for a paradigm shift in the characterization of
morality among students. While the DOS of the CUC asserts the view that provocative
dressing is morally wrong, many students I interviewed see this as having to do with fashion rather than with morality. As a pastor of the Central Gospel Church, the Vice President of the Central University College (CUC) indicated that:

The dean of students must be a man or woman of God, a spiritual director, a counselor, and a faculty member. Successful students are those who are able to effectively combine their spiritual life to the academic work. Remember, my brother, that *anima sana in corpore sano* (a sound mind in a sound body). The Bible says come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light (Matthew 11: 28-30, King James Version). Again, the Word of God says that do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going (John 14:1-4, King James Version).

The vice president of the CUC perceives student success as one’s willingness and ability to follow the dean of students’ spiritual guidance since that is a necessary condition for academic excellence. He therefore perceives the role of the dean of students as that of a spiritual counselor, and this role defines the philosophy of the dean of
students’ work. Manning et al (2006) define student engagement as the “time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities” (p. 24). Even though knowledge of spirituality as advocated by the vice president of the CUC may be an educationally purposeful activity, the focus is different from what Manning et al (2006) have described.

**The Dean of Students as an Intercessor**

All four deans of students I interviewed seemed to perceive their work as basically serving as a bridge between university leadership and students. This created the impression that students needed to use their offices as conduit for communicating with university leadership. One dean of students noted:

> Hmm! Students and student leaders of today have no respect for authority. They now have the tendency to want to meet the vice chancellor, vice president, or the registrar without first notifying my office. In our student days, this would have been perceived as an abomination. It would have been impossible! We need to strengthen existing structures to ensure that all students and student groups use our offices as the contact points for access to university leadership. This cannot be compromised.

In the Ghanaian Akan language, “hmm!” is suggestive of the strong feelings and emotions that the dean of students attaches to the account. This account seems to put less emphasis on the role of the dean of students as facilitator for the provision of student services. It also downplays the expected role of the dean of students as the catalyst for student engagement. The impact a college experience has on a student depends on one’s
involvement in the available curricular and co-curricular activities (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). In many instances, when the campus environment is perceived by students as supportive and congenial for the overall learning experience, student engagement occurs (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

A student leader at KNUST indicated that many student leaders have been unimpressed in the past by how the DOS had represented them at the Vice Chancellor’s Office. He explained:

We have instances where our petition and grievances to the Vice Chancellor through the DOS’ office have been misrepresented. A case in point was November 2010 when our request for the Vice Chancellor to strengthen the performance evaluation process of faculty was presented as an attempt to undermine the authority of the Vice Chancellor. The DOS woefully failed us.

**Time Commitment and Collaboration**

The DOSA of GIMPA was emphatic about the need for her office to commit time for student interactions. She opined that students needed to be involved and the DOSA’s office had a responsibility to make that happen. She added:

As a full-time director of student affairs, I am committed to the success of my students, most of whom are non-traditional students. I have students who are workers, mothers and fathers. They need the support of my office to effectively combine their multiple roles. I make sure that I am available and visible to listen to them and help them. I am committed to providing
student services to meet their needs. In particular, my office provides counseling services, academic and financial advising, and conflict resolution and mediation services. I perceive my role as an advocate for my students.

The campus environment as described above could be a necessary condition for student involvement, leading to student success (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). In an interview with staff members at another dean of students’ office, a female administrative assistant described her perception of the dean of students’ work by saying:

The dean of students spends about ten hours a week in the office. He is a professor and spends most of his time at his academic department. He is hardly available and visible. I believe that many students do not know him. Even though the office functions in his absence, many important student-related issues that need to be addressed are delayed. For example, he is the only signatory to student introductory letters and the issuance of these letters often delays. He perceives students as children whose views do not matter, and often tends to intimidate them. The office hardly collaborates with other offices, and this negatively affects the quality of the few student services we offer.

This lack of collaboration is what Manning et al (2006) describe as the functional silos. This model depicts student affairs practice where there is minimal collaboration with other units. The Student Learning Imperative (ACPA, 1996) suggests that each functional unit is decentralized and autonomous. This offers specialized expertise for
student services. The prevalent model at these Ghanaian universities seems to be administration-centered rather than student-centered. The focus group interviews with students confirmed the minimal collaboration that exists between the dean of students’ office and other units within the university. In an interview at the University of Cape Coast, one student said:

The dean of students’ office hardly involves students in planning programs for students. Many committees do not have student representation. We do not matter in the decision-making process. This is worrying, but when we complain we do not get a hearing. Sometimes, we get the feeling that they do not care about us. When we report concerns about our academic departments, they don’t get resolved easily due to lack of collaboration.

As university students, we believe we are no longer children, but that is how they perceive us to be. *Asem se be!*

*Asem se be* is an Akan phrase, meaning, “This is a mystery.” It sums up the frustration of this participant and it also confirms the administrative-centered nature of the dean of students’ office (Manning et al., 2006). Participants of the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) and those of CUC gave the impression that their deans of students’ offices were less administrative-centered as compared to KNUST and UCC. A student at the CUC stated that:

The dean of students and his staff are very committed to our success. They care about our academic and personal life. They advise us on how to be successful in college. They collaborate with the Counseling Unit and the
Chaplaincy Board to offer various student services. In particular, the career workshops every semester are very helpful. Faculty members generally perceive the work of the dean of students as purely non-academic interaction with students with no basis for collaboration with academic units. In an interview with a faculty member at KNUST, the professor indicated that:

I don’t get it! I just don’t! This is an attempt by the dean of students to overburden us with extra duty without benefits. Collaborating with academic units for what? I don’t see the relationship. We need to let him know that we cannot be part of any unstructured undefined collaboration. It is a waste of our time.

This professor’s position represents the co-curricular model which distinguishes out-of-class programs from the formal classroom curricular, and further expects student affairs professionals and the faculty to place greater emphasis and concentrate on their respective areas of expertise (Brown, 1972). This model does not view student affairs and academic affairs as complementary to each other. Throughout the interviews, there were indications that the dean of students’ offices practiced a combination of administrative-centered and student-centered models. Also, there were instances of a combination of functional silos and the seamless learning models at all the deans of students’ offices, even though different offices were at different locations on the continuum.

**Student Needs and Services**

All four deans of students (DOS) I interviewed were emphatic about the fact that their offices were under-resourced to provide the many diverse student needs. They also
pointed out that the many student concerns/complaints they had received and documented over the years had given them a fair idea of the nature of students needs. Staff at the DOS’ offices had concerns about their inability to serve students on time. They acknowledged that due to limited resources, student requests are often delayed at their offices. They added that they would continue to do their best, hoping that students will understand and appreciate their services.

**Traditional Student Needs and Services**

Student needs and services identified and mentioned by the four DOS I interviewed were mainly on counseling services, financial support services, and mediation and conflict resolution.

Confirming this, the DOS of KNUST said:

The major student needs that we provide services for are counseling and psychological needs, financial needs, and academic-related needs. The others are issues with relationships, theft cases, and conflicts. The few available counselors and psychologists have tried to provide services for students. My office has also liaised with the Finance Office to help arrange payment plans for financially-struggling students. Again, my office continues to provide conflict resolution and mediation services. We also collaborate with the police to resolve theft cases.

The DOS of the Central University College (CUC) added his voice and shared his experiences in relation to student needs and services, in particular citing the religious and moral foundations undergirding his work. He said:
As a Christian institution, we are concerned about the perception of low moral values among our students. We provide biblical moral education for our students. We also provide marriage counseling services for our non-traditional students. I have a team of pastors that meet once a week to pray for our students. I believe in the power of prayers and I know that our students will grow and become responsible God-fearing adults.

Many students I interviewed argued that due to changing student characteristics, student needs continue to change. They were however concerned that provision of student services had not adequately responded to the changing needs. They called for a more systematic method of identifying student needs to be able to provide the appropriate students services to meet those needs. Stan, a senior at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) said:

Student services have not significantly changed during the past three years I have spent on this campus as a student. Student population has changed, student needs continue to change, and students are exposed to different cultures especially due to the internet. The DOS’ office has to change the way student services are designed and provided. We need more innovation and creativity. Students can help to make this happen, but the office does not see the need to involve us.

A faculty member of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), who also had concerns about student services said:
I was a student of KNUST from 1997 to 2001, and after almost a decade, the DOS’ office provides the same student services. The services have remained the same, the method of service delivery has not changed, and staff work ethics and attitude towards work are the same if not worse. As an institution, we need to take advantage of modern technology in the delivery of student services.

**Non-Traditional Student Needs and Services**

During a focus group interview at the University of Cape Coast (UCC), the students unanimously said that they appreciate all the services they receive from the DOS’ office. According to them, the counseling services, the conflict resolution and the mediation services only serve the traditional needs of students. Many of them expressed a desire for services that met more diverse student needs, including some that challenged the traditional, religious ethos of the Ghanaian culture. Eva, a junior at UCC said:

> I know few students who describe themselves as lesbians and gays; and due to the way our culture frowns on these practices, such students struggle to deal with the many social challenges associated with being gay/lesbian in our culture. There are no services on campus to support them. Again, students cannot transfer from one university to the other, and this remains a very big concern for students. There are no on-campus opportunities for career services in relation to our majors. We are not even sure about the future prospects of our majors. Access to internet services on campus is very limited, and we still receive all notifications on notice
boards. These are non-traditional student needs that we expect the DOS’ office to provide services for.

Eva’s concern was repeated at the other research sites during the various focus group interviews I had with students. The issue here is that what the DOS’ offices consider to be the most important student needs are viewed as less important by the students. Students expect the DOS’ offices to recognize the changing student characteristics and respond with more innovative student services that can serve the non-traditional needs of students. This was re-echoed by a former dean of students of KNUST when he said:

The DOS’ offices ought to have a more systematic way of assessing student needs. The needs continue to change and provision of student services have to respond accordingly. Student needs in the 1990s are not the same as current needs. I highly recommend a more scientific tool/instrument for identifying student needs. This will be a necessary condition for providing the ideal student services.

Many US and European colleges continue to review student services to respond to changing student characteristics, student needs and emerging trends in higher education. Ohio University (OU), for instance, recently introduced gender neutral housing to meet the housing needs of its Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community (OU Residential Housing, 2011). The gender neutral housing offers a residential facility where rooms, bathrooms and other facilities are not gender specific. What it means is that roommates are assigned without gender consideration, and this serves the needs of the
LGBT community. Again, Ohio University has special services to provide for the needs of veterans, students with disabilities, victims of sexual assault, etc. (OU Residential Housing). The DOS’ offices in Ghanaian universities need to collaborate with selected colleges in the US and Europe to replicate some of the non-traditional student services aimed at meeting the needs of special student populations.

**Customer Service**

Students of the Central University College (CUC), a private, tuition-driven higher educational institution, showed evidence of being more satisfied and appreciative of student services provided by the DOS’ office than do students on the other campuses. In particular, they commended the DOS for his attempts to have personal informal interactions with all student groups throughout the year. During the focus group interview, Bernice, a second year student of CUC said:

The DOS and his staff have time to listen to students. I know the DOS has a schedule to meet all student groups on campus for informal interactions. This is so nice and it shows how much his office is committed to our success on campus. Staff members at the office have excellent customer service, and students really appreciate this. There is mutual respect among students and the staff.

Students of the University of Cape Coast (UCC), a public higher educational institution, had a different perception of customer service at the DOS office. At a focus group interview, the students expressed their frustration about how the staff members of
the DOS’ office usually respond to their needs. Marcus, a senior at UCC, summed this up when he said:

Customer service is at its lowest ebb in the DOS’ office. The staff members have little time to listen to students, and they do not respect the views of students. If there were options, I know many students would not access the services of the DOS’ office. I only hope that it gets better.

Many students I interviewed spoke negatively about the level of customer service at the DOS’ office. Students perceive customer service as an integral part of student services and added that the relatively poor customer service at the DOS’ office has made it challenging for many students to appreciate and value the work of the DOS. My personal observations at the various DOS’ offices confirmed student perception that respect for and responsiveness to students was relatively poor at the DOS’ office. There were instances where students were treated by the staff as strangers or a group of troublesome people. I witnessed a situation at one of the offices when a student who indicated that he wanted to meet the DOS for personal reasons was not allowed to meet with him. It was required of him to state a reason, and personal reasons were unacceptable.

Having worked in student affairs both in Ghana and in the US, I know that customer service is better in US colleges than in Ghanaian universities. In my opinion, customer service is less emphasized in Ghanaian universities because university leaders fail to recognize students as constituents who deserve to be heard. Since demand for higher education far outweighs supply, university leadership is not concerned about
retention efforts. Many universities in Ghana are able to admit less than half of their applicants (GIMPA Annual Report, 2010). Students are unable to transfer to other universities and almost all students enrolled by default graduate from the same institutions. Customer service is therefore taken for granted in many Ghanaian universities.

The Success Story

Despite the many instances of frustration expressed by students in their interactions with the DOS’ office, there were some significant success stories. Students, staff at the DOS’ offices, and the DOS recounted some stories related to student services. Tony, a student of the Central University College noted:

Our DOS and his staff genuinely show concern and care towards the welfare of students. They are committed to student success and they demonstrate this by their patience and tolerance when serving students. The staff members listen to us even when we provoke them. Many students have very positive testimonies about the work of the DOS’ office.

When I asked the DOS of KNUST if he could share some success stories, this was what he shared:

I have had parents call me to express their satisfaction and appreciation for helping their children deal with specific difficulties. I recall a mother who called about a month ago to thank my staff and me for assisting his son to deal with a very challenging roommate conflict. Students have come to my office to thank me for supporting them to resolve academic-related issues.
We continue to receive positive feedback from students, faculty, staff, and parents. It is exciting to know that despite our many challenges, we still are able to make an impact on students’ lives.

Staff members of the DOS’ office at UCC shared instances when student feedbacks on their experiences with the office have been very positive. In one instance, Sam, a senior administrative assistant, said:

It is always heartwarming to receive positive feedback from students. I had a student who was helped by our counselors to deal with a traumatic experience of sexual assault come to me thanking our staff for their support. It dawned on me that despite our many challenges, we are still able to make an impact on the lives of some of our students. It was such a good feeling!

Ghanaians are generally a happy people, and I have heard many foreigners who visit Ghana (including the President of Ohio University, Dr. McDavis) say they wished Ghana could export happiness to other parts of the world. Along with this is the expression of appreciation among many Ghanaians. Students expressed appreciation for efforts being made by staff of the DOS’ office to support them on campus. Students who had had interactions with the DOS’ offices were generally positive about the experience even though they wished staff could reach out to many more students. They also suggested the need for the DOS to have more one-on-one interactions with many students, hoping that could positively impact the experiences of many students on campus.
Challenges

The DOS’ offices face many challenges, prominent among them are inadequate resources, traditional mindset, and staff-student tension.

Inadequate Resources

Throughout the interviews at all the sites, it was obvious that inadequate resources posed as a major challenge facing the DOS. Supporting staff members at the office are not sufficient to respond to student needs. This situation is frustrating for both staff and students. Staff members at the DOS’ office were concerned that sometimes it takes too long to respond to student needs due to the many students the few staff members have to serve. Students, on the other hand, need the services and cannot wait. All the DOS and their staff were worried about the inadequate equipment at their disposal. They complained about lack of modern technology and unreliable access to the internet. The offices are unable to communicate effectively with students. Student records are not properly managed, making access to student information challenging. Various offices in the universities have difficult sharing information. This was echoed by the DOS of the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) when she said:

Our offices are under-resourced and yet we are expected to serve students with distinction. Sadly, we are often unable to serve students the way we wish to serve them. It is a pain to access student records and our ability to use technology to monitor our students is limited. Sometimes, this is very frustrating, especially when one knows what to do to serve students better, but is limited by available resources.
Tension between Students and Staff

The interviews with students and staff portrayed some tension between the former and the later. This tension seemed to be as a result of opposing traditional mindset and expectations. Traditionally, many staff members of the universities expect students to show respect to the elderly by listening without questioning. This traditional mindset and expectation is challenged by students who want to ask questions and engage university staff in intellectual discourse. While university leadership perceive this as disrespectful, students see this as an attempt to be recognized as important stakeholders in the decision-making process of their institutions. This has led to tension between students and staff leading to many student demonstrations on many campuses. One example is the issue of dress among female students. Many university staff members have described the dressing of many female students as provocative, and have called for a stricter dress code. Students see this as unreasonable and an attempt to treat them as elementary school children. A student leader of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology said:

Students and staff have different traditional mindsets and expectations, and till we are able to compromise on these stands, the tension will continue to exist. We expect staff to be more realistic and recognize that times have changed. We are blending modernity with tradition. Irrelevant outmoded traditions have no space in modern society. We need to be trained to become responsible world citizens, and some of these traditions don’t work at the international level. I wonder why they don’t get it.
The tension between students and administrators seem to match the climate that led to the overthrow of *in loco parentis* in American higher education in the 1960s. Even though the specifics of the Ghanaian situation may be different from the American experience in the 1960s, one wonders if the Ghanaian universities can continue to play the perceived parental role on campus.

**Inadequate Institutional Support**

All the four DOS I interviewed called for more institutional support and redefinition of their job description. They all asserted that support from the Vice Chancellors’ offices, faculty, and the Registrars’ offices could be better. They were unanimous that the universities were capable of hiring additional staff and providing more equipment for the DOS offices, and wanted the university leadership to make them one of their institutional priorities. The DOSA of the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) said:

> While university leadership sometimes accuses us of being too supportive of students, the latter usually think that we are too supportive of university leadership. This dilemma occasionally makes me wonder whether we were appointed as DOS to serve students or university leadership. Our job descriptions probably need to be redefined.

This dilemma needs to be managed well if the DOS offices are to remain committed to the service of students. Voicing his frustration, the DOS of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) said:
Generally, faculty members have not given us the needed support. We need their collaboration to serve students better. Many faculty members do not see the need for this collaboration. I will continue to be an advocate for faculty-DOS collaboration for student success.

Furthermore, the DOS of UCC and GIMPA shared similar concerns about lack of support and services to provide resources that non-traditional students might need. Both of them were worried that breast-feeding mothers, for instance, had no place for their babies when they came to campus for classes. The DOS of GIMPA, in particular, argued that they needed to have more women as DOS to help make the needs of non-traditional students such as nursing mothers a priority. The DOS were also concerned about the absence of resident counselors to attend to on-campus students who might need counseling services outside the 8 am to 5 pm working hours.

Another concern which was shared by all the DOS I interviewed was the perception among students that some faculty and staff have the habit of sexually abusing female students. One of the DOS said:

Even though these perceptions may be based on assumptions, it still remains a concern. I encourage research in this area to help us identify whether this perception is based on assumptions or systematic analysis. We need to have the resources and consistent policies and procedures for responding to such student concerns.
Conclusion

Many students I interviewed at the public universities were of the view that the offices of the deans of students were not serving their needs, and that the offices were not well-resourced to effectively provide student services. Also, the deans’ description of the performance of their work was centered on conflict resolution among students, mediation, addressing issues of student indiscipline, and counseling services for students. There was no formal evaluation of their work. They all depended on occasional feedback from students and parents. Again, the deans of students at the public universities argued that inadequately qualified staff and lack of support systems made it difficult for them to effectively relate their philosophies and values to their work.

Moreover, the offices of the deans of students’ interpretation of student needs revolved around financial problems, counseling services, roommate conflicts, and issues of academic success. Furthermore, the major challenges facing the deans at the public universities were inadequate qualified staff, lack of support from university leadership, unreasonable demands from student senate, and indiscipline among students. All the interviewees were positive about the future of student affairs in Ghana. While most students and staff at the deans of students’ offices would like to have full-time administrators as the deans of students, there was a mixed perspective on the issue among the vice chancellor/president, the pro vice chancellor/vice president and the deans of students themselves.
Chapter Summary

Chapter four was a discussion of findings. I started with an introduction and descriptions of the four research sites. Then, I discussed the interviews and observations from my visits to the four research sites. This was followed by a cross-case analysis that had the following themes: Ghanaian culture and tradition; traditional leadership as parenthood; communal living; and perceived role of the deans of students. The others were student needs and services; the success story; and challenges.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter addresses the research questions and relates them to the major findings and themes. The chapter also discusses the themes in relation to the literature. Additionally, the study’s implications for practice and further research are addressed. My personal reflections of the study are also included in this chapter.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to understand the perceptions of the work of deans of students at Ghanaian universities and to appreciate the ways in which their experiences, values and philosophy influence their roles on campus. In particular, the extent to which deans of students understand their work in providing student services, promoting student learning, student engagement, student development and success is of special interest in the study. The research questions identified below provided a guide for the study:

1. How does the university community perceive the work of the dean of students?
   a. The Vice Chancellor / President
   b. The Pro-Vice Chancellor / Vice President
   c. Faculty
   d. Staff at the deans of students offices
   e. Students

2. How do the deans of students describe the performance of their duties?
   a. Philosophies and values
b. Student needs as interpreted by the deans of students, staff at the deans’
   offices, and students

c. The offices of the deans of students response to student needs

d. The challenges the deans of students face in the discharge of their duties, and
   how they work through the challenges

3. How do the deans of students perceive changes and the future of their offices?

   The study analyzes the role and experiences of the deans of students, identifies
   themes, and makes recommendations for Ghanaian higher education leadership to
   redefine the mission of student affairs divisions for the achievement of more quality
   student experiences on campus. It also highlights research opportunities for other related
   student affairs areas. Additionally, it serves as a research document and reference for
   university leadership and student affairs professionals to serve students in a more
   professional manner.

   The findings of this study should be set in context. Thus, I reviewed literature on
   the chieftaincy institution in Ghana, which provides an important foundation for
   understanding the attitudes and experiences presented in this study. In addition, I
   addressed the history and state of higher education and student affairs in Ghana and the
   United States, higher education and development, and challenges facing student affairs
   professionals. Models of student affairs practice were discussed. This provided the basis
   for theoretical framework of the study.

   The research questions were investigated through qualitative research design that
   consisted of interviews of deans of students (DOS), staff of the DOS offices, a vice
chancellor, a pro vice chancellor, faculty members, former DOS, a Ghanaian higher education expert, and focus group interviews with students. I also used observations and documents. I conducted basic interpretive qualitative study and used interpretive case studies of four selected higher educational institutions in Ghana which helped me to develop conceptual categories from the data. My sampling method was purposeful sampling. I used grounded theory analytical procedures to identify major themes from the data. The credibility and trustworthiness of the study were enhanced by triangulation and the use of the grounded theory analytical process. This was further enhanced by member-checking the data with participants through e-mails and telephone calls.

Findings from this study were presented through the efficient use of relevant quotations and interpretive analysis. The participants produced the thematic patterns that gave meaning and understand to the role and experiences of the deans of students (DOS), and how the nature of their work is perceived. The major themes included: Ghanaian culture/tradition and the work of the DOS; perceived role of the DOS; time commitment and collaboration; student needs and services; and customer service. Others were inadequate resources; tension between students and staff; inadequate institutional support; and desired changes in student affairs practice. I discussed the themes in relation to the research questions. Available, relevant, related research findings and literature were used to help understand and discuss the data and the findings. The summary offers a good foundation for discussing the value and meanings of the role and experiences of the DOS and the perceptions of the nature of their work.
Discussion

This section presents discussions of the major findings in relation to the research questions of the study. The findings consisted of major themes such as perceived role of the DOS, student needs and services, challenges facing the DOS, and desired changes of student affairs practice in Ghana.

Research Questions

1. How does the University Community perceive the Work of the Dean of Students?

The university community’s perception of the work of the DOS is bifurcated by staff perceptions and student perceptions. Many staff members interviewed had a traditional mindset about the work of the DOS comparing it to a father-son relationship in a family setting. The staff members at the various research sites view the DOS’ position as a family head with many children to care for. Their expectation is for the DOS to be a parent and a disciplinarian, making sure that students remain respectful to authority. Attempts by students to challenge or even question certain decisions by the authority are perceived as deviation from the norm. They therefore expect the DOS to correct students when they make mistakes through the use of punitive interventions. This perception has affected student engagement since the DOS hardly involve students in the decision-making process. Some staff members even say that for the DOS to be successful, they should be fearful such that students cannot argue with them and make unnecessary demands.

Students, on the other hand, generally have a negative perception about the work of the DOS even though they recounted a few positive stories. Students think the DOS’
office has not responded to the needs of the changing characteristics of the student population. They described the DOS’ office as being immune to change and that very little collaboration exists between the DOS’ office and other units on campus. Many students however expect the DOS office to plan and provide student services capable of helping students to be successful on campus. Again, students are of the view that the DOS’s want to treat them as children. Students do not want father-son relationship with the DOS. Many students I interviewed expect the DOS’ office to identify student needs and provide services to meet the needs. They want the DOS’ office to serve as a resource center where they can always go to have their many needs met.

These perceptions and the cultural context that supports them have influenced the model of student affairs practice at the DOS’ office. Staff members at DOS’ office are more concerned about the administrative set-up of the office and ensuring that procedural requirements are met than gaining familiarity with students and their needs. They want to be efficient in their own “small world” with limited collaboration with other offices. This practice seems to confirm the traditional model of student affairs practice by Manning et al. (2006): administrative-centered model and functional silos. According to Manning, Kinzie, and Schuh, the administrative-centered approach to student affairs practice places the administrative perspective at the center of student affairs practice. This model simply organizes “functions and approaches from an organizational, leadership, or management perspective rather than student development” (p. 58).

The administrative-centered approach to student affairs practice identified at the DOS offices at UCC, KNUST, GIMPA and CUC seem to be different from parallel
examples in the United States. This is because the Ghanaian model offers a blend of the administrative-centered model that Manning et al. (2006) describe and some features of chieftaincy explained by Kludze (2000). This unique model organizes functions and approaches from an organizational, management, and traditional leadership perspective. Similar to the Ghanaian chieftaincy institution, compliance gaining, power, and the authority of the position are very important elements for the DOS and their staff. In their interactions with students, the DOS and their staff members tend to emphasize the need for students to recognize the authority of their positions and sometimes demand respect from students. Some of the potential strengths of this model include its emphasis on morality and traditional values such as respect for the elderly, communal living and community service.

The DOS are so bureaucracy-centered that in many of the offices I visited, student development is sometimes relegated to the periphery. Many staff members in the DOS office spend more time attending meetings, writing reports, and addressing management and leadership issues than having interactions with students. Through this research, I realized that sometimes because of the reliance on centralized authority, the office ceases to function when the DOS (the leader) is absent. This phenomenon is described, similarly, by Manning et al. (2006).

2. **How do the Deans of Students describe the Performance of their Duties?**

Many of the DOS describe the successful performance of their duties based on their ability to gain student compliance. During the interviews with the DOS, they all seemed to create the impression that one is successful when one is able to keep students
calm, and prevent them from demonstrations, popularly referred to as “aluta” in Ghanaian universities. Again, the DOS added that their ability to meet the Vice Chancellor’s expectations of them is a significant indicator of a high performing DOS. They were more concerned about issues of discipline and morality than student involvement and success. Several of the deans argued that once students were disciplined and morally upright, success will be achieved.

This philosophy seems to differ from the United States situation where the demand for evidence of student learning has steadily increased since the mid-1980s, when many influential reports, beginning with *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), were disseminated. In Ghana, there do not seem to be concerns about evidence of student learning, and therefore issues of accountability in higher education are not discussed. The DOS in all the research sites are not under pressure to document evidence of student engagement and success. Therefore, in describing the performance of their duties, there was no documentation showing how student services had resulted in student involvement and success. The description of the performance of their duties had no relation with institutional mission and philosophy. Kuh et al. (2005) opine that “educational effective colleges and universities – those that add value – channel students’ energies toward appropriate activities and engage them at a high level in these activities” (p. 9).

Performance evaluation was one thing I found to be inconsistent in the DOS’ position. When I asked how their performance was evaluated, all four deans of students indicated that there was no structure for evaluation. They have based this on feedback
occasionally received from staff in the office, students, and parents. The director of student affairs of GIMPA shared her plans of ensuring that her performance was systematically evaluated. As part of this plan, student satisfaction survey of student services would be conducted at the end of every semester. The aim was to use the results for improvement. According to her, this plan was informed partly due to her working visit to selected colleges in the United States in the summer of 2010.

“Assessment in higher education primarily responds to two forces: external demands for accountability and internal commitments to improvement” (Keeling, Wall, Underhile & Dungy, 2008, p. 1). Staff performance evaluation is a common practice in many US colleges and universities (Keeling et al.). At the beginning of the academic year, staff members submit measurable goals to their supervisors. These goals serve as the yardstick for both mid-year and end-of-year evaluations. The supervisors receive feedback from colleagues, student employees and students, compile them, and use the information as the bases for staff performance evaluations. Areas of strength and growth are discussed to help improve performance.

Performance evaluation in many US higher educational institutions differs from the Ghanaian model because while the former has structured tools for assessing performance, the latter, according to the interviews I conducted at the research sites, relies on unstructured informal feedback from parents, students, and sometimes colleagues.
Philosophies and Values

The DOS were emphatic about the importance of students embracing traditional values such as respect for the elderly and obedience. They also believed that students needed to be morally upright if they wanted to be successful in college. Student success, according to most of the DOS, is more dependent on the choices that students make than the impact of the services provided by the DOS’ office.

This philosophy differs from the assertion that colleges and universities have a responsibility to do more to foster student learning, and that enhancing student success must be the main priority at all institutions of higher education (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Education Commission of the States, 1995; Kuh et al., 2005). In their interactions with students, the DOS expect to receive unconditional respect. Many students are of the view that respect is earned and the traditional unconditional respect for the elderly cannot always be applicable. Students generally expect mutual respect, and this has been a source of tension between students and the DOS’ office.

In addition to the fundamental demand for respect, however, there is also evidence that some of the deans were interested in meeting student needs—particularly the academic and emotional needs of students. The primary tension, however, relates to students’ demands for autonomy and the institutions’ beliefs, as expressed by the deans of students, that students are not yet adults. Indeed, this is seen as perhaps a last gasp for the educational system to exert direct influence on student morality.

According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), the development of autonomy and interdependence is an important task for traditional age college students in the United
States. The Ghanaian students with whom I spoke also recognized this as an important, yet unsupported, need for their own college lives. The traditional community-centered norms that are part of Ghana’s culture seem to provide a stark contrast to these needs.

**Student Needs and Administrative Response**

The DOS and their staff interpret student needs as counseling, conflict resolution and mediation, financial support, and academic support needs. When asked how they identify these needs, it came out that there was no consistent tool for even routine practice of needs assessment. The deans have typically depended on what their predecessors had done in the past. In responding to these needs, the DOS office use counselors, staff members, collaboration with the Finance Office to serve as guarantors for students’ payment plans, and collaboration with academic units. Students view these service-oriented actions as traditional, and recommend that the DOS offices seriously consider expanding their mission and work to address non-traditional needs.

The students describe the non-traditional needs as providing support for special populations such as international students, gays and lesbians, people with disabilities, and students who are married, nursing babies, and working. According to the students, the DOS office usually does not provide for the needs of such students, and it was time that this situation changed. These kinds of services are common in student affairs divisions in the United States. For instance, university administrators support services for the lesbians and gays, students with disabilities, and veterans. Student affairs professional design programs and support services for all students irrespective of their characteristics. The DOS’ response to student needs depends on available resources and, in some cases,
liberalizing ideologies. The deans confirmed during the interviews that their offices were unable to meet many student needs due to inadequate resources. Even though they acknowledge the impact of this on the overall campus environment and student experiences, there was little their offices could do to make things better.

Deans of Students Challenges

The three main challenges faced by the DOS are inadequate resources, staff-students tension, and inadequate institutional support. All four of the DOS complained about the limited number of staff members in their offices which make it impossible to provide high quality student services. They said they know the struggle they go through to serve students partly due to lack of modern equipment, reliable internet connectivity, modern records management devices, and modern technology. The student – staff tension is usually caused by the university leadership’s traditional mindset and the administrative-centered model of student affairs practice at the DOS office vis-à-vis a student population that is much more liberal than their administrative counterparts.

The traditional mindset of staff expecting students to remain obedient without questioning has lost favor among students. Students do not understand why issues of morality should be the yardstick of judging them. The students claim that sometimes staff members of the university, themselves, do not serve as role models when it comes to issues of morality. This tension has been the basis of many demonstrations on campus. One illustration of this tension is the ongoing conflict about the dress of many female students which university leadership has described as often provocative.
The third challenge, as described by the DOS, is inadequate institutional support. The DOS indicated that university leadership has not provided enough funding for their offices to be able to meet the contemporary diverse needs of students. According to them, their calls for the hiring of more counselors and the purchase of modern equipment to enhance their service delivery efforts have fallen on deaf ears. They also bemoaned the lack of collaboration and support from faculty. The DOS recounted efforts they had made to collaborate with faculty, but very little had been achieved. Faculty, according to them, still views their work as independent from the work of faculty.

3. How do the Deans of Students perceive Changes and the Future of their Offices?

All the DOS I interviewed were receptive to change, but added that they wanted change to be gradual and incremental. Apart from the DOSA of GIMPA, all the deans were of the view that faculty members needed to continue to serve as DOS. They explained that the difficulty in serving students needed faculty members to serve in the position since students generally respected faculty more than administrators. The DOSA of GIMPA disagreed with this assertion and said that many students rather feared faculty more than administrators. She cautioned her colleagues DOS (who are faculty members) not to equate fear to respect and challenged them to conduct a study to ascertain whether students feared them or respected them.

Furthermore, all the DOS were optimistic about the future of student affairs in Ghana. The DOSA of GIMPA mentioned that they needed to replicate some of the best practices of serving students and warned that students and parents may soon demand better student services from them. One of the best practices proposed by Magolda &
Baxter Magolda (2011) was self-authorship. “Self-authored student affairs educators who are intellectually curious, lifelong learners … and who are able to communicate across difference, are excellent role models for students for whom we desire these same outcomes” (p. 13).

The DOSA of GIMPA suggested that the DOS’ offices had a responsibility to offer themselves for performance evaluation to help them improve. She called for an objective review of their mindset, philosophy, and their administrative-centered model of student affairs practice. She recommended innovation and a paradigm shift to value and involve students in their practice. She urged her colleagues to embrace change and be open to innovative ideas, and requested all stakeholders of Ghana’s higher education to demand quality and innovative student services for the benefit of college students.

The discussions of the research questions and their relationships with the theoretical framework revealed the following themes: Perceived role of the DOS; student needs and services; challenges facing the DOS; and desired changes in student affairs practice in Ghana. The discussions further showed that these themes would be the bases of the study’s implications for practice.

**Desired Changes in Student Affairs Practice**

The four DOS I interviewed espoused positive attitudes towards change, but were quick to add that change needed to be gradual. They also suggested a systematic educational campaign among all stakeholders of Ghana’s higher educational system to promote the needed change in the DOS’ office. They were all positive about the future of student affairs in Ghana. To make this happen, they suggested the introduction of
graduate programs in student affairs at the various higher educational institutions in Ghana. They also called for collaboration among the various DOS’ offices. The DOS of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) recommended that all the DOS should come together and form an association of student affairs professionals. According to him, “That is the best way we can collectively be agents of change in Ghanaian higher education.”

The DOSA of the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) said, “We need to educate the university community about the need for change. We need to have full-time DOS, and it does not matter if the person is a faculty member or an administrator. I know this sounds difficult, but we should not forget that GIMPA has shown the way.” The other three DOS from UCC, KNUST, and CUC argued that it may be necessary for faculty to continue serving as DOS since students generally seem to show more respect and compliance towards faculty than administrators. Many students at the focus group interviews however asserted that their compliance towards faculty is mostly due to fear. This makes it difficult for many students to freely interact with faculty.

Furthermore, I observed that as much as the DOS acknowledge the need for change, they also continue to espouse the features of traditional leadership and the traditional mindset of parent-child relationship in their interactions with students. This mindset has been the major cause of tension between students and university leadership, and one wonders if the DOS are willing to accommodate the desired changes that may contradict the values of traditional leadership. Some of the DOS are referred to as nana,
meaning chief. Some are family heads and sub-chiefs in their hometowns where their words and decisions are usually unchallenged.

Students desire to have a more student-centered model of student affairs practice, which is different from the current administrative-centered model which has a traditional flavor. Many students I interviewed are determined to use the social media to create awareness among students about the need for change. Again, the students recognize that staff members at the DOS’ offices tend to interact better with non-traditional students because of their age and working experience, and are determined to involve as many non-traditional students as possible in their campaign for change.

Another group of students who are calling for change are the fee-paying students. Currently, about 30% of students at the research sites are full fee-paying students (NCTE, 2009). This group has started demanding student services commensurate with the fees that they pay, and they are trying to convince their parents to get involved in the campaign for change. Students hope that civil society will understand and appreciate the need for the DOS’ offices to practice student affairs models that embrace care for students, collaboration, and integration.

In an interview, the former Executive Secretary of Ghana’s National Council for Tertiary Education was optimistic about the future of student affairs in Ghana. He said, “Higher education leadership in Ghana should value and respect students as a very important group in the university community. The universities will cease to exist without students.” He suggested that the DOS had to replicate some of the best practices from student affairs professionals in the United States (US) and Europe. He called on the DOS
to explore opportunities for exchange programs with selected universities in the US. He also challenged university leadership to educate the university community about the need for better student services. He asserted that student services could not be provided in a vacuum. “They have to serve the needs of students,” he said. He advised that the work of the DOS needed to be professionalized, and the way to do it was to make it a full-time position to be able to coordinate the “many hats of the office.”

Kegan and Lahey (2009) explained the ways in which leaders can lead the way and become agents of change. One important thing is the recognition that “there is life after adolescence; and that adulthood, too, must be a time for ongoing growth and development” (p. 309). The DOS need to take a developmental approach and recognize the fact that adults can grow. Kegan and Lahey (2009) further discussed the fact that a change in mindset takes times, and since mindsets influence thinking and feeling: “Changing mindsets needs to involve the head and the heart” (P. 318).

The chieftaincy institution assumes that the chief is the wisest and hardly makes a mistake. This creates the impression that chiefs have attained the highest level of growth and development. In the traditional setting, nobody challenges the chief. This, therefore, contradicts Kegan and Lahey’s (2009) assertion that adults too can grow. It may take time and patience to achieve a significant change in mindset among the DOS. Students and other proponents of change may need to employ some of the ideas suggested by Kegan and Lahey (2009) if they want to unlock and overcome the DOS’ immunity to change.
**Implications for Practice**

First, the DOS at the selected research sites need to evaluate their administrative-centered model of student affairs practice. This model, according to students, is too bureaucratic and does not give them the opportunity to get involved in the activities of the DOS office. The administrative-centered model is less student-centered, and does not promote integration and collaboration among units (Manning et al., 2006). Another weakness of the administrative-centered model of student affairs practice is the “professional isolation that may result from the distinctive specialization of the offices. This isolation can quickly turn into professional solitude and lack of community” (p. 67).

Students want to be engaged so the university can cultivate their potential. A less bureaucratic model of student affairs practice such as the student-centered ethic of care and the academic-student affairs collaboration models may be ideal. According to Manning et al., the ethic of care model acknowledges that some students come to college inadequately prepared to perform academically at acceptable levels, or may lack the necessary social skills or capital to succeed in college. The model emphasizes that universities have a moral and educational obligation to provide the academic and social support students need to succeed. The academic-student affairs collaboration model emphasizes the shared relationship between all campus entities as well as the importance of developing a mutual agenda concerning student success.

In the Ghanaian situation, a hybrid of the administrative-centered model, the student-centered ethic of care model and the academic-student affairs collaboration model may be most ideal (Manning et al., 2006). Such a hybrid will have certain
characteristics of the traditional framework of university leadership, student involvement opportunities, and faculty collaboration. This will satisfy the expectations of the DOS, students, and faculty. Again, such a hybrid may offer an ideal model of student affairs practice that potentially can be replicated in many African universities whose characteristics may be similar to the research sites.

It is important for university leaders in Ghana to recognize that adults can grow and change their mindset to foster development (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Kegan and Lahey acknowledge the fact that cultural change is difficult but possible. Many students I interviewed seemed to advocate for a more student-centered approach to student affairs practice, which is different from the status quo. This expected change might take time, but may eventually happen.

Second, staff members at the DOS’ offices need to be equipped with knowledge, skills and competencies to be able to conduct systematic needs assessment for the provision of student services. To make this happen in the short term, the DOS and staff at the deans’ offices need to undergo professional development training through in-services for the acquisition of these skills and competencies. Student affairs professionals and faculty from the United States may be contacted to help provide these in-services.

The DOS can also collaborate with the offices of DOS in selected universities in the United States and Europe to learn contemporary student affairs practices. In the long term, Ghanaian universities will need to offer graduate programs in college student personnel or student affairs. Existing graduate programs at the colleges of education may also review their curriculum to include courses in student development theory and student
affairs practice. This will help train more qualified personnel to support the offices of the DOS. Furthermore, African universities can collaborate with foreign universities to help offer graduate programs in higher education and student affairs through distance learning.

Moreover, the DOS need to acquire the skills and competencies to be able to write grants for funding programs and educational initiatives that aim at providing students services. To make this happen, there is the need for transparency and accountability. The DOS’ offices must avail themselves for evaluation and be prepared to share the results with potential funding agencies. The DOS must consider training students as peer mentors to support the work of the counselors. The few professional counselors can train selected students to help serve the many counseling needs of the students. Having said this, the DOS must make efforts to identify the changing student characteristics, and meet with non-traditional student groups such the gays and lesbians, married students, nursing mothers who are students, etc. This will help the offices to serve all students on campus.

Furthermore, since the main challenges facing the DOS are inadequate resources, student-staff tensions, and inadequate institutional support, the deans of students could form a national association to provide a forum for addressing these challenges holistically. Such an association may have the numbers to dialogue with local, state, and national agencies for a common agenda to address these challenges. In order to leverage the support of other constituents, the association could involve national student and professional organizations such as the National Union of Ghanaian Students (NUGS), University Teachers Association of Ghana (UTAG), and the Vice Chancellors, Ghana in their deliberations. This will offer them the opportunity to create awareness among
interest groups about their mission. This, in my opinion, will help to strengthen the future potentials of student affairs in Ghana.

Finally, performance evaluation of the Ghanaian deans of students and their staff needs to inform the model of student affairs practice. If the existing model does not improve the delivery of student services, the performance evaluation process may help to bring it up for potential review (Rhatigan & Schuh, 1993). It is therefore important for the various institutions to acquire and use more structured performance evaluation tools that can potentially provide results for improvement in performance.

**Implications for Further Research**

Very little empirical research exists concerning higher education in Ghana as a whole, and there is very limited previous research on the mission and practice of student affairs within Ghanaian higher education. Therefore, there is much work to be done in this regard in order to realize the promise of post-secondary education to benefit students and society as. In the light of this, I identified the following areas as potential topics for further research:

1. An appreciative inquiry study of the perceptions of the work of deans of students in selected Ghanaian universities. This study may focus on selected institutions and people who are working with students most effectively through innovative and progressive practices. The purpose, among others, may be to understand the experiences of those institutions and professionals; and also identify the effective practices and understand how those practices have worked effectively for them.
2. Faculty perceptions of their role in working with students in selected Ghanaian universities.

This study may help us to understand the experiences of faculty in working with students for the attainment of the mission of higher education for addressing the broader needs of students and society.


**Personal Reflections**

The study has shaped my views about the role of DOS at the research sites, and how these roles affect student services and success. During the fieldwork, it was clear to me that many students are less satisfied with the available student services, but have no forum for addressing these concerns. It occurred to me that many college students are left “in the wilderness to fend for themselves” with very little support from the institutions. I had never thought about the fact that many students spend three to four years in college without any out-of-class support from the DOS offices.

Furthermore, through the study I had the perception that the DOS and the leadership of the research sites genuinely care about the welfare and success of students since many of them perceive students as their children. This care is often portrayed in the form of ensuring that students remain children who need the protection of adults; and since they are perceived as incapable of protecting themselves, they are often expected to listen and obey university leadership unconditionally. Any attempt by students to question university leadership often leads to tension on campus. I am convinced that the
different mindsets of students and university leadership on issues of tradition, culture, morality, and student needs and services deserve some kind of national debate to create awareness about the status quo and offer recommendations for the realization of integrative higher education in Ghana.

One unique experience throughout the study was the realization that the academy is notoriously resistant to change; and that “changing a university is like trying to move a cemetery. You get no help from the inhabitants” (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010, p. 127). I am hopeful that the study would promote collaboration and enhance integration in the work of the DOS’s in Ghanaian universities. Integrative higher education unites intellectual rigor with compassion and love. It also infuses the academy with meaning, purpose, and soul (Palmer & Zajonc).

It is important to recognize the role of globalization and technology on potential changes in organizational culture and societies (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Many students I interviewed at the research sites mentioned that access to internet has made them aware of how student activism and student expectations at different universities worldwide had led to changes in institutional cultures and conservative mindsets. Many of the students were confident that change was inevitable, even though they acknowledged that it would take time. Throughout the world, leaders who are resistant to change put themselves and their organizations through more challenges than those who value and welcome change (Kegan & Lahey). A change in mindset takes time and “there is no McDonald’s drive-through window for adult development” (p. 316). One needs time, patience, tolerance, collaboration, and compromise “to take up a developmental perspective” (p. 317).
Change will naturally occur in Ghanaian higher education. Globalization and technology will potentially influence this change, and student affairs practice in Ghanaian higher education will assume a more student-centered approach.

I was surprised that none of the deans of students directly talked about their advocacy roles. Even though they recognize the need to support students, my impression was that they do not see themselves as being advocates for students. In the United States, both the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) have student advocacy strongly captured in their vision statement and goals respectively.

The study has given me a new lens to compare student affairs practice in the United States and Ghana, and I know that Ghana needs student affairs professionals to provide resource and support for college students. This study has made me more committed to return to Ghana after graduation and serve as an agent of change for student affairs practice in Ghanaian higher education.

Chapter Summary

I began the chapter with a summary of the study. Then, I addressed and discussed the research questions in relation to the major findings and themes. I also discussed the themes in relation to the literature. Other discussions included the study’s implications for practice and recommended topics for further research. Finally, I outlined my personal reflections of the study which included my experiences throughout the process.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL FORM

A determination has been made that the following research study is exempt from IRB review because it involves:

Category 2. research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior

Project Title: Faculty as Dean of Students: Experiences of Selected Deans of Students in Ghanaian Universities.

Primary Investigator: Michael Boakye-Yiadom

Co-Investigator(s):

Advisor: Peter Mather
(if applicable)

Department: Counseling & Higher Education

Rebecca Cale, AAB, CIP
Office of Research Compliance

Date 08/05/10

This approval remains in effect provided the study is conducted exactly as described in your application for review. Any additions or modifications to the project must be approved (as an amendment) prior to implementation.
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR DEANS OF STUDENTS

1. What do you perceive to be the nature of the work of the dean of students?

2. Can you share some specific examples?

3. What do you perceive to be the major student needs?

4. How do you determine how successful you are in meeting these needs?

5. Please share with me some success stories. What are some specific examples that you may consider not too successful?

6. What are the main student services that your office provides?

7. How accessible are these services to students?

8. Can you share some stories in relation to the accessibility of student services?

9. With specific examples, can you share with me how you have interacted with students and staff?

10. What have you experienced through these interactions?

11. Can you share some examples?

12. What philosophies and values have influenced your interaction with students?

13. What have been the major challenges that you have dealt with?

14. What are the specific stories that exemplify these challenges?

15. How do you perceive changes in the office of the dean of students?

16. What specific changes would you suggest?

17. What do you think should be the structure of an ideal Dean of Students Office?

18. What do you think is the future of Student Affairs in Ghanaian universities?
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR VICE CHANCELLORS OR PRESIDENTS

1. What do you perceive to be the nature of the work of the dean of students?
2. Can you share some specific examples?
3. What factors do you consider in appointing the Dean of Students?
4. Can you describe who a successful dean of students is? Please give specific examples.
5. To what extent do you think your leadership style, philosophies and values affect the performance of the Dean of Students? Can you share some stories to support this?
6. How does your office influence the structure and culture of the dean of students’ office?
7. Can you share some examples?
8. How do you assess the quality of service delivery at the dean of students’ office?
9. How do you assess the performance of the Dean of Students?
10. What do you think are the major challenges of the Dean of Students in the delivery of student services?
11. What specific measures have you taken to help deal with these challenges?
12. How do you perceive potential changes at the office of the dean of students?
13. What specific changes would you suggest?
14. What do you think should be the structure of an ideal Division of Student Affairs?
15. What do you think is the future of Student Affairs in Ghanaian universities?
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR STAFF AT DEANS OF
STUDENTS’ OFFICES

1. What do you perceive to be the nature of the work of the dean of students?

2. Can you share some specific examples?

3. What do you think are the perceived student needs?

4. How do you determine how successful your office is in meeting these needs?

5. Please share with me some success stories. What are some specific examples that
   you may consider not too successful?

6. What are the main student services that your office provides?

7. How accessible are these services to students? Do you any stories or examples to
   support this?

8. Can you share with me how you have interacted with students and the Dean of
   Students?

9. What have you experienced through these interactions? Any specific examples?

10. How does the Dean of Students interact with students?

11. Can you support this with stories and examples?

12. What have been the major challenges that you have dealt with?

13. What are the specific stories that exemplify these challenges?

14. How do you perceive potential changes at the office of the dean of students?

15. What specific changes would you suggest?

16. What do you think should be the structure of an ideal Division of Student Affairs?

17. What do you think is the future of Student Affairs in Ghanaian universities?
APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR FOCUS GROUPS

1. What do you perceive to be the nature of the work of the dean of students?
2. Can you share some specific examples?
3. What do you think are the major student needs?
4. How do you think the Dean of Students’ office identifies these needs?
5. How do you access student services provided by the Dean of Students’ office?
6. Please share with me some success stories. What are some specific examples that you may consider not too successful?
7. With specific stories and examples, how will you describe the quality of student services provided by the Dean of Students’ office?
8. Can you share with me how you have interacted with the Dean of Students?
9. What have you experienced through these interactions?
10. How does the Dean of Students interact with students?
11. Can you support this with stories and examples?
12. What have been the major challenges you have dealt with in your attempt to interact with the Dean of Students?
13. What are the specific stories that exemplify these challenges?
14. How do you perceive potential changes at the office of the dean of students?
15. What specific changes would you suggest?
16. What do you think should be the structure of an ideal Division of Student Affairs?
17. What do you think is the future of Student Affairs in Ghanaian universities?
APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR FACULTY

1. What do you perceive to be the nature of the work of the dean of students?

2. Can you share some specific examples?

3. What do you think are the major student needs?

4. How do you think the Dean of Students’ office identifies these needs?

5. With specific stories and examples, how will you describe the quality of student services provided by the Dean of Students’ office?

6. Can you share with me how you have interacted with the Dean of Students?

7. What have you experienced through these interactions?

8. How does the Dean of Students interact with students?

9. Can you support this with stories and examples?

10. What have been the major challenges you have dealt with in your attempt to interact with the Dean of Students?

11. What are the specific stories that exemplify these challenges?

12. What do you think is the future of Student Affairs in Ghanaian universities?