

Pathways to the SSAO Position: An Examination using Social Network Analysis

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Introduction

- Career in Student Affairs
Career ethos: Enjoy student contact and the opportunity to make a difference

Careers in service leadership: Lure of pay can divert path?

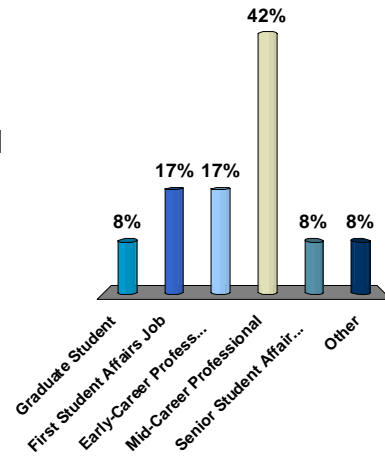
Who is SSAO? Dean of Students, Vice President, Vice Chancellor
- “Myths” and “Legends”... *heard in the hallways at NAPSA?*

“Spending too much time serving in the residence life specialty can curtail career aspirations for a senior position?”

“Most student affairs divisions do not seek to fill SSAO positions from within their own institutions, preferring rather to hire from another school?”

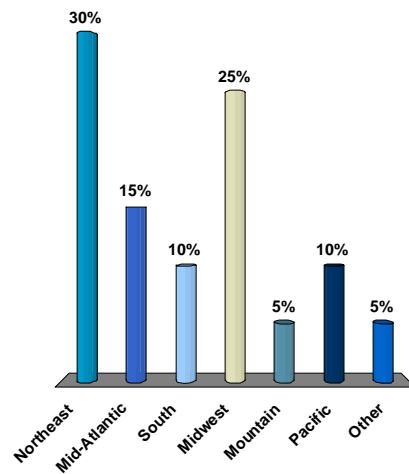
Who are we?

1. Graduate Student
2. First Student Affairs Job
3. Early-Career Professional
4. Mid-Career Professional
5. Senior Student Affairs Officer
6. Other



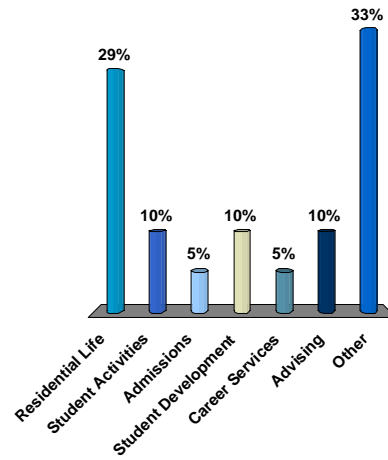
Geographic Region?

1. Northeast
2. Mid-Atlantic
3. South
4. Midwest
5. Mountain
6. Pacific
7. Other



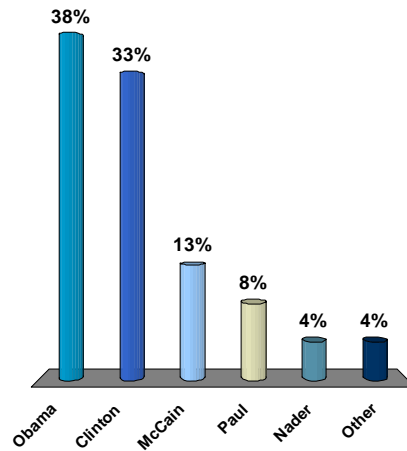
What unit or area in student affairs do you work (functional area)?

1. Residential Life
2. Student Activities
3. Admissions
4. Student Development
5. Career Services
6. Advising
7. Other



Which of the following candidates are you most likely to vote for?

1. Obama
2. Clinton
3. McCain
4. Paul
5. Nader
6. Other



Introduction (cont'd)

- Using network analysis to find common pathways to the SSAO position
- This project asked “What were your last three positions?”

Examples

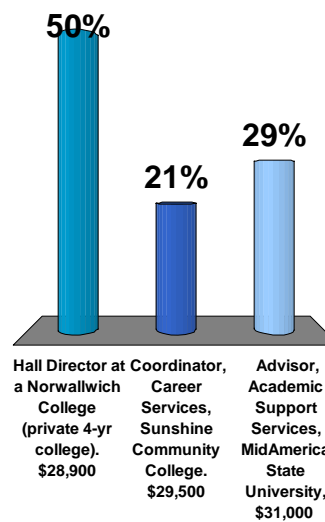
| <u>Current Position</u> | <u>Previous Position #1</u> | <u>Previous Position #2</u> | <u>Previous Position #3</u> |
|---------------------------|---|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| VP Student Affairs (SSAO) | ← Associate Dean for Student Life | ← Director of Housing | ← Hall Manager |
| Dean of Students (SSAO) | ← Director of Academic Support Services | ← Assistant Director of Outreach | ← Coordinator, Career Services |
| VP Student Affairs (SSAO) | ← Assistant VP, Student Services | ← Manager, Advising Center | ← Advisor |

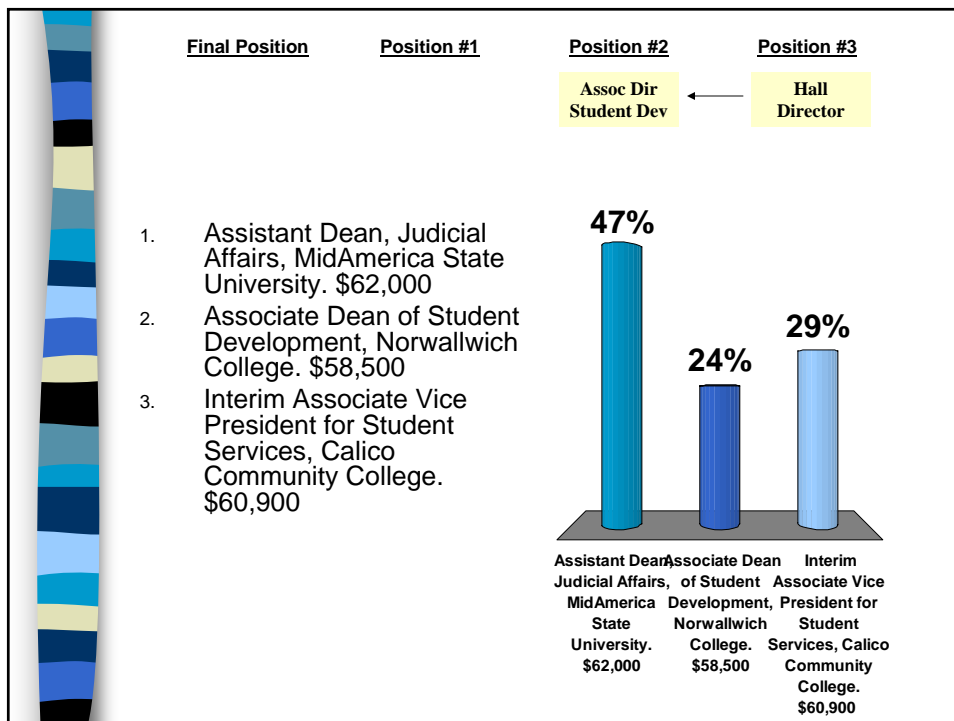
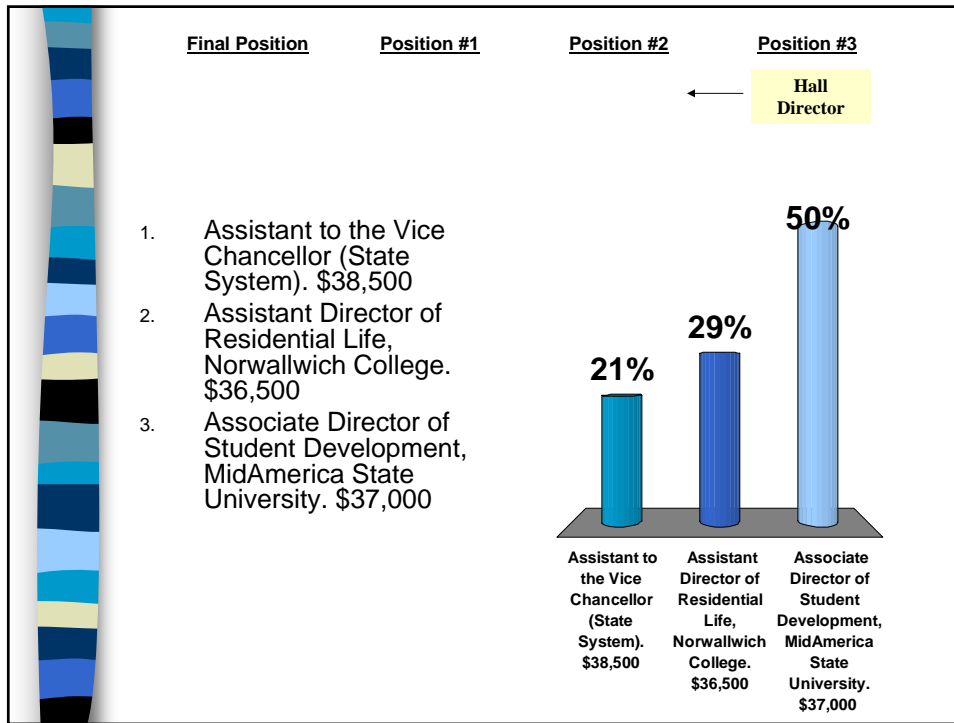


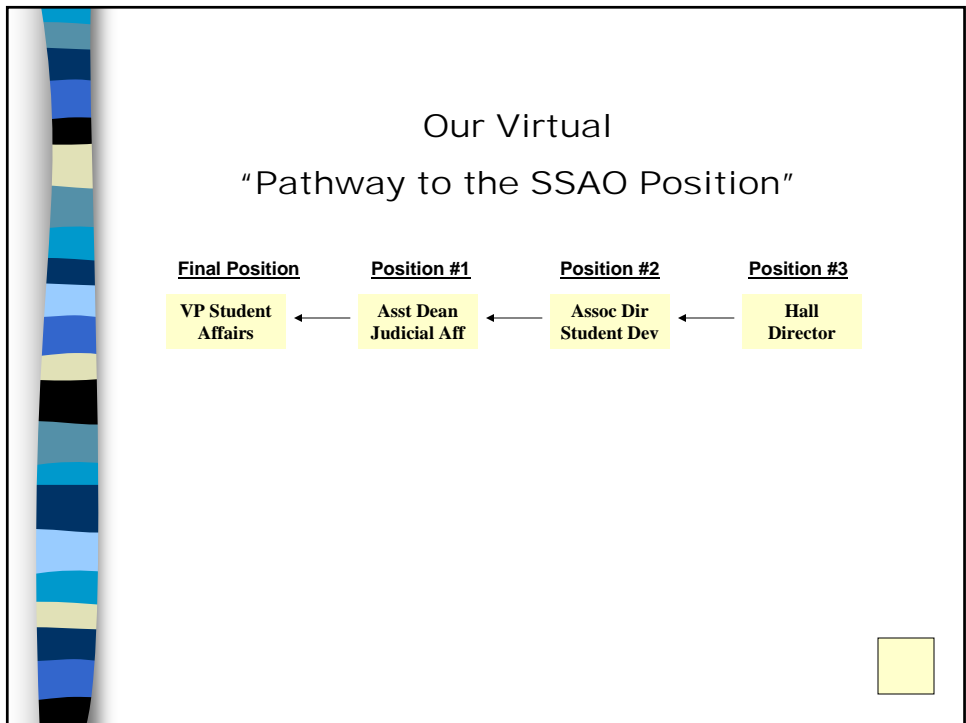
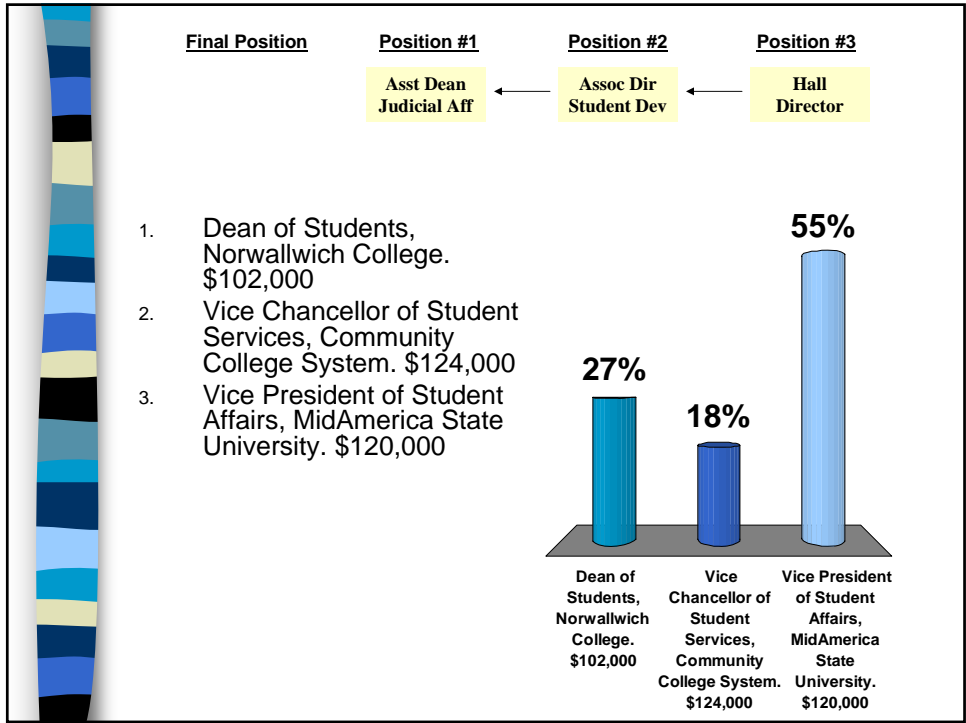
| <u>Final Position</u> | <u>Position #1</u> | <u>Position #2</u> | <u>Position #3</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|

?

1. Hall Director at a Norwallwich College (private 4-yr college). \$28,900
2. Coordinator, Career Services, Sunshine Community College. \$29,500
3. Advisor, Academic Support Services, MidAmerica State University, \$31,000

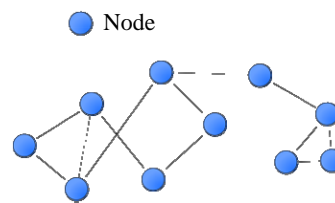






Networks and Analysis

- Network is a collection of points, typically referred to as “nodes,” and lines, representing the connections between nodes
- Characterized as a form of descriptive statistics, network graphs provide a useful alternative to table data for understanding relationships

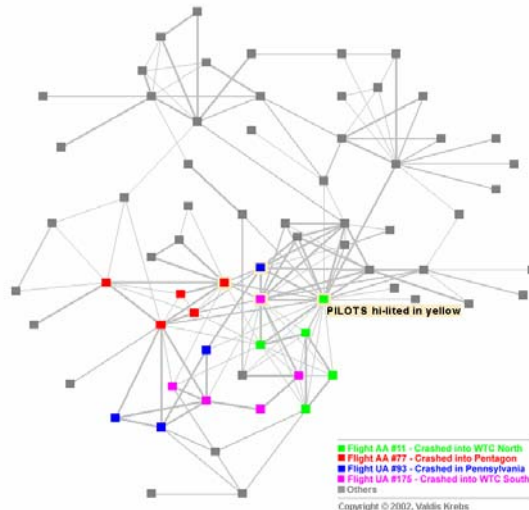


Networks and Analysis (cont'd)

- Units and actions are viewed as interdependent, rather than as independent, data
- Relationships are considered resource paths.
- A network allows a look at one unit's role among other units, regarding the opportunities or constraints facilitated by the network structure.
- A network may be viewed as a full model to conceptualize structure as lasting patterns of relationship among its units.

– Wasserman & Faust, 1994

Networks and Analysis (example)



<http://www.orgnet.com/hijackers.html>

Hijackers are color coded by the flight they were on.


The dark grey nodes are others who were reported to have had direct, or indirect, interactions with the hijackers.

The gray lines indicate the reported interactions -- a thicker line indicates a stronger tie between two nodes.

Networks and Analysis (cont'd)



Look beyond attributes to examine the exchanges that create and sustain work and relationships.




Sample (N = 195)

By Carnegie Classification

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|------------|---|---------|
| Community Colleges | = | 22 | } | (52.3%) |
| Baccalaureate / Liberal Arts Colleges | = | 29 | | |
| Master's Granting Institutions | = | 51 | } | (28.2%) |
| Doctoral Universities | = | 16 | | |
| Research Universities | = | 39 | | |
| Did not report school type | = | 38 | | (19.5%) |
| TOTAL | | 195 | | |

Public vs. Private?

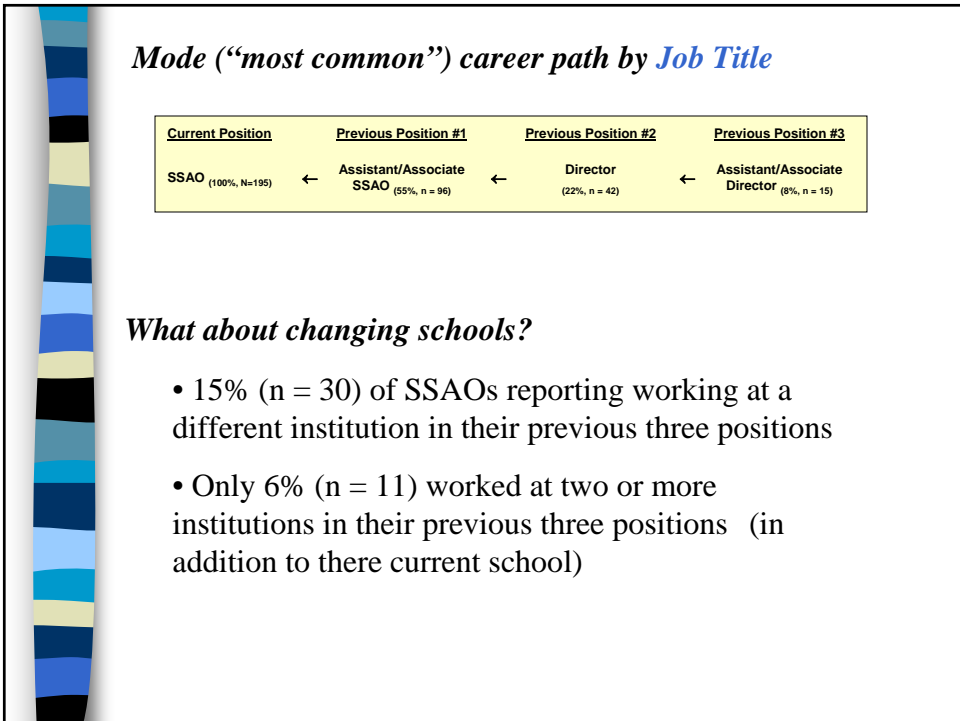
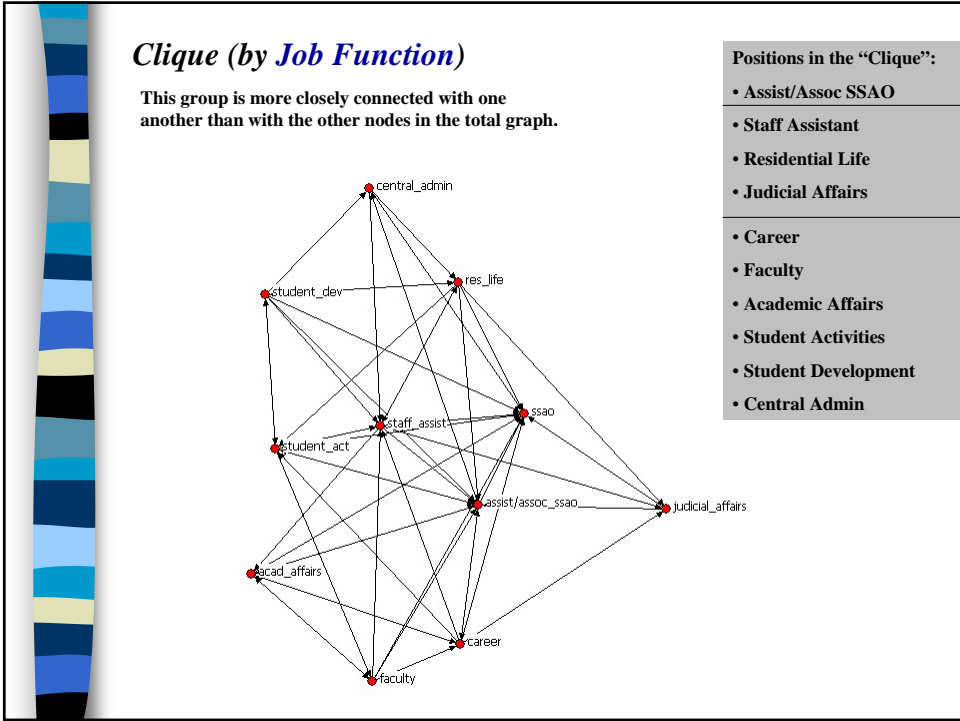
| | | | |
|----------------------------|---|------------|---------|
| Public Institutions | = | 104 | (53.3%) |
| Private Institutions | = | 53 | (27.2%) |
| Did not report school type | = | 38 | (19.5%) |
| TOTAL | | 195 | |

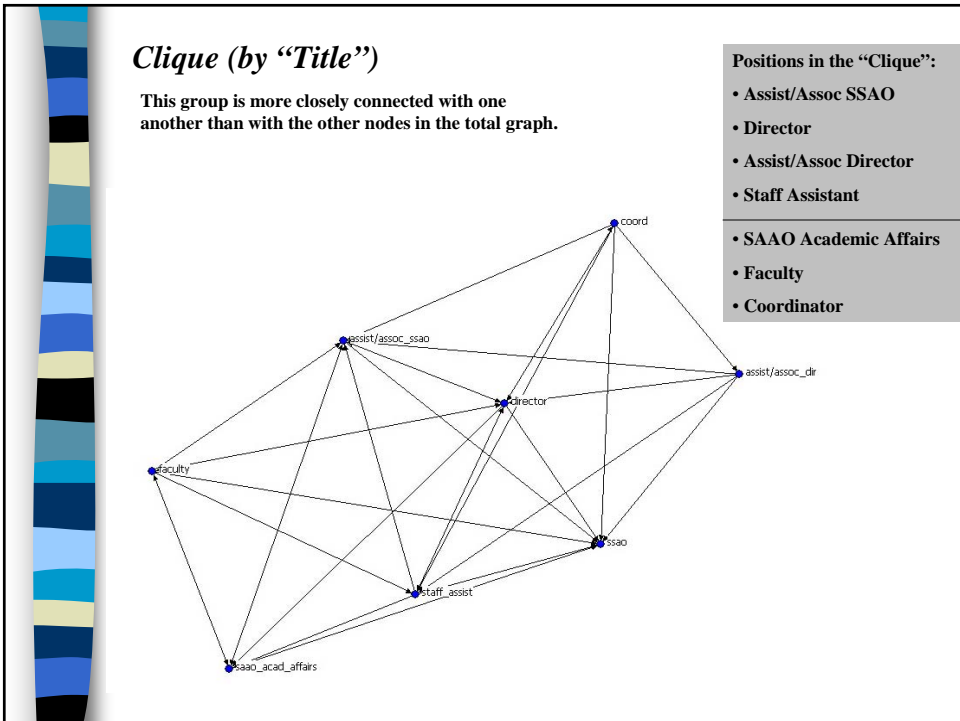
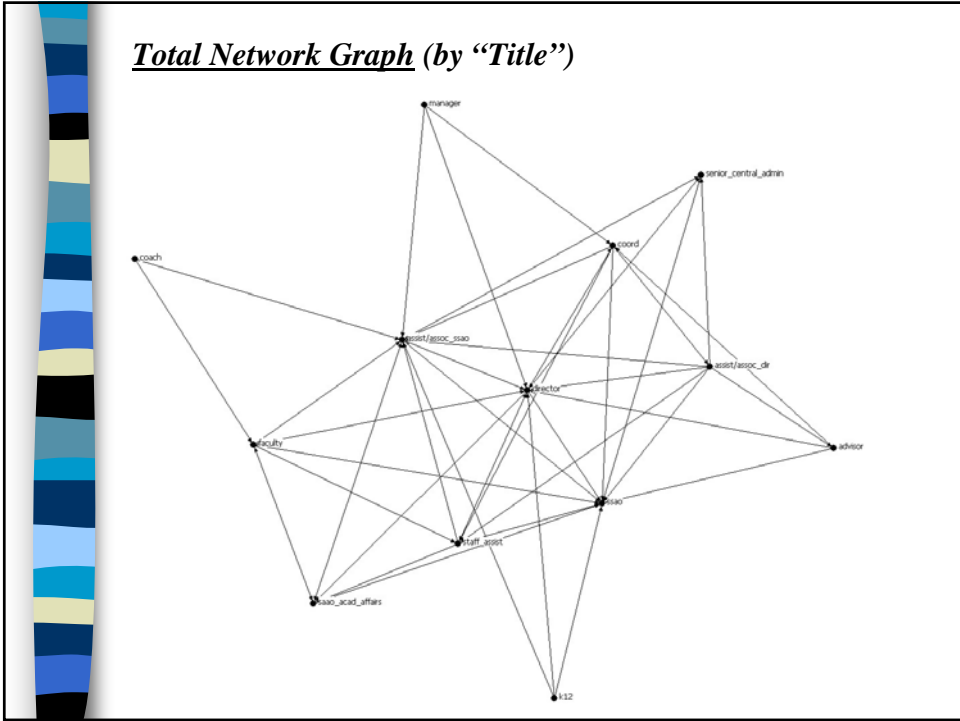



Analysis of career path by Job Function

Researcher coding of the data yielded 26 “Job Functions”

| <u>Job Function</u> | <u>(n)</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>Comment</u> |
|----------------------------|------------|----------|--|
| Assistant / Associate SSAO | 107 | 55% | Assistant VP for Student Services Associate Dean of Student Development |
| Residential Life | 61 | 31% | includes Housing |
| Student Activities | 23 | 12% | |
| Academic Affairs | 19 | 10% | includes Provost, Academic Deans |
| Student Development | 17 | 9% | Leadership |
| Admissions | 17 | 9% | |
| Faculty | 16 | 8% | |
| Career Services | 13 | 7% | |
| Staff Assistant | 12 | 6% | Assistant to the VP of Student Affairs |
| Orientation | 10 | 5% | |
| Counseling | 7 | 4% | |
| Advising | 7 | 4% | |
| Private Sector | 6 | 3% | |
| K12 Admin/Teach | 6 | 3% | |
| Central Administration | 6 | 3% | Institutional Research |
| Registrar/Records | 5 | 3% | |
| Marketing/Communications | 5 | 3% | |
| Assessment | 5 | 3% | |
| Student Services | 4 | 2% | Director of Student Services |
| Judicial Affairs | 4 | 2% | |
| Grants | 3 | 2% | |
| Facilities | 3 | 2% | Union |
| Diversity | 3 | 2% | |
| Coach | 2 | 1% | |
| Financial Aid | 1 | 1% | |
| Disabilities | 1 | 1% | |







Differences in Pathways according to School Type

Community Colleges, Baccalaureate / Liberal Arts Colleges,
and Master's Granting Institutions

vs.

Doctoral and Research Universities

Community Colleges, Baccalaureate / Liberal Arts Colleges,
and Master's Granting Institutions (CC/Bac/M)

Faculty members (n = 12) **2X** as likely to SSAO vs. Doc/Res

Staff Assistant (n = 8) **2X** as likely to SSAO vs. Doc/Res

Admissions (n = 15) **2.5X** as likely to SSAO vs. Doc/Res

All counselors (n = 7) were from this group, none from Doc/Res

All K12 Admin/Teach (n = 6) were from this group, none from Doc/Res



Differences by School Type (cont'd)

Doctoral and Research Universities (Doc/Res)


Academic Affairs (n = 9) **2.5X** as likely to SSAO vs. CC/Bac/M

Orientation (n = 5) **3X** as likely to SSAO vs. Doc/Res

No Difference...


Student Activities and Student Development personnel

(Same % for both CC/Bac/M and Doc/Res)



What have we learned from the network analysis and descriptive statistics?

- More than half of the participants in this study were an assistant/associate SSAO prior to moving to SSAOs
- Residential life is the most common function area for those who became SSAOs
- Positions such as “Staff Assistant” and “Judicial Affairs” emerged as associated with becoming an SSAO
- Other
- Other
- Other



*Feedback from participants (SSAOs) about career path...
Advice for early- and mid-career professionals...*

Get Functional Experience

“Make opportunities to get exposure and experience in different areas in our field. Collaborate with colleagues in other departments to develop programs.”

“Chart a career path that includes experience in several service areas. An applicant for a dean position who has experience in housing, campus rec, and union activities would be more likely considered than applicant only from housing.”



Feedback from SSAOs (cont'd)

Mobility vs. Stability

“Be mobile with your career opportunities. I have worked in four states at vary different institutions. Obviously, this can be tough on families... but I’m a firm believer that the experience from different universities and systems is critically important. Helps you grow professionally and become more open-minded and comfortable with change.”

“I chose to stay at one university... Building credibility and strong reputation over the years... viewed as a strong leader. Focus on leadership abilities, emotional intelligence, and managing.”




Feedback from SSAOs (cont'd)

Professional Association

“Get involved in a professional association – networking is the key. Join a conference committee, serve on a taskforce, run for regional office, etc.”

“Actively participate in a professional association (including being a presenter).”



Concluding Thoughts & Next Steps

- Novel use of network analysis in higher education and student affairs research
- Follow up study... use actual SSAO resume or vita as data source (data rich!)
- Where does graduate education occur?
- Differences by gender
- Other ideas

Presentation available online at [NASPA conference site](#)

Thank You!