THE VERMONT
CONNECTION

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Honoring the Past, Embracing the Present, & Preparing for the Future

*V*Sigmund Freud once said, "The key to happiness is good love, good work, and good play, in that order." If only finding happiness and fulfillment were that simple. How do we make meaning of our lives in a field of service to others? What gets us out of bed in the morning? Through all of the unpredictability of a career in student affairs, how do we keep going when the future is drastically uncertain? Is higher education our passion, or is it a job to pass the time and pay the bills? The answers to these questions may be different for all of us, and no one reason is more important than another. As an individual in a seemingly tireless and often thankless role, running from meeting to meeting, dealing with unforeseen student concerns, there is rarely enough time for me to catch my breath, not to mention reflect on and learn from the moments that make up my days. I have often found myself struggling to interpret and understand what it is that I do day in and day out, what implications it has, and why it is so important.

My time in the HESA program has been characterized by this quest for authenticity, for meaning, to own who I am and what I bring to the program and to the students with whom I work. I have seen the same in my cohort, and have come to believe that by developing a strong sense of self, I can help others do the same. I have often heard the 2 years of HESA compared to a rollercoaster ride. The twists and turns of the program have been the twists and turns on my journey towards my most authentic self, but the nervous, shy individual who was unsure of her voice when she moved to Burlington 2 years ago has become a stronger, more articulate, and more confident woman. I owe this to HESA. Although I am still working on many aspects of who I am and what I bring, as Final Word author Stacey Miller puts it, HESA students are "always striving to be better than they were yesterday, and better for tomorrow." However unfortunate, each misstep or mistake along the way has provided me with an opportunity to learn and grow.

In this 30th volume of the journal, the Editorial Board chose to take a look back in order to honor the history of *The Vermont Connection*. Decades of HESA students have worked to produce TVC, and without their commitment to its uniqueness I would not be writing this piece. This year's Moral Conversation theme, "There and Then, Here and Now: Reflection and Meaning Making in

Student Affairs," provided an opportunity to reach out to our rich history and networks. We asked authors to reflect on what motivates them, and how they make meaning for themselves and others. As Rick Gatteau ('95) states, "Forming your identity is an ever-evolving process; it takes time to discover, understand, and appreciate your true self."

As the saying "many hands make light work" goes, the same holds true for *The Vermont Connection*. Thank you to our advisors, Patty Eldred ('80) and Corin Blanchard ('04), for their constant guidance and support throughout this process. They provided context, historical reference, and offered advice as we strove to continue environmentally-friendly initiatives and engage our alumni around the world. We owe Deb Hunter much gratitude for serving as the faculty liaison to TVC, and for helping us in truly understanding our history in order to better shape our future. The HESA faculty have been a constant support network, from making phone calls during Phone-A-Thon this past fall to offering advice and feedback for how we can create and maintain a true Vermont connection. To our alumni, this publication would not be possible without your support, as many of you are the reasons that we are at the University of Vermont today. Your names and stories have kept us motivated and engaged. Our newest alumni, the class of 2008, instituted change for TVC that has helped guide how we have achieved our goals. Thank you for your mentorship and friendship.

Creating the journal also offers the unique opportunity for the current HESA community to come together as one, to engage and challenge one another throughout the process, and as Keith Miser asserts, "produce something that is of the very highest quality whose voice helps form the soul of the graduate program." Last year's Kenneth P. Saurman Award winner, David Laxamana, reflects on the intentional relationships he built that helped him survive and thrive in HESA. Thank you to this year's Full Board for all of the collective work you have put in to make this journal a reality, and for making this 30th volume thrive. Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the members of this year's Editorial Board, as they worked tirelessly to actualize lofty goals and ideals that once seemed insurmountable, yet stayed firmly rooted and grounded to accomplish the task at hand. Thank you for giving me the courage to be my own self, and being such an integral part of this true teaching and learning experience.

I am honored to present the 30th volume of *The Vermont Connection*. In the pages that follow, you will find articles that reflect the changing scope of higher education and vignettes that bring us back to HESA days past. We hope that this volume gives you an opportunity to pause and reflect on your own meaning making and discover how this reflection has shaped you, both personally and professionally. Most of all, we hope that it challenges you to find ways to have good love, good work, and good play.

Colleen Toomey

ARTICLES

V

Campus Sexual Assault Prevention: Supporting Male Student Allies in an Effort to Sustain Engagement

Travis Annan

Movements to engage college men as activists and allies working to end sexual assault have become increasingly prevalent in U.S. colleges (Barone, Wolgemuth, & Linder, 2007; Berkowitz, 1994, 2002, 2004; Fabiano, Perkins, Berkowitz, Linkenbach, & Stark, 2003). Unfortunately, studies have shown that college men who are involved in breaking down gender norms and working to end sexual assault face being ostracized by their peers (Antill, 1987; Archer, 1984; Barone, Wolgemuth, & Linder, 2007, McCreary, 1994). The author will make an argument elucidating the importance for student affairs practitioners to foster an environment that is supportive of men who do not subscribe to hegemonic masculine ideals to keep them involved in the struggle to eliminate sexual assault as a reality.

Research has suggested that nearly one in four college women will be a victim of a sexual assault between entering as a first-year student and graduating from college (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000; Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987; Warshaw, 1994). Although it is a very small number of men who commit sexual assaults, nearly 98% of all perpetrators of sexual assault, against people of any gender, are identified as male (Catalano, 2006). Regardless of the overall percentage of men who rape, all men can have an impact on the environment that permits perpetrators to continue victimizing women (Berkowitz, 2002).

Numerous programs exist to work with men to create male-identified allies and activists who persistently work to end sexual assault (Barone, Wolgemuth, & Linder, 2007; Berkowitz, 1994, 2002, 2004; Fabiano, Perkins, Berkowitz, Linkenbach, & Stark, 2003). Many of these programs work to dismantle the culture that supports an environment where sexual assault can thrive. Unfortunately, when men actively work to break down gender norms or do not subscribe to traditional gender norms and engage in public efforts to end sexual assault, they risk being ostracized and criticized by their peers (Antill, 1987; Archer, 1984; Barone et al., 2007; McCreary, 1994). Student affairs practitioners need to intentionally foster a supportive and affirming environment for male-identified students who are in-

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volved in sexual assault prevention efforts. Men who do not fit into what society has deemed to be traditional gender norms need the same support.

The Need for Male Allies

Historically, sexual assault prevention efforts have placed emphasis and responsibility on women to protect themselves. This form of victim blaming is a common mentality in North American society. Campus programs and classes teaching women how to defend themselves or how to reduce their risk of sexual assault are examples. There are also numerous studies showing the breakdown of victim demographics, but little research about perpetrators. In order to change this emphasis, student affairs practitioners must shift their focus to also include men's responsibility in preventing sexual assault.

The recent movements to engage men include programs designed specifically for men to increase their awareness of sexual assault and hegemonic masculinity and typically teach bystander intervention strategies. Most programs utilize ideas from feminist theory that gender is socially constructed and "loosely defined" (Gardiner, 2005, p. 35) rather than "natural" (p. 35) or "ideal characteristics of people with similar genitals" (p. 35). These programs encourage men to dismantle a rape-supportive culture by challenging traditional gender norms and by working alongside women in ending sexual assault (Barone et al., 2007; Berkowitz, 1994, 2002, 2004; Fabiano et al., 2003).

Although only a small number of men participate in such unwarranted acts, student affairs practitioners face the reality that men commit nearly all sexual assaults. Therefore, the recent trend of creating men's programs is a positive step towards ending sexual assault. Although it is difficult, student affairs practitioners must do their part to help engage men and to maintain and sustain their involvement. Men's involvement in gender issues is complicated because it means that a privileged group mobilizes and reflects on its own privilege in an effort to challenge it (Flood, 2005). In order to recognize male influence on the issue, further analysis of what contributes to sexual assault is needed.

Rape Culture

Sexual assault is more than individual acts of sexism and violence. A culture exists in our society where sexual assault is allowed to thrive through commonly held beliefs. Studies have shown that several myths about sexual assault exist among college students and contribute to rape culture (Barone et al., 2007). These myths include that:

1. Women deserve to be sexually assaulted for how they were dressing, act
   ing, [or] behaving.
2. Most sexual assaults are stranger assaults.
3. Men have more power and are entitled and supposed to be dominant and
   in control in sexual interactions.
4. Once consent is given it cannot be taken away.
5. Men must be the initiator of sexual activity. (p. 589)

These myths all contribute to rape culture by making misinformation common-place and distorting the realities that exist around sexual assault and violence against women. In turn, these myths allow men to distance themselves from the primary responsibility, which in reality, lies on the perpetrator and not on the victim.

Another contributor to a rape-supportive culture is the gender roles that much of western culture has subscribed to for centuries. Thompson (2000) outlined six ways that boys have been taught by society to be successful men: (a) acting tough, (b) hiding emotions, (c) earning a substantial income, (d) having the right kind of occupation [as a doctor, mechanic, or business executive — not a nurse, secretary, or librarian], (e) competing powerfully, and (f) winning at any cost. Socio-cultural theory argues that these expectations of how men should think and act promote "restrictive gender roles where coercive sexuality is accepted" and that individuals learn "motives, attitudes, and rationalizations that promote sexually assaultive behavior" (Davis & Liddell, 2002, p. 36). Research links people who subscribe to traditional "socialization scripts" (p. 36) and hold attitudes that support rape. Men who act according to the aforementioned gender scripts are likely to exhibit beliefs and actions that contribute to rape culture.

Fortunately, additional research shows that a majority of men experience a level of discomfort with the expectations to be what society has deemed "masculine," including "how to be in relationship[s] with women, homophobia, heterosexism, and emotional expression, and that they are uncomfortable with the sexism and inappropriate behavior of other men" (Berkowitz, 2004, p. 3). This research gives practitioners evidence that many male-identified students have a desire to change. An atmosphere, however, must be created that is affirming and supportive of dismantling rape culture.

Gender socialization is not the only contributing factor to sexual assaults, since many men may not fulfill the roles normalized by society (Berkowitz, 1994). Simply because society provides an environment of support for sexual assault does not mean men are not responsible for their actions or that they do not have the ability to manage how they act. It does, however, make it more difficult for men to challenge the ways in which they were taught to act regarding these socialization scripts.

As a result, homophobia is very common among many college-aged men. Numerous scholars (Barone et al., 2007; Berkowitz, 2004; Flood, 2005) have stated that people who feel threatened by sexual assault prevention efforts may exhibit homophobic behaviors to discredit male activists. Homophobia occurs as a way of "policing heterosexual masculinities" (Flood, 2005, p. 464) and forces men back into the box of what it means to be "a man." All of these factors combine to create a culture that allows sexual assault to thrive.

Barriers to Retaining Men in Sexual Assault Prevention Efforts

Men involved with this movement challenge the dominant culture in an attempt to make the world a safer place for women and a healthier place for people of all genders. The difficulty with involving men and retaining their continued involvement may stem from the feedback they receive from peers, as well as from faculty and staff (Barone et al., 2007; Berkowitz, 2004; Flood, 2005). Negative verbal responses or even threats directed towards men involved in sexual violence prevention make it difficult to retain them. Although, at a moral and philosophical level, this should not be reason for men to relinquish their responsibility in deconstructing rape culture, it is a real factor in losing men who fight for an end to sexual violence. It is common for hate speech to be used against men doing this work. In the following excerpts from research on male-student experiences, this type of language is outlined in a fairly graphic nature to convey the extent of the reality for men who are involved in this movement. In a qualitative study of students who participated in The Men's Project at Colorado State University, Barone et al. (2007) found that homophobia was a barrier for men in breaking down gender norms and utilizing bystander intervention strategies in fear of being discredited by peers. One student stated, "Being told that you're gay [is a barrier to confronting peers]… It's like, you say something, and it's like, 'All right, fag,' and they walk away and completely blow you off" (p. 591).

Barone et al.'s (2007) study revealed another difficulty faced by men who are working on sexual assault prevention. One student said:

> And I think people can be really critical too, if you are trying to change your language, or be more inclusive…and people know that, and you slip up, people will call you out on that and make a big deal of it. (p. 592)

These hypercritical attitudes from people of all genders can be very difficult for male students to move beyond. People may be ready to "attack" at the slightest slip-up on the activist's behalf, whereas a male student who is not actively involved in ending sexual assault may not receive the same criticism.

Barone et al. (2007) also found that men are not always supported by women

when challenging their peers on language or opinions. In this case, hate speech was used once again against a male student. One student interviewed after his involvement in The Men's Project stated:

> I've even been told by women, like, I'll come home from class, and there'll be on my whiteboard, "Grow some balls, you fag," and I know it's from the women on my floor…they do it as a joke because a lot of them respect the things I do, but in a way they make fun of me. (p. 591)

This shows that, although most criticism and jokes come from other men, even female peers will make jokes about men who challenge masculinity. Even though women may be appreciative of men's efforts and their jokes are not intended to cause harm, this study shows that negative peer feedback is indeed a barrier to continuing to work toward becoming an ally.

Limitations

Men striving to end sexual assault must maintain a high level of responsibility and accountability to the women's movement when addressing the issue of sexual assault, so as not to overshadow the work women have been doing for decades. Often, men doing this work receive more credit for their efforts than women who are working on the same issues. Efforts by men to help end violence against women must occur alongside women and not come at the expense of or in competition with the initiatives for and by women that are currently in place (Berkowitz, 2004). Moreover, men's programs must not replace programs which provide resources to women who are survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence. Women's centers, rape crisis centers, victim's advocates, and political efforts for change are tremendously important. Practitioners need to ask themselves how and where they see men who are working to end sexual assault fitting into their current models of practice. More research is needed to further understand how men can help prevent sexual assault without overshadowing the work of women.

The male gender norms outlined earlier exist in many cultures across the United States, but variation exists across races, ethnicities, social classes, sexual orientations, religions, abilities, and other identities that intersect with the male identity. These differences should not be ignored when considering the experiences of male students and working to support the efforts of men who do not fit into U.S. gender norms. "As with every other issue, there is a danger of imposing definitions and understandings from more established violence prevention efforts (which, like the larger culture, is predominantly White and middle class) upon other cultures and communities" (Berkowitz, 2004, p. 5). Further research must question what barriers exist for men who have other identities that might affect how they are socialized to be men.

Students who fit into the gender binary can be affected by sexual assault in very different ways than transgender students. The issue becomes much more complex for students who identify as transgender since they may have been socialized as one gender, but may not identify with the gender they present as or with any gender at all. Over-generalizing when deconstructing masculinity can discount and ignore the experiences of transgender students, but it is necessary to label certain behaviors as more masculine or more feminine in order to begin breaking them down as norms. It is difficult to change socialization patterns without putting a name to the characteristics. More research is needed in order to begin understanding the experiences of transgender students as the victims and the perpetrators of sexual assault.

Implications for Practice

It is inspiring to see the increase in movements to involve men in ending sexual assault because of its prevalence on college campuses. Although many prevention efforts have placed emphasis on what women can do to reduce their risk, we are seeing more programs that engage men. These programs work to dispel rape myths, break down gender socialization scripts, and confront homophobia. Unfortunately, men who are involved face substantial barriers to remaining committed to the issue. Student affairs practitioners have the opportunity to support men who are working on this issue.

Practitioners can help to dismantle rape culture by making a conscious effort to not support rape myths, having conversations with students who believe any of these myths, and designing and supporting programs that focus on debunking misconceptions around sexual assault. Awareness-raising efforts can be very effective in dispelling rape myths. Practitioners of all genders must also challenge themselves to ensure that they do not subscribe to these myths. Actively self-reflecting on these beliefs can help practitioners to ensure they are not contributing to commonly-held fallacies.

Homophobic attitudes can hinder men from displaying the diversity of character that they have the capability to express. These attitudes can deeply hurt students who do or do not identify with the queer community. Student affairs practitioners must confront homophobic comments and attitudes in an effort to discontinue the environments that inhibit many men from speaking out against violence.

Practitioners must be sure to not reinforce or support behavior from other students that normalizes hegemonic masculinity or that negatively reinforces traditional gender norms. It is important to foster an environment where male-identified students may display behavior that might not fall under the definition of traditional gender norms. This can help to create a safe atmosphere for male

students working to break down these norms. They should not tolerate behavior that makes light of men actively engaged in ending sexual assault. Additionally, they should confront individuals who make these comments or participate in activities rooted in sexism. In doing so, they can create a space where there are fewer barriers for men to remain engaged in ending violence against women.

If a practitioner works with any male-identified students who are working to end violence against women, they need to be appropriately affirming of these students' actions. This means showing appreciation for the work they are doing and listening to their experiences while ensuring they understand the responsibility and what it means to receive credit for their work alongside women. While it is difficult to maintain this balance between affirmation and accountability of the student, practitioners must not support behavior from male students that, while done with good intentions, overshadows the work that women have done and are doing on this issue.

Finally, practitioners themselves should be knowledgeable and aware of the severity of sexual assault as a reality for all students. They should work to tailor their language and beliefs to reflect an attitude that helps to end sexual assault. Male-identified practitioners can work to break down gender norms themselves in an effort to not contribute to rape culture and hegemonic masculinity. Female practitioners can support this behavior through words of affirmation. Exemplary behavior helps to ensure that students understand the importance of ending rape and the culture that allows it to persist.

Without creating a supportive atmosphere for men who are working to end sexual assault, we are likely to see men fall away from the movement. It is vital for men to challenge themselves and one another to stop contributing to a rape supportive culture. If men are met with negative attitudes or no affirmation of their efforts, we will lose them and the cause of sexual assault is unlikely to be uprooted.

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Listen to Our Reality:
Experiences of Racism, Prejudice, and Bias in the Classroom

Akirah J. Bradley

In this study I explore the climate for students of color in the classroom setting at a university located in Northern New England. This research shines light on the experiences of six students of color. I conducted phenomenological interviews to reveal specific acts of racism, prejudice, and bias in the classroom. Throughout this study the themes developed are based on the students' perceptions of climate. Additionally, this study implores institutions to validate the voices of students of color with one powerful institutional response.

Many actually believe this monster, racism, that has had at least a few hundred years to take root, grow, invade our space and develop subtle variations . . . this mind-funk that distorts thought and action, can be merely wished away. I've run into folks who really think that we can beat this devil, kick this habit, be healed of this disease in a snap. In a sincere blink of a well-intentioned eye, presto—poof—racism disappears. (Yamato, 2004, p. 92)

Introduction

Many Historically/Predominantly White Institutions (HPWI) in the United States are making rigorous efforts to increase racial diversity within the student body (Davis, Dias-Bowie, Greenberg, Klukken, Pollio, & Thomas, et al., 2004). In 2006, the American Council on Education reported that between 1993-2003 the enrollment of students of color in higher education in the United States increased by 50.7%. As campus populations become increasingly diverse, institutions of higher education must respond actively to these changes.

In recent years, some institutions of higher education have adapted their policies, mission, and vision statements to emphasize and prioritize multiculturalism.

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However, these values are not consistently enacted across all individuals and departments (Maruyama, & Moreno, 2000; Watson, Terrell, & Wright, 2002). While some universities work toward increasing the structural diversity of their student body, they often make minimal efforts to increase the racial diversity of administration and faculty (Berlak & Moyenda, 2001; Bresciani, 2003; De Sherbinin, 2004). The expression and incidence of prejudice on college campuses continues to be a concern. In particular, students of color at HPWIs report experiencing racism in the classroom (Davis et al., 2004). This study focuses on these experiences.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of racially biased incidents experienced in the classroom at a Northern New England University (NNEU). Through this study, I sought to identify these particular biases and to make recommendations for the retention and support of students of color on their educational journeys. I explore these research questions:

1. What is the nature of the classroom climate for students of color at NNEU?
2. What types of racially biased related incidents occur in the classroom setting?
3. What actions can be taken to diminish the number of racially biased incidents in the classroom?

Significance of the Study

Many scholars acknowledge that institutions of higher education across the nation are experiencing a growth in the number of students of color enrolled (Davis et al., 2004; De Sherbinin, 2004; Howard, 2006; Smith & Wolf-Wendel, 2005). This rapid increase in structural diversity challenges institutions of higher education to create and maintain a benevolent and respectful learning environment for students of color. Many HPWI administrators and faculty members on campus are not cognizant of the struggle that students of color face in the classroom (Watson et al., 2002). In addition to recognizing the burden that students of color carry, institutions must respond diligently to faculty who send racist and/or biased messages to students. Hurtado (1992) stated "that instances of overt racial conflict can no longer be viewed as aberrations or isolated incidents, but rather are indicators of a more general problem of unresolved racial issues in college environments and in society at large" (p. 540).

As an African American female and new professional in the field of higher education, I reflect back on my undergraduate experiences while attending a HPWI remembering the bias and injustice I endured. Through reflection I chose this topic to help give a voice to commonly misunderstood or neglected students of color at HPWIs. After a review of the literature and personal communication from students at NNEU, I find that this topic is important, necessary, and affects all stakeholders in higher education—students, faculty, student affairs professionals, and administration.

Initial research and conversations unearthed disturbing stories provided by students of color across the nation. During this review of existing literature and personal communication, I identified racially biased incidents that students of color attending a HPWI encounter in the classroom. This study grew from the literature and conversations which indicate that predominantly White campuses are unwelcoming and hostile, creating a "chilly climate" for students of color (Fleming, 1984; Hurtado, 1992; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Smith & Wolf-Wendel, 2005; Stage & Manning, 1992; Watson et al., 2002).

The term "chilly climate" comes from the research of Hall and Sandler and refers to the classroom climate for women (Crombie, Pyke, Silverthorn, Jones, & Piccinin, 2003). Crombie et al. (2003) defined "chilly climate" as "the aggregated impact of a host of micro inequities and forms of systemic discrimination that disadvantage women in academic environments" (p. 52). Smith and Wolf-Wendel (2005) stated, "the current literature suggests that some campus environments are more 'chilly' than welcoming, more 'alienating' than involving, more hostile than encouraging" (p. 12). After review of the literature, I define the term "chilly climate" for students of color in the classroom as a milieu that does not actively support cultural or racial identities other than White, and one that tolerates acts of subtle or overt individual, group, or systemic racism. By conducting a study on students of color in a chilly climate, the goal is to capture perspective on a shared experience using qualitative method that acts as an outlet to voice students' narrative of their reality.

Methodology

Qualitative researchers endeavor to "capture and discover meaning" (Neuman, 2000, p. 123). There are many types of qualitative methodologies; this study is an example of phenomenological research methods. Phenomenology seeks to understand the experiences of individuals and connect an understanding of shared experiences among groups.

Selection of Participants

Six undergraduate students of color at NNEU participated in this study. At NNEU in 2007 approximately 11,870 students were enrolled. Of this number, roughly 800 identified as students of color. The student sample was chosen through quota sampling. The criteria were as follows: a student of color, under-

graduate junior or senior status, and experience with being a racial target in the classroom. The delimitations to this method and the study are that experiences of the participants do not represent all students of color. However, their experiences may be shared by other students of color at other HWPIs.

Data Collection

I chose to interview only those students who held junior or senior status because of their experience and knowledge of the frequency and nature of college classroom-based racially biased incidents. Their upper-class status meant that they completed approximately three academic years at NNEU. To complete the study, I sought a sample size of six participants using the quota method to ensure a diverse (i.e., gender, race/ethnicity, and major) sample group (see Table 1 for details). I conducted phenomenological interviews, which enabled students to express feelings, experiences, and perceptions of how they perceived the classroom climate.

Data Analysis

In this study, I used Strauss's three-step method for qualitative data coding including open, axial, and selective coding (Neuman, 2000). The data was divided into the general demographics of gender, race/ethnicity, university status, and major (see Table 1). I utilized analytical memos of each audio recorded interview to draw out the insightful responses from respondents. By validating and acknowledging students' experiences through their responses, I hope that the findings will be used to develop a blueprint for institutional change to create a safer classroom environment for students of color.

Table 1: General Demographics of Participants

	Alias Name	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Status	Major
Student 1	Jerry	Male	Multiracial	Senior	Anthropology
Student 2	Muhammad	Male	South Asian	Senior	Political Science & History
Student 3	Bridgett	Female	African American	Junior	Business Administration
Student 4	Rosaura	Female	Latina	Junior	Psychology
Student 5	Alyse	Female	African American	Senior	Political Science
Student 6	Melissa	Female	Dominican	Junior	Spanish & Political Science

Findings

I categorized the collected data based on the analytical memos which listed popular or unique themes that emerged. These themes provided essential information needed to conduct this study in a methodical fashion. The interpretation of ana-

lytical memos revealed the following three prevalent themes:

1. Failure to intervene
2. Shifting of the expert and the spotlight
3. Structure to support diverse learning

Themes emerged after hearing authentic voices and personal stories of participants regarding their experiences in the classroom at NNEU. The findings indicate an expectation for all higher education professionals to take action and own the responsibility of transforming the academy to a more welcoming place for all students. An elaboration and analysis of these findings follows.

Theme 1: Failure to Intervene

Five out of six participants expressed concerns in relation to professors ignoring subtle racist and prejudicial remarks expressed by White students in the classroom. Those five participants described incidents where they felt that the appropriate action would have been to address the issue, but instead it was ignored. Alyse shared her experience:

> This semester in my writing class we had to write poems about somewhere we would rather be, but here. So this boy wrote a poem about how he would rather be in California because it is warmer there and it is so cold here. Then he said something like the only thing you have to worry about in California is one Mexican fighting another Mexican over who gets to mow your lawn. And then he said you just can't get rid of Jesus! All she [the professor] did was look at him and didn't say anything and I was dumbfounded. Like, I can't believe he just said that! It is ridiculous. She [the professor] just looked at him and quickly tried to change the subject by calling on somebody else to read their poem.

This student mentioned the passive approach that the professor used to deal with issues of racism and bias in the classroom. One must remember that racism presents itself in various forms, including acts of passive racism. This particular form of racism is seen more often on today's campuses (De Sherbinin, 2004; Hurtado, 1992) and especially at NNEU. Another participant, Rosaura, explained:

> A student of the majority [a White student] voiced how if you do not like a part of your identity you should just change it…at one point I said what about your race and ethnicity you can't change that and the whole class sort of ignored what I said. Everyone just turned to the teacher who suddenly took their attention and segued into something else…Faculty tend to be a little more subtle about it. They tend to be the ones who will look away when

the situation is happening rather than address [it]… After that I dreaded going to class.

Through the voices of these students, one can see that the act of ignoring even subtle racism is detrimental to society and the learning environment of our students. Students expressed anger because in some classes, they felt that they were all alone in addressing racial tension, prejudice, and racist stereotypes. Students acknowledged the hardship of being in a class where the professor never attempted to interrupt the cycle of racism perpetuated by their classmates. Jerry stated why he believes a faculty member should interrupt when racist remarks are made in the classroom:

> It would be a good thing if professors address it. Because professors are people in sort of like a power position. If you have someone in a power position who will address something that went wrong or a bias incident it is less likely to happen again because the person with the most knowledge, the person with the most power, the person that you are supposed to revere and respect is telling you that it is wrong.

Students mentioned specific professors and classes that were known to avoid subjects such as race. Avoidance is a dangerous road to travel when the academy desperately needs to become inclusive and supportive of all. Fear motivates the practice of ignoring the discussion of racism and confrontation of bias related classroom incidents (hooks, 1994; Tatum, 1997). hooks (1994) explained:

> The unwillingness to approach teaching from a standpoint that includes awareness of race, sex, and class is often rooted in the fear that the classroom will be uncontrollable, that emotions and passions will not be contained. To some extent, we all know that whenever we address in the classroom subjects that students are passionate about there is always a possibility of confrontation, forceful expression of ideas, or even conflict. (p. 39)

Even with these missed opportunities for confrontation, students shared stories of joy and excitement the few times a professor appropriately intervened and educated students on racist or biased remarks made in the classroom. Melissa exclaimed, "I am really fortunate to have the professors that I have…the couple of times that something has been said the professor completely shut down the conversation." By "shut down," the student means the professor addressed the situation by educating the student who said the racist comment.

In the interviews, when sharing an experience similar to Melissa's, many students smiled, clapped, or used some other body language to express that they felt supported. It is a healing lesson; we all must come to realize that in each of us lies the power and the right to interrupt the constant flow of racism (Howard, 2006).

Theme 2: Shifting of the Expert and the Spotlight

Students told stories about being a witness to biased remarks in the classroom where the professors failed to intervene in Theme 1. However, Theme 2 emerges from students' descriptions of incidents in the classroom when they felt racially targeted by professors themselves. When students noticed this dynamic, based on their race as perceived by the professor, they expressed emotions of frustration, anxiety, and aggravation. Muhammad aptly summarized:

> I am a Middle Eastern Studies minor and I am Muslim and my appearance looks Middle Eastern but I am actually South Asian… People freely speak their minds and I do not know if they have any idea that what they are saying is completely offensive and racist. In class, this girl smeared the whole religion [Islam] as a terrorist sympathizing religion. My professor called on me to answer that and I was just very frustrated at that point.

These situations of expecting students of color in predominantly White classrooms to represent their entire race are commonly visited within the literature. "Often if there is one lone person of color in the classroom [that person] is objectified by others and forced to assume the role of 'native informant'" (hooks, 1994, p. 43).

Three out of five students reported that they were pegged by classmates and even professors as the "native informant" of their ethnic group. Bridgett shared a comment made in class by a peer:

> "Black people all live on welfare and they live in ghettoes." Then it is like I have to raise my hand and say that I am speaking on behalf of [Bridgett] and not my entire race. I do not feel that White people have to ever say when they are not talking for their entire race. But, when it comes to minorities you have to let people know.

Students had several stories to tell about the idea of being the "native informant" in the classroom. These students seem to find themselves in similar situations as other students of color attending a HPWI. Davis et al. (2004) completed a study where one of the five themes presented was, "Sometimes I'm Not Even Here/ Sometimes I Have to Represent All Black Students" (p. 427). This was noted as "invisibility and supervisibility" in Davis et al.'s (2004) study.

Invisibility and supervisibility are accurate identifiers for what students voice throughout this theme. The spotlight was placed on students wholly as a result

of their race which, in turn, made them super visible in a predominantly White class. The participant, Alyse, focused on a time where she was uncomfortable because she was called on by the professor to answer a question because her race was the topic of discussion. Alyse said, "Then he said something like, is there an African American culture? So, I looked up and he [the professor] said, well, let me ask the two African American students in this classroom." In this situation, the student's race was the topic at hand.

Conversely, when issues of race were not the topic many students suddenly became invisible. Students also acknowledged when the energy in the room would shift in their direction. Students and faculty alike had the expectation of hearing the perspective of the only student of color in the class when the topic of ethnicity or culture is raised. The next excerpt is a narrative of a participant who experienced the spotlight shift on them because the professor was no longer the expert on the topic of conversation. Melissa explained:

> Professors will discreetly refer certain questions to you because they want to hear your perspective on it… The Spanish professor always decides to ask my perspective on things, like she wants the correct answer or something. She [the professor] always tends to look at me as if I am supposed to know it.

Narratives shared by participants illustrate the transference of being the expert and having the spotlight move from professor to student. Most classrooms are structured with the professor as the sole expert within the class. Nonetheless, if a professor has not had any formal or personal developmental training to become fully cognizant of various cultures and issues of race, many are reluctant to speak about the topic. Students in the study often stated that, to some extent, a large percent of faculty members were not knowledgeable regarding issues of race. Muhammad exclaimed, "Professors need to become educated on these issues and not expect students of color to speak for the whole race!"

Students reported that professors unconsciously or consciously assumed that students of color were experts of what was perceived to be their culture. This is not a correct or fair assumption. Being from a particular racial group does not make one an expert. Classrooms are becoming increasingly racially diverse and students may have more knowledge pertaining to particular subjects (Clark, 2004), but professors should not have an expectation for individual students to educate the class. Professors receive a salary to educate and the student who is expected to educate the class on their culture does not. Professors must become more cognizant of putting the spotlight on certain students and should begin the process of increasing their own cultural competence by "acquiring a knowledge base about ethnic and cultural diversity in education" (Gay, 2000, p. 70). In addition to personal knowledge about racial and cultural differences, profes-

sors must also understand how to facilitate and interact within these discussions (Dilg, 1999). A classroom can be designed in a way that allows for an open exchange in dialogue when and if students are comfortable speaking in such an environment. If a professor wishes to hear perspectives from students, these perspectives should be encouraged at all times, not just when race or ethnicity becomes the center of attention. Marin (2000) spoke about a specific classroom format where, "faculty and student participants agreed that faculty members have biases as well as limited knowledge and therefore are considered only one of many classroom participants—and not even the central one" (p. 63).

Faculty may respect diversity and admit their limitations in multicultural competence but also fear a potential loss of authority as the head of the class (hooks, 1994). The idea of shifting the expert and spotlight may be accompanied by hesitation and apprehension about not knowing what to say or how to say it. Faculty, similar to students, may have trepidations about offending someone, or worse yet, being called a racist. So how do we create classrooms that support diverse learning among faculty and students?

Theme 3: Structure to Support Diverse Learning

A final theme that surfaced in the interviews was a need for the classroom to be structured in a way that encourages diverse learning. Students involved in this study alluded to an incompatible atmosphere of a Euro-centric learning milieu. Students shared multiple perspectives and offered ideas on how to create a safe structured classroom environment. Muhammad conveyed:

> I think they [racially biased incidents] were experienced in the classroom more often than anywhere else. I think that is interesting because most people would not see it that way because a classroom is a place that has structure and discipline… In a classroom you have to sit and listen to what is being said. Whereas, in a social environment you can try to avoid it.

Muhammad and others displayed a desire to have classrooms with a structure that would encourage diverse learning.

Many colleges in the U.S. founded by European Americans were built on a foundation of and were governed with principles that reflect White culture. Feagan and Sikes (1995) have stated, "at the core of most predominantly white colleges is the Euro-American bias in courses, curricula, and research agendas" (p. 95). This style of classroom does little to support a structure developed to promote diverse learning. There is a need for a classroom to be a space where students can learn from one another and not be fearful about discussing issues of race and oppression as they arise. Rosaura spoke about a class she took that provided the

"perfect" structure for diverse learning:

> I took Intergroup Dialogue…that was the perfect class environment. Just because, we were talking about these issues, we were accepting our dynamics as a class that was mixed, a fairly good mix of different backgrounds… It was such a comfortable class environment. I remember having a discussion in which I was triggered, completely like flying off the wall and still trying to follow the rules that were given to me. It is so natural to be emotional about it. I felt really comfortable in the class because I knew I could be emotional and next Thursday everything would be fine.

Tatum (1992) has suggested confronting "race as a taboo topic" (p. 5) as the first step in developing a learning environment that supports multiculturalism. The Intergroup Dialogue classroom environment that Rosaura explained achieves this end.

Several respondents mentioned that race was a topic not easily explored in a classroom because a structure has not been built to encourage open dialogue. It must be tailored to fit the individual students in the classroom (Gilroy, 2004). However, there are ways to ensure that one creates an optimal learning environment for all students. A notable suggestion by Rosaura is that, "sometimes we just need ground rules."

Alyse shared an example of her ideal learning environment that supports diversity:

> The class may still be majority White, because that is how the world is. But, it should also have a nice representation across the ALANA [African, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American] spectrum…it gives those students of color a support system and you do not feel like you are alone. I feel that the White students would be able to see—that just because you are a minority we are not all the same, we all have different experiences and different stories to bring to the table.

She noted that, in her opinion, there is a need for more students of color in the classroom for true support; with a more diverse classroom will also come a safer environment where students are supported by one another.

Several scholars declare that the most favorable classrooms are those that establish trust, respect, support, and community. Most research has named this environment as a *safe space* (Marin, 2000). Participant Jerry wants to reduce the size of the average classroom to provide a type of community atmosphere which he believes will also help to create a safer space. Jerry said:

> I would like classrooms to be smaller. If you have a smaller class and you know the people in the class it is less likely of a bias incident happening. Just because, everybody knows each other, and you know it is not going to be like, oh there's the Black kid in the corner. Let's see what he has to say about it.

Professors must help to cultivate a respectful environment for students' safety. Bolgatz (2005) spoke about creating a trusting yet challenging class structure that supports critical reflection. In addition, deeply exploring content that does not simplify "issues by ignoring the intersections between multiple forms of oppression" is another way to create a safe space (Bolgatz, 2005, p. 97). Kelly (2005) built on the scholarly works of Corvin and Wiggins (1989) and Zuniga, Nagda, and Sevig (2002) when she stated, "A respectful environment helps students (1) trust their peers, (2) critically examine their own biases, prejudices, and stereotypes; and (3) foster open and honest dialogue" (p. 63). hooks (1994) noted:

> Indeed, exposing certain truths and biases in the classroom often created chaos and confusion. The idea that the classroom should always be a "safe," harmonious place was challenged. In order to create a safe classroom one must understand and implement the following: Have the willingness to change the structure of the traditional classroom. (p. 30)

Institutions must restructure and transform the classroom from its traditional style. It is a difficult task and entails a significant amount of work, but oftentimes faculty are preoccupied with research and fail to take the time to create an innovative, flexible structure. A structure that supports and provides the best learning environment for all students is crucial (Stage & Manning, 1992). There is a need for professors to critically examine and reflect on what the most optimal learning environment would look like. This section reveals several ways that professors can begin restructuring a classroom environment to encourage diverse learning and help students of color feel supported in the classroom.

Implications for the Field

Traditionally, student affairs professionals have taken on the majority of the work for supporting students of color and raising awareness of the issues that plague the university community (Stage & Manning, 1992). The research discussed in this article addressed the most common forms of racially biased incidents that take place to create chilly climate classrooms. Literature and research is being produced, but often results in minimal changes in policy initiatives surrounding racial climate on college campuses (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1998). It is vital for institutions to listen to the reality of students of color and continue to research the effects of administration, staff, and faculty who can eas-

ily escape into a daily routine that is suitable to primarily White students.

Classroom Transformation

From these testimonials, one can see that faculty play a vital role in the lives of students and the institution. As institutions grow in the representation of multiple racial and ethnic identities, faculty must take the time to learn about cultural difference and the various different styles of learning and understanding. When these cultures collide, there is potential for misunderstanding, misconceptions, and bias. Faculty members have an obligation to be cognizant of these dynamics that play out in the classroom. It is important, therefore, for classrooms to be transformed by culturally responsive instruction and curricula utilizing pedagogy of multicultural education and understanding (Boyer & Baptiste, 1996; Dilg, 1999, Gay, 2000; hooks, 1994).

If faculty members are going to transform their pedagogy and classroom structure, the author recommends support from the institution by providing training to shift the classroom to a multiculturally competent environment. Faculty may need assistance and training to learn how to track biased comments and combat racism and misconceptions in the classroom (hooks, 1994). By transforming the classroom experience, faculty can serve as a positive force to demolish chilly climates, improve the overall climate for students of color, and serve as change agents in the institution.

Institutional Transformation

Institutions of higher education acknowledge, understand, and take action against various forms of racism, prejudice, and bias on various levels. Some institutions have recently gained consciousness of the injustices and biases occurring on campus. The current approach that many institutions are taking is to rely on specific departments such as Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity, Multicultural Affairs, and Commissions on Diversity to deconstruct the history and vicious cycle of racism that permeates the institution. However, breaking down the cycle of bias, prejudice, and racism is the job of every administrator, faculty, and staff member on campus. This task often rests on the shoulders of small departments with limited staff and resources. It is important to have a welcoming space on campus, like ALANA and other multicultural centers, but it is equally important to transform the system by: instituting policies and procedures that work against hate and promote a friendly environment for students of color; implementing and requiring diversity training for staff, faculty, and administration; changing the curriculum to be more inclusive; and designing classroom lectures and presentations that support diverse learning.

Institutions cannot solely rely on student affairs administrators to support stu-

dents of color. There must be an institutional effort to change the climate not only on campus but also specifically in the classrooms where many student affairs professionals hesitate to intrude on the boundaries of academic space. Clark (2004) posited:

> Toward this end, the multicultural education classroom must become an oppositional space, in which educators and students can come together to fight for equality and social justice. That is, it must become a space in which prejudice and discrimination are the common enemies and educators and students join forces to figure out how to eradicate prejudice in themselves and in the context of discipline-specific study and professional practice. (p. 79)

When there is a chilly climate anywhere on campus it is everyone's problem. Together, student affairs professionals, administrators, faculty and staff can create change.

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LGBT Leadership Development:
Uniting LGBT and Leadership Scholarship to Determine Best Practices

Grant Hoover

Although a growing body of scholarship describes the developmental experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students and the popular subject of campus leadership continues to gain depth, there is little research telling us about the intersection of these two identities: the LGBT student leader. The existing research reveals that there is a variety of LGBT student leader types, each with their own set of values, preferred leadership contexts, and working styles. Using the current literature as a base-point for practice, I put forth a series of recommendations and best practices so that student affairs professionals can better engage the diverse identities and subgroups that make up the LGBT student leader community.

As innovative, purposeful, and effective practitioners, we are compelled to use the current research to guide our work with students. But what do we do when the literature fails to address our area of work or does not provide the practical piece that is crucial to implementing new ideas? Far too often we improvise, make assumptions about student needs, and let our best intentions lead the way. Our busy lives keep us from reading between the lines of current research to find the answers we are looking for.

Research considering the development of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) student leaders is relatively new to the field of student affairs. Researchers brave enough to explore this uncharted territory admit that there are still many avenues to explore, however, an analysis of the existing body of knowledge will be useful in compiling a set of practices that best meet the developmental needs of LGBT student leaders. To that end, I will build a set of practices based on the literature in hopes that administrators will begin to offer a variety of services that are intentionally designed to meet the specific needs of this diverse group of students.

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Theoretical Frameworks

There is a modest body of scholarship on LGBT college students. Prior to the mid-1990s, articles were sparse and those published simply validated LGBT students' place in the higher education setting (Lark, 1998). Today, the increasing diversity within the LGBT umbrella leaves much to be explored. A longer established body of research on student involvement tells us that students engaged in the university system experience positive outcomes related to leadership development (Astin, 1993; Kuh, Hu, & Vesper, 2000). LGBT identity and leadership identity development are not mutually exclusive topics, and research on the intersection of these two subjects continues to add to our understanding of LGBT students on our campuses (e.g. Renn, 2007; Renn & Bilodeau, 2005; Porter, 1998). The following three sections will cover the relevant literature and theoretical frameworks that pertain to LGBT student leaders.

LGBT Identity

Stage models of lesbian, gay, and bisexual[1] identity development are some of the oldest frameworks developed to help student affairs professionals better understand and serve their LGB students. The framework Cass (1979) presented, while one of the older theoretical constructs, is perhaps the most frequently cited stage model throughout the literature on LGB identity development. Sexual identity, according to this six-stage model, is a universal developmental process that takes place in a predetermined sequence. According to Cass, one begins with a private sense of self as non-heterosexual, then works towards public recognition, later immerses in the identity, and finally integrates that LGB identity into one's larger sense of self. Based on this model, LGB student leaders would fall within the later stages (stages four through six) wherein individuals begin to accept their LGB identity, come to take pride in that identity, and then synthesize their sexual identity into the larger context of self. While this framework may be dated, Cass' model continues to manifest in the development of LGB students at our contemporary institutions. The LGB identity development milestones, from which this framework was built, continue to shape student experiences.

More recent researchers have criticized the Cass model for its myopic approach and inability to account for the growing diversity within the LGB community (Renn, 2007; Savin-Williams, 2006). Savin-Williams argued that such stage models fail to address the various contexts that shape one's experience as a same-sex attracted individual. Other factors such as race, class, and family dynamics influence one's sexual and gender identity and make stage models, like the one Cass

[1] Earlier models did not address gender identity development or reflect on the experiences of transgender students.

has offered, obsolete. In lieu of these limited and dated models, Savin-Williams (2006) presented a more fluid way of looking at the development of same-sex attracted teens. He stated that "teenagers are increasingly redefining, reinterpreting, and renegotiating their sexuality such that possessing a gay, lesbian, or bisexual identity is practically meaningless" (p. 1). Savin-Williams suggested that sexual identity labels, just like stage models, are defunct and that soon enough same-sex attracted individuals will be so commonplace that binaries like gay or straight will no longer exist. To demonstrate the changing climate of our society, Savin-Williams noted that the age at which individuals first identify as gay appears to be considerably younger among today's teens. These individuals are self-labeling at age 16, whereas individuals who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s self-labeled around age 21. Students are not coming out—which refers to the public declaration of one's sexual and/or gender identity—in college, they are coming out in high school, and this shift should be reflected in the types of services our institutions offer. While it is unrealistic to believe that all students come to college already out and with their sexual and/or gender identities synthesized, the changing nature of LGBT students presented by Savin-Williams should be taken into account when preparing a set of best practices to harness the skills of LGBT student leaders.

Leadership Identity

The definition of leadership continues to mature with time. What once was an individual's ability to demonstrate a set of traits or behaviors necessary to fill a position and direct a group of people is now understood to be a group process where individuals work together towards societal change (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2006). The newer understanding of leadership, with its focus on social justice, ties directly to LGBT students' advocacy work both on and off-campus, towards liberty and equality (Porter, 1998). In other words, a change-model of leadership better resembles the types of experiences, motivations, and outcomes one sees when working with LGBT student leaders.

The more recent literature on leadership, while recognizing the diversity among leaders and leadership contexts, focuses on desirable developmental outcomes (Renn, 2007). The leadership identity development (LID) model (Komives et al., 2006) is one of the more utilized frameworks with which researchers exploring LGBT leadership development work. LID is a six-stage model for identifying changes that take place as an individual comes to an increasingly complex understanding of leadership, community, and self in relation to others. Komives et al. (2006) and Renn & Bilodeau (2005) agreed that the most important developmental milestone in the LID model is a subject-object shift that occurs between stages three and four. At this point, one moves from a positional understanding of leadership to a more transformational one that is not dependent upon titles.

In stages four, five, and six, individuals see that leadership can happen anywhere; that they can be participatory leaders; and that they can have responsibility for the success of the group, whether or not they hold a formal leadership role. While researchers place value on the shift from positional to transformational leadership, it is more important for student affairs professionals offering LGBT services to cater to the developmental needs of both groups.

LGBT Student Leader Identity

Earlier work on LGBT student leadership simply attempts to tie together LGB and LGBT identity developmental models with leadership development models (Porter, 1998; Renn & Bilodeau, 2005). For example, as students take on additional responsibility for an LGBT organization, the degree to which they are out on campus increases because they are working throughout campus on behalf of the LGBT organization. The flip side is also true, as involvement in the LGBT community increases leadership skills. The research of Renn & Bilodeau (2005) began to scratch the surface of inquiry by determining that leading in an LGBT context promotes sexual and/or gender identity development as well as leadership identity development. Renn (2007) explored this concept further and discovered an "involvement-identification cycle, in which increased leadership promoted increased public identification as LGBT/queer, which in turn promoted increased leadership" (p. 318). Additionally, involvement in an LGBT organization supported the development of students in terms of leadership and LGBT identity development regardless of their level of outness.

Renn (2007) has categorized LGBT student leaders in two ways. The first, derived from the Komives et al. (2006) LID model, breaks leaders into two groups: positional leaders and transformational leaders. Positional leaders are those that show characteristics of LID stages one through three, whereas transformational leaders demonstrate qualities reflective of stages four through six. The second way Renn grouped students is by classifying those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender as either LGB(T) or queer. The distinction here is that LGB(T) students are "more aligned with normative structures of gay versus straight" whereas queer students "align themselves in oppression to normative structures" (p. 313). LGB(T) students are those that work with the system in established roles to create positive change. Queer students, on the other hand, are those that challenge the system to encourage change. While researchers agree that a transformational leader demonstrates a more cognitively complex understanding of leadership, there is no value placement that distinguishes the LGB(T) leader from the queer leader. These two leadership styles are simply different styles, each of which are necessary and serve a purpose. In fact, Renn (2007) argued that without unique campus offerings for each group, LGBT student organizations might crumble to conflict between students who wish to push a more

LGB(T) agenda and those who are more queer-inclined. Having organizations and opportunities for both groups is important in serving all LGBT student leaders. Renn's work identified distinct subgroups of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender student leaders that require their own unique set of services, programs, and student organizations in order to fully engage them.

Limitations

The key limitation to most, if not all, of the literature on LGBT student leadership is that many of the findings have yet to be confirmed or contested by other research. At this point, LGBT student leadership is a niche subject that only a few scholars have explored. This leaves a seemingly vast and diverse subject area with a variety of unanswered questions left for a handful of researchers to uncover. As the topic becomes more popular and necessary to meet the needs of our LGBT students, the gaps in our knowledge will hopefully be filled and the current research will be confirmed, refined, or perhaps disputed.

To that end, the work of these few researchers fails to encapsulate the experience of all LGBT student leaders; the current research (Renn & Bilodeau, 2005; Renn, 2007; Porter, 1998) has focused on students participating in LGBT leadership activities (e.g. student organizations, advocacy, etc.). Their samples did not include student leaders who identify as LGBT but serve in non-LGBT leadership roles (e.g. student government, athletics, community service, etc.). Therefore, we do not know if the findings of Renn & Bilodeau (2005) and Renn (2007) apply to all LGBT student leaders. The degree to which a leader is out in his/her/hir position will have an impact on the validation of Renn's (2007) involvement-identification cycle. If, for example, a lesbian student senator prefers discretion when disclosing her sexual identity, she may not experience the positive identity development that coincides with the leadership development of LGBT student leaders cited by the research. However, if a student's sexuality is an open aspect of his/her/hir leadership identity, one could see how the current research on LGBT student leaders would apply. The subject of LGBT student leaders participating in non-LGBT leadership roles requires further exploration, but for the time being, it is important to know what specific student populations to which the current research applies.

Best Practices

It is safe to say that not all LGBT students participate or take advantage of the services universities offer them. Rather than dismiss this fact by attributing it to student indifference, institutions need to examine their services and determine if they are meeting the needs of the various subgroups that make up the LGBT leadership population. Some college students are dealing with issues related to their sexuality while others, perhaps more than ever before, are coming to campus self-identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Engaging these distinct groups of LGBT students will require a variety of services and opportunities that meet the students where they are developmentally. Additionally, the different types of LGBT student leaders—LGB(T), queer, positional, and transformational, as outlined by Renn (2007)—require distinct services. Institutions that wish to maximize LGBT student leader engagement and participation will need to offer an array of services, programs, and student organizations. Three specific examples of these best practices are given below, and it is important to note that these recommendations are designed to complement one another. Think of them as a package, as opposed to stand-alone initiatives, designed to appeal to the different pockets of LGBT student leaders on our campuses.

Student Service: LGBT Peer Mentoring

It is unwise to assume that all LGBT students will be ready to attend an event sponsored by the campus LGBT center. To some, going to such an event would surely out them to the campus community. For students starting on their LGBT identity development journey, low-key, private, and perhaps confidential services are necessary. One program that can facilitate the dual developmental benefits of the involvement-identification cycle is peer mentoring. If done holistically, so that attention is paid to more than just LGBT identity development, those mentored can begin to simultaneously explore other aspects of identity, such as leadership identity. For mentees, the gains in self-confidence and comfort with one's sexuality will make participation in other, more public LGBT activities a possibility. For those students serving as mentors, developments in leadership and LGBT identity will manifest into serving the community in other capacities and disclosing their LGBT identity, which are key to Renn's (2007) cycle and will aid in the further development and identity synthesis for the mentors.

A mentoring program draws in a variety of the groups outlined in the LGBT leadership literature. Those who are more comfortable with their LGBT identity work with and support those who are less comfortable with their sexuality or gender. As for leadership types, this program would likely appeal to the LGB(T) students because it is an institutional service as opposed to a student run or initiated service that would likely be more appealing to the queer student leader. This program could be made to appeal to both transformational and positional leaders. Transformational leaders will see a non-hierarchical system designed to create positive community change and will hopefully want to participate. At the same time, giving mentors a title and positive reputation on campus will draw the positional LGB(T) student leader. The commitment to serving others that a peer mentoring service offers will potentially encourage the positional leader to further develop his/her/hir understanding of leadership and leave the experience

with a more transformational view of leadership.

Student Programs

Programming is an opportunity to direct students along their developmental path, however, programs must meet the students where they are developmentally to foster this growth. If the aforementioned mentoring program works to help students become more comfortable with their sexual and/or gender identity, programming can focus more deliberately on leadership within the LGBT community. An LGBT leadership retreat would be an excellent opportunity to develop students' leadership and LGBT identities. To ensure that the program not only serves those at the earlier stages of LID or LGBT identity development, established LGBT leaders and past attendees can help plan and coordinate the retreat and serve as facilitators. This model for an LGBT leadership retreat adds to the skill sets and experiences of the developed LGBT leaders while setting some foundational groundwork for the less developed LGBT leaders.

A leadership retreat intended specifically for LGBT students would appeal to a variety of the LGBT leadership subgroups. While this program would likely be too intense for students who are still addressing and defining their identity (e.g. Cass' stages one through three), it would offer a variety of opportunities to other pockets of the LGBT community. For participants, the retreat builds their developing understanding of leadership and will at least expose students to the types of activities, organizations, and services that they can take part in to be LGBT leaders on campus. At the same time, a retreat specific to the LGBT community will provide those who are looking for more interaction with other LGBT students a valuable experience. Students planning the retreat and facilitating sessions will further build upon their skill sets (e.g. communication, motivation, and working with a new group of people) and a variety of LGBT leaders will be open to participating. Positional and transformational leaders, as well as LGB(T) and queer students, will be drawn to the opportunity to talk about their work on campus.

Student Organizations

Offering a diverse group of student organizations is perhaps the most important component of a theory-based set of practices to encourage LGBT leadership on college campuses. Renn (2007), Porter (1998), Outcalt (1998), and Mallory (1998) all stressed the need for a variety of LGBT organizations (e.g. social, political, community service, educational, etc.) in order to meet the diverse interests within the LGBT community. These organizations need fair access to funds (Mallory, 1998) and the freedom to adapt to the dynamic student population (Outcalt, 1998). For students in the identity acceptance and identity pride stages of Cass'

(1979) model, participating in a "gay" organization may be very appealing. For others who are at the identity synthesis stage, which Savin-Williams (2005) has argued is a dramatically increasing ratio of students, organizations will need to offer more than a queer gathering place; they will have to appeal to other passions and forms of identity. Additionally, organizations will need to vary in structure with some being relatively hierarchical, reflecting the preference of positional leaders, and others being relatively flat, demonstrating a transformational leadership approach.

Organizations of different sizes, structures, missions, affiliations, and cultures will hopefully draw in the variety of leaders found within the LGBT community. Engaging students through participation in student organizations is a documented way to promote positive development in both leadership and LGBT identities (Renn & Bilodeau, 2005). Student affairs professionals should also make the process of establishing a student organization well publicized, student friendly, and as clear as possible so that in the case that existing LGBT organizations do not appeal to students, they have the tools available to create a new organization that meets their needs.

Offering a variety of services, programs, and student organizations that build off of and complement one another will be crucial to developing LGBT leaders on our campuses. To ensure that students take advantage of these offerings, practitioners must be intentional about targeting students at different developmental points with initiatives that meet their specific wants and needs.

Future Research

Savin-Williams (2006) presented research that has provided the most pressing questions as the generational shift of LGBT students becomes more distinct. These students, who are coming out earlier, are further along their sexual and/or gender identity path than previous cohorts. This development will have an impact on the services student affairs professionals need to offer. If students are coming to college with their sexual and/or gender identities synthesized, we may see a decrease in student participation in LGBT-specific services, programs, and student organizations. As discussed earlier, these students may still benefit from Renn's (2007) involvement-identification cycle but this topic has yet to be adequately addressed. We do not know what impact, if any, working in a non-LGBT leadership role has on LGBT development. It is crucial, therefore, for researchers to explore the development of LGBT students serving as leaders in non-LGBT capacities.

Conclusions

The diversity found within the literature on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender

students speaks to the complex student population we are trying to understand. As society's views of same-sex attracted individuals change, so too will the experiences of our students who identify as LGBT. Scholars have an opportunity to not only add significant value and understanding to the field of higher education and student affairs, they can reshape how colleges and universities across the nation approach LGBT advocacy, development, and services. Their theory is crucial in establishing sound practice that fosters positive developmental outcomes. Many of the services discussed previously are offered on campuses throughout the country, however, those offering such services, programs, and student organizations must be more intentional in the types of students for which each of these leadership opportunities are intended. Many practitioners have been working aimlessly for years when it comes to LGBT leadership. It is time to refresh our practices and become more intentional in order to consolidate resources and serve our students to the best of our ability. In order to do this, we need to know the research and prepare a wide array of programs and opportunities that meet the diverse and distinct needs of our lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender leaders.

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Elite Collegiate Athletics and the Academy: Criticisms, Benefits, and the Role of Student Affairs

Jackie Hyman & Matthew Van Jura

College sports play a special role in higher education by promoting student unity on campus, maintaining connections with alumni, and enhancing the overall student experience. There are some who claim that college sports have lost touch with their origins and have been consumed by a "win at all costs" mentality. Murray Sperber (2000) has suggested that at many institutions, athletic programs are hindering the quality of undergraduate education. This article will explore the history of collegiate athletics and show how current sports programs play an integral role in supporting multiple facets of universities. Given the negative history, culture, and perception surrounding college athletics, it is important for student affairs professionals to consider opportunities to correct these problems. Finally, this article will explore how a more cooperative partnership between student affairs and athletic departments at institutions with elite sports programs can benefit not only universities, but student-athletes as well.

Whether one cheers for the Badgers, Buckeyes, Terrapins, Catamounts, or any team in between, college sports serve as a source of entertainment and more importantly, play a vital role in higher education. Not every school boasts rich athletic traditions, nor does every campus feature a student body that lives and dies with their teams' successes and failures. Yet for schools where campus culture surrounding popular athletic events plays a significant part in defining the student experience, college sports take on an important role for multiple constituencies associated with the institution. Universities' athletic teams offer benefits to prospective students, current students, and alumni, as well as a unique educational opportunity for student-athletes. There are some critics, however, who believe that college sports do more harm than good, for both athletes and

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non-athletes. When left unchecked, athletic programs run the risk of damaging the quality of undergraduate education by using athletes as a source of revenue rather than encouraging their responsibilities as students. While college athletics are not without fault, fixing the problems would be conceivably easier than condemning the entire establishment. In this capacity, student affairs professionals can help immensely in the holistic development of the student-athlete and redefine the role that college athletics play in the broader student experience. It is increasingly important for student affairs professionals to study the problems that have arisen in the past surrounding athletic culture and acknowledge the positive influences college sports can have on a campus. Pursuing collaborative efforts between athletic departments at institutions with elite sports programs and student affairs, practitioners can bolster the positive impact of sports programs on today's students and create a more unified campus community.

History of Athletics

Looking at the history of higher education in America, college sports have long played a key role in defining the student experience. These activities have encouraged schools to adopt their own traditions including colors, mascots, fight songs, and alma maters. By 1880, football grew in popularity to surpass all other sports at universities such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Rutgers, Michigan, and Cornell—some of the first institutions to adopt the game (Rudolph, 1990). For the first time, institutions of higher education began to understand the importance of intercollegiate relations through sports. In response to football's popularity, universities began to build larger stadiums on campus to accommodate the growing number of fans. By 1923, over 87,000 fans were filling the seats of Michigan Stadium, while some were still being turned away at the gates (Rudolph, 1990). Today, many of these stadiums at schools such as Michigan, Illinois, Louisiana State, and Ohio State remain iconic buildings on campus. Thelin (2004) introduced the idea of "subway alumni," (p. 214) where fans tuned in via radio broadcasts and newspaper coverage of sporting events. These loyal fans follow every game and make monetary contributions even though they never attended the institution. Rudolph (1990) noted that as time passed and football frenzy spread, many Americans began to feel as though the purpose of an American college or university was to field a football team.

Along with the passion, tradition, and loyalties that college athletics provided their institutions, these contests unfortunately proved to be an avenue for negative conduct as well. By the early 20th century, sporting events became opportunities for gambling and excessive alcohol consumption (Thelin, 2004). These behaviors were not only perpetuated by undergraduate spectators, but also alumni and, in some instances, the athletes themselves. To this day, the presence of alcohol abuse at sporting events remains a primary cause for disruptive fan behavior,

as well as a threat to the well-being of those choosing to drink before, during, or after the game. Another societal ill perpetuated by college sports is centered on racism. At one time, Black athletes who attended northern institutions were not allowed to play in games when their teams traveled south to play schools not yet integrated (Thelin, 2004). While civil rights legislation and judicial decisions have addressed this particular injustice, many other negative behaviors associated with sports are not as readily correctable. The portrayal of Native American mascots such as Chief Osceola, the Fighting Sioux, and Chief Illiniwek at Florida State, North Dakota, and University of Illinois, respectively, serve as examples. Since these behaviors are a part of college athletics' history, they have become ingrained in the culture of sports on campus. Addressing this culture and correcting it is possible, but will require an enormous effort.

Criticisms of Athletics

One of the foremost critics of college sports in today's culture is Murray Sperber. He has stated that the pervasive "win-at-all-costs" attitude within the collegiate landscape ultimately hurts "student-athletes," (or "athlete-students" as he refers to them). Rather than being educated, these students are viewed as a revenue source for their institution. For the student-athlete, the heightened demand to win means that success on the playing field becomes a full-time job. As a result, less attention is given to their success in the classroom and fewer resources are dedicated to preparing student-athletes for their life after college (Sperber, 2000). In *Beer and Circus* (2000), Sperber's criticisms also focused on the institutions that place big time college sports at the forefront and on the attitudes of today's college students who believe that partying and following their team are more important uses of their time than studying. Using anecdotal evidence, he presented cases that examine multiple facets of the problem, such as coaches who usurp the power of the university president, institutional partnerships with the beer industry, the fallibility of the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA), and the bottom line when it comes to paying for athletic programs.

Meanwhile, the quality of education that the typical undergraduate receives at these institutions suffers as well. Since many big time college sports programs are affiliated with Tier 1 research institutions, Sperber believed that these institutions try to bolster their image not by allocating funds for improving undergraduate academic programs, but rather by focusing on the quality of graduate research so as to gain national prestige. Throughout his book, Sperber argued that in the absence of an environment that stimulates undergraduate education, students resort to the culture of beer and circus by choosing to party, binge drink, and develop their social skills instead of their academic skills. A spokesperson for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation stated that the profile of a college or university with an undergraduate drinking problem is a school with a large ath-

letic program and/or a large Greek community. This correlation between alcohol consumption and sporting events extends beyond undergraduates to include alumni and fans.

College sports can have a negative impact on the student-athletes as well. In 2007, Sharon Stoll, a professor at the University of Idaho, conducted research that examined the moral reasoning capabilities of student-athletes (Dohrmann, 2007). Over the course of 20 years, she surveyed approximately 80,000 high school, college, and professional athletes. Asking participants to answer on a 5-point Likert scale using "strongly agree," "agree," "neutral," "disagree," or "strongly disagree," Stoll presented situations such as:

> During a volleyball game, player A hits the ball over the net. The ball barely grazes off player B's fingers and lands out-of-bounds. However, the referee does not see player B touch the ball. Because the referee is responsible for calling rule violations, player B is not obligated to report the violation. (Dohrmann, p. 67)

Questions such as these tested the athletes' level of honesty and moral reasoning within scenarios based on their active participation in athletics. By assessing the responses to these dilemmas, Stoll evaluated the athletes' ability to make ethical decisions. She observed that female athletes have shown higher moral reasoning abilities in the past, but trends show a convergence with the lower scores of male athletes. Furthermore, athletes who play revenue-generating sports, such as football and basketball, have, on average, the lowest scores (Dohrmann, 2007), suggesting that these visible athletes are held less accountable for their actions.

College athletics has the opportunity to teach lessons such as the importance of healthy competition, wellness, work ethic, teamwork, and personal awareness. When competition fails to promote these learning outcomes, then college athletics not only fails to achieve its intended purpose, but denies athletes the holistic education they deserve. Stoll's study suggested that for these more visible athletes, a sense of privilege has pervaded their thinking in regards to the responsibilities they share as members of the academy and as members of a greater society. For athletes who see themselves on national television, practice in multimillion-dollar facilities, and frequently read about themselves on the front page of the campus newspaper, the expectation becomes that of athletic excellence and nothing else. Reinforced by coaches, peers, and media, this mentality comes at the expense of academic and personal development. Unfortunately, student-athletes are not maturing at the same rate as non-student-athletes.

Benefits to Student-Athletes

Contrary to popular belief, athletic programs have a huge stake in the development of their student-athletes. Within practices, games, and team meetings, the student-athletes are doing more than simply exercising and learning strategic plays. They are learning important life lessons such as teamwork, focus, and perseverance. In 2005, Potuto, Larson and O'Hanlon surveyed an array of student-athletes from eighteen different NCAA Division 1A institutions. To ensure participants had "sufficient time on campus to provide well informed responses," athletes involved must have already completed at least 85 credit hours (p. 947). The results of this survey found that 90% or higher of the students felt as though their participation in athletics had strongly influenced their leadership skills, teamwork, work ethic, ability to take responsibility for oneself, decision making ability, and time management skills. As one individual athlete commented in the survey, "athletics teaches you to persevere, motivate yourself, and be self-reliant. It also improves skills in dealing with others" (p. 11).

Collegiate athletics has been successful in creating community, despite the belief that college campuses "have become a group of 'multiple communities' where our disparate goals work against the creation of a common campus community" (Kerr, 1982, p. 373). According to Wolf-Wendel, Douglas, & Morphew (2001), "intercollegiate athletics has accomplished much of what institutions generally are attempting to achieve in building community out of difference" (p. 370). Athletics programs have been successful because they have focused on the shared athletic experience, rather than the differences that separate their community. Wolf-Wendel et al. (2001) suggested eight commonalities that make athletic programs successful: (a) student-athletes share common goals: to grow, improve, and ultimately, win; (b) through practices, classes, and living spaces, they engage in intense and frequent interaction; (c) they share common experiences of adversity through hard work, suffering, and sacrifice; (d) in working together to build a team, they recognize that each individual has something important to contribute to their collective success; (e) they hold each other accountable in terms of academic performance; (f) they hold each other accountable in terms of performance on the field, court, etc.; (g) they have coaches who invest time in each individual and truly care about their successes to guide them through their experiences; and (h) through involvement in athletics as children, collegiate student-athletes have exposure to several different identities at a young age. "A remarkably strong sense of community exists" because of these several commonalities within the student-athletes experience, linking them "across most differences, including race, socioeconomic status, and geographic background" (p. 376).

Benefits to Overall Community

Expanding the scope, one can see that athletic programs help the surrounding neighborhood by embodying the entire campus community. An example of this is the University of Maryland - College Park, where coaches designate certain days outside of their practice schedules to engage in community service as a team. By instilling the importance of community service to student-athletes, coaches get their players accustomed to the idea of giving back to the community. Service can range from holding an annual winter coat drive for donation to local homeless shelters to spending a day with non-able-bodied children. These experiences humble student-athletes and allow them to see the positive impact that they have on others.

Athletic departments have a strong and positive impact on the relationship between past, present, and future students. When looking at mass spectator sports such as football and basketball, the attendance of games is what the 1990 Carnegie Report has called a "celebrative community" (p. 374). Uniting students, community members, faculty, and administrators, these games attract people from all different interest groups to the same location for two to three hours a week to show their loyalty to an institution, as well as their support for student-athletes. Few other events on campus have this potential. While programs planned by student organizations offer the prospect of education, networking, and social interaction, these events often target a specific demographic of the campus population at the assumed subconscious exclusion of others. Athletic events do, however, offer all members of the university the opportunity to wear the same colors, rally behind a common cause, and feel proud of the student-athletes who represent their school. The energy that runs through arenas across the country has the power to both unite and empower. The 1990 Carnegie Report noted that, "athletics have contributed greatly to the spirit of community on campus…powerfully uniting students, faculty and alumni behind a common passion" (p.59).

Benefits to the Campus Community

Legendary Alabama football coach Paul "Bear" Bryant once stated, "it's hard to rally around a math class" (Hunter, 2004, p. 11A). It is important to acknowledge the impact that athletics has on campuses where the popularity of sports programs is a major interest for students. Sports generate spirit and pride that, in turn, generate community amongst students. This is not to say that institutions that have strong athletic programs are any better than schools that do not, nor does it imply that students with teams to follow have a better undergraduate experience than students whose interests may lie elsewhere. Rather, the experiences and attitudes of students who are attracted to institutions with a strong tradition of athletics are unique and should be acknowledged as a critical component of

their student experience. Athletics play a key role in shaping the campus environment at these institutions. College sports are one of the great unifying forces in higher education. The sight of tens of thousands of students, linked arm in arm and singing their alma mater at the conclusion of a game is a memory that many students will treasure for a lifetime.

At some traditionally athletic institutions, coaches may be more recognizable figures to the student body than the school's president. Although this happens on occasion, it is unfair to focus only on those individuals whose actions attract negative attention. What is unique about many of these figures is that when put in such a position of power, they often return the favor to their schools. For example, Coach Joe Paterno—head football coach at Penn State—and his wife have been instrumental in championing new construction and donating money to various projects on campus. One such project was the construction of the new main library, named after Coach Paterno. He has also served as the vice chairperson of the $352 million Campaign for Penn State, and together with his wife, made a $1 million donation for the creation of an all-faith center on campus (Antonacci, 1998).

Alumni associations, with missions of maintaining lifelong connections between students and their alma mater, are direct beneficiaries of this phenomenon. Following graduation, alumni may move hundreds or thousands of miles away from their institutions, but athletics provides a means of connection. Furthermore, when collegiate athletic contests are tied with annual events such as class reunions or homecoming celebrations, alumni participation increases. The Ohio State Alumni Association boasts over 125,000 members and over 400,000 living alumni of the institution and plans an annual Alumni Reunion Weekend (K. Bickle, personal communication, October 27, 2008). In the past, this event has alternated between the spring and the fall homecoming weekend. Compared with the years when the event was held in the spring, the association staff has noticed a sizeable increase in attendance when football game tickets were included in the weekend's festivities.

Student Affairs' Current Involvement

While there are negative aspects to college athletics, the positive qualities are more numerous. Many of these cited problems are correctable and present an opportunity for student affairs professionals to step in and make a difference for student-athletes, the undergraduate student body, and for all fans who support a particular team. One recommendation is for student affairs divisions to collaborate with athletic departments to implement programs such as the CHAMPS Life Skills Program (Challenging Athletes' Minds for Personal Success). This program was born through a collaborative relationship between the NCAA Foundation

and the Division 1A Athletic Directors' Association in an effort to provide support for all student-athletes. The philosophy behind this program supports the holistic development of the student-athlete, not focusing strictly on their academic or athletic ability. According to NCAA (2008), "the CHAMPS Life Skills program was created to support the student-athlete development initiatives of NCAA member institutions and to enhance the quality of the student-athlete experience within the context of higher education" (Program section, para. 1). Some of the goals of this program are to "promote student-athletes' ownership of their academic, athletic, career, personal and community responsibilities, foster an environment that encourages student-athletes to effectively access campus resources," and "encourage the development of character, integrity and leadership skills" (Program section, para. 2). Within these specific goals, student affairs professionals can get involved and support the athletic department in their mission of full student-athlete development. As of June 2008, there were 330 Division I institutions (including the University of Vermont), 155 Division II institutions, and 141 Division III institutions implementing the CHAMPS Life Skills program. With so many institutions applying this program, the gap that still exists between student affairs, higher education administrators, and athletic departments is surprising.

Both athletic departments and student affairs professionals aim to see student-athletes succeed inside and outside of the classroom. They help students develop into ambitious, well-rounded, hard-working critical thinkers. How can we, as student affairs and athletics professionals, work together to yield the most productive, efficient, and valuable service to our students? The Life Skills program is definitely a start, but what more can be done? How can we begin to build and foster a relationship to provide a seamless learning experience for our students?

Vanderbilt University has taken a radically creative approach and restructured their athletic department. In 2003, then Chancellor E. Gordon Gee, decided that the obligations student-athletes had to their teams often prevented them from being a part of the other student experiences on campus. He disbanded the athletic department and placed supervision of athletics under the control of the Division of Student Life. Administrators rearranged student-athlete practice schedules to ensure they could attend classes more easily, have more options in declaring majors, and even participate in experiences such as study abroad. Many viewed this change as Vanderbilt giving up being competitive in the South East Conference, but 5 years later the results have been notable. NCAA President Myles Brand supported the decision, noting it was a healthy solution for reintegrating student-athletes into the campus (Pope, 2008). Jensen Lewis, a baseball player and 2006 graduate now in the Major Leagues remarked, "You feel as much a part of someone winning a concerto competition as they feel part of you winning a baseball game" (p. 1). Statistically, the transformation has been a success

both academically and competitively.

The Lone Student Affairs Professional

All of this may seem overwhelming and larger than the single student affairs professional, but there are steps that can be taken on an individual level to work toward these goals of preparing student-athletes for personal and professional success following graduation. For example, we as student affairs professionals can begin to inquire more about this special student population through research and frequent interaction with student-athletes. Practitioners should solicit the expertise of personnel within athletic departments regarding the challenges and pressures that student-athletes face, as well as examine trends that they have observed within specific populations in order to begin building a working professional relationship. The more knowledge that is gained about the experiences, structure, and implementation within the athletic department, the better equipped student affairs professionals are to evaluate and assess the universality and accessibility of the current practices and services in place on campus. Do current services truly cater to all student populations, and do the professional staff within these services have any foundational knowledge of the challenges that student-athletes face?

Once practitioners have a clearer idea of the specific needs of this population, expertise can be offered to professionals within athletic departments, whether they are coaches, advisors, or other personnel. With the extensive education that student affairs practitioners have in student development and systemic approaches to institutional change and improvement, there are many services these professionals can offer. Examples include, but are not limited to, advising the athletic department on how to create, implement, and sustain a more student-centered approach to their current programming efforts. Practitioners may consult with athletic department staff to provide targeted programs and services to student-athletes dealing with high-risk issues such as alcohol use among teams (Brenner & Swanik, 2007). Additionally, they can provide athletic departments with resources that can better prepare them for questions that the student-athletes may have concerning issues outside of the athletic arena.

Not only can student affairs professionals act as consultants to athletic programs and personnel, but they can also take a more proactive and intentional approach to working with athletic departments on creating future programs that address the more prominent issues facing student-athletes. Practitioners should investigate why student-athletes do not seek out services offered by student affairs and how programming can be altered to become more inclusive. Collaboration on future efforts will show student-athletes that they have the necessary support not just from their coaches, but from student affairs staff as well. By initiating regular conversations with athletic department personnel, student affairs professionals can begin to bridge the gap between the two departments.

With all of the positive contributions that athletics can offer, the strides that have already been made between the student affairs and athletic departments, and the potential that still exists, there is hope to spark conversation across divisions. With the help of the athletic departments, student affairs professionals will be better able to harness the energy that the student body possesses for a more involved and active campus climate. With the help of student affairs professionals, athletic departments will be able to better influence student culture through educational opportunities regarding alcohol consumption, inclusion, and healthy competition. Unfortunately, this is a collaboration that has too long been dormant in the United States system of higher education. By requiring a new approach, an open mind, and a pilot program similar to those demonstrated by Vanderbilt University and the University of Vermont, one can awaken a partnership that yields positive and productive results that all can benefit from, no matter where one's allegiances lie on game day.

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Critical Race Theory and the Landscapes of Higher Education

Frank Michael Muñoz

As a locus of mass acculturation, the American college campus is uniquely suited to impact the lives of millions of students each year. Drawing on the framework of critical race theory (CRT) and the professional practice of campus planning, this analysis suggests that campus buildings and landscapes have a role in maintaining and perpetuating American racism. Guided by CRT's anti-racist and color-aware tenets, this analysis offers CRT as a lens through which campus planners and architects can (re)envision their work and roles on campus. Suggestions include strategies and tools for campus planners and educators.

The landscape of the college campus is a site of both the imagined and lived realities of contemporary Americans. Each year millions of students traverse the grounds of a diverse range of institutions of higher education. In doing so they engage in a reciprocal relationship with these landscapes; their experiences are shaped, in part, by the terrain they traverse and the buildings they occupy and these physical elements are in turn shaped through continued use. This complementary relationship is one in which the ideas and actions of people shape and are shaped by the physical environments of the campus.

As sites of mass acculturation, lessons about what it means to be American and who matters are taught to college students alongside their daily academic endeavors (Dober, 1992). In more critical terms, American schools are seen as "principal sites for the production and naturalization of myths and ideologies that systematically disorganize and neutralize minority cultural identities" (McCarthy, 1988, p. 163). In this view, higher education is suited to impact millions of individuals. Furthermore, increasingly diverse campus communities reinforce the need to critically address issues of equity and inclusion within the academy. As a vital component of any college or university, the built forms and landscapes of a campus warrant such careful examination.

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Drawing upon the field of critical race theory (CRT) and the established theories and practices of campus design and planning, this work seeks to realign the gaze of campus communities. It examines the contemporary and historical landscapes of institutions of higher education and, guided by the tenets of CRT, suggests ways to improve understandings of campus dynamics while contributing to the design of more inclusive educational environments. This instructive theoretical framework merges CRT and architectural practice to offer a new lens through which one may view and understand college and university campuses while increasing their inclusivity.

To fully appreciate the rich analysis that CRT can provide, this work will first recount trends in current campus planning practices, including the ecological perspective advanced by Strange and Banning (2001). An account of the origins and components of CRT will follow. Finally, these two realms will be explored in tandem, highlighting the importance of CRT in the construction and maintenance of inclusive and educationally purposeful environments.

Campus Architecture, Planning, and the Ecological Perspective

Campus planning is an interdisciplinary process that often involves multiple constituencies. From the board of trustees and state legislators, to students and grassroots organizers, committees and individuals involved in campus planning must respond to the needs of varied constituents. Even after a project has been completed, planners and architects will be asked to explain their rationale, and their designs will be constantly reinterpreted. Considerable guidance for campus planners emerges from the fields of architecture, landscape design, and planning. These professional practice guides are often impersonal and emphasize elements of style, the role of infrastructure, and the importance of strategically placed green space to creating aesthetically pleasing and functional designs (Dober, 1992; Kenney, Dumont, & Kenney, 2005; Knell & Latta, 2006).

Understanding the importance of extending the analysis of campus environments beyond aesthetic and physical considerations, Strange and Banning (2001) elaborated upon the ecological perspective, a spatial-educational theoretical framework that orients spatial analysis toward the campus environment and its inhabitants. The perspective's analysis of educational environments identifies four essential elements of campus environments: (a) physical components, both natural and created; (b) human features, conveyed through aggregated characteristics; (c) organizational structures and designs; and (d) the constructed or perceived environments and meanings attributed to them (Strange, 2003). Together, these elements influence the behavior of campus community members. Therefore, architects must fully understand and carefully analyze each component in order to achieve an educationally purposeful environment.

Strange and Banning (2001) have identified safety and inclusion as components of the student experience impacted by the campus environment. From campus planning traditions emerge physical spaces and human aggregates capable of promoting or undermining the safety of environments. The structural diversity of a campus contributes to students' sense of safety and inclusion, yet students who do not fit the dominant characteristics of their campus community, such as racial or ethnic minorities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) individuals, and differently-abled individuals, often experience hostile campus environments. As the diversity of college and university environments increases, it is important to understand why certain groups of students interpret them as hostile, unwelcoming, and unsafe. Campus planners seeking to create safe, inclusive environments must use physical and psychological perspectives to achieve these ends (Kenney et al., 2005).

Unfortunately, both professional guides and educational theory have historically neglected research concerning race and the college landscape. Most work, especially Strange and Banning's (2001), has discussed some aspects of inclusion and diversity on the college campus. However, these cursory glances often speak in generalities about feelings of inclusion and safety rather than identifying forces, such as institutionalized racism, that affect students in collegiate environments. This lack of focus around issues of campus environments and landscapes can be partially remedied through an analysis guided by critical race theory.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework and movement that is politically committed to examining contemporary social structures, thoughts, and principles with a focus on highlighting their role in the construction and maintenance of social domination and subordination (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In essence, it is a vantage point that privileges the subordinated by seeking to underscore the myriad ways in which modern systems support and perpetuate racist ideologies and practices in America. Developed by activists and scholars, this movement draws its origins from the field of critical legal studies. As early as the mid-1970s, lawyers, legal scholars, organizers, and others began to focus on the Civil Rights Movement's loss of momentum and decay in some instances (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Having identified that strategies were needed to help combat the strong racist undercurrents that dominated mainstream political and legal arenas, an interdisciplinary group began to fashion the early tenets of the still unnamed field.

According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), CRT subsumes many of the issues more conventional racial and civil rights conversations include, but it resituates them in a context that includes "economics, history, context, group- and self-

interest, and even feelings and unconscious" (p. 3). Denying the legitimacy of colorblindness in the anti-racism movement, Delgado and Stefancic (2001) assert that ignoring race allows individuals to ignore all but the most overt racist acts, permitting more subtle and insidious acts to remain unnamed and unchallenged. Central to the color-awareness that CRT advocates are six basic tenets that Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, and Crenshaw (1993) extract from early legal studies in the 1970s. These basic principles guide the antiracist work of the movement:

1. Critical race theory recognizes that racism is endemic to American life.
2. Critical race theory expresses skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, color blindness, and meritocracy.
3. Critical race theory challenges ahistoricism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis.
4. Critical race theory insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society.
5. Critical race theory is interdisciplinary.
6. Critical race theory works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression. (p. 6)

As CRT grew among legal scholars and activists, it also branched away from its legal roots and asserted its relevance in other fields of study. In the mid-1990s, scholars of education first encountered CRT when Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) demonstrated that CRT could help educators understand some prevalent educational inequities (Dixson, 2006). Though scholars of education and critical race theory approach the topics in different ways, their work focuses intently on lending voice to the experiences of students and scholars of color (Teranishi, 2002; Yosso, 2006), conceptions of equality in education (Rousseau & Tate, 2003), and the pitfalls of colorblindness in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Work that fuses CRT with education seeks to liberate people of color and positively impact their educational experiences. As scholarship incorporating education and critical race theory enters its second decade, there remains great space for this work to develop.

Critical Race Theory, the Architect, and the College Campus

Scholars of critical race theory have yet to turn their analysis toward the physical landscapes of America. Much contemporary architecture and planning work that focuses on issues of race and gender address professional duties to recruit qualified women and students of color and provide access to fair-workplace practices (Anthony, 2001; Coleman, Danze & Henderson, 1996). This research focuses on the identities of the architects while ignoring the substance of their work. Recently, however, an emerging scholarship that focuses on the relationship be-

tween built space and race has shifted the critical lens back toward the spaces and boundaries in which Americans live (Barton, 2001; Grandison, 1999; Wilkins, 2007). Drawing from these works, the following analysis will apply the aforementioned tenets of critical race theory to extend the lessons of these works to the landscape of the American campus.

Critical Race Theory and the Landscapes of Higher Education

The six tenets that Matsuda et al. (1993) identified as central to the work of CRT serve as important foundations for examining the landscape of the college campus. Following is an analysis of campus planning and architecture guided by these tenets.

CRT recognizes that racism is endemic to American life

Recognizing that racism is an integral part of the organization of American society, CRT affirms that the question is not one of who or what serves to subordinate individuals based on race. Rather, it seeks to explain how everyday artifacts, values, interests, and ideas serve as mechanisms of racism. The built space and landscapes of higher education do not escape this scrupulous gaze. As manifestations of American values and educational priorities, the residence halls students sleep inside, the greens they laze upon, and the classrooms they learn within are each steeped in the machinations of American racism. Only from this fundamental assumption can the following constructs of CRT operate and provide guidance.

CRT expresses skepticism toward claims of neutrality, objectivity, color blindness, and meritocracy

CRT rejects claims that the inanimate structures college students live within are racially neutral. As objects of intense planning and sites of focused architectural collaboration, residence halls, classrooms, and student centers are hardly neutral sites. Instead, they are locations that frequently perpetuate and reward White-normative behavior. Bolted-down seats that prevent collaboration and conversation and thin walls that prevent lively conversation are physical features of many classrooms that reinforce White-normative behavior. In these classrooms, behavior is policed not only by the gaze of the professor and students, but also by the limitations imposed by the physical spaces themselves (O'Brien, 2006). These oft-subtle features of the classroom can cumulatively contribute to a "chilly climate," the additive effect of persistent acts of subtle racism, for non-White students on campus (Strange & Banning, 2001). Recently, architects and critical theorists have begun to discuss the pervasive colorblindness that haunts their field, and assert that increased awareness and new approaches to design are

necessary to understand how race is embedded in architecture (Cripps, 2004; Wilkins, 2007). CRT demands that college planners and architects have a place in this conversation, as they too are involved in the creation and maintenance of spaces and places that perpetuate American racism.

CRT challenges ahistoricism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis

The historical context of the college campus provides important information about where the institution has been and where it is going. Often, traditions and values are drawn from institutional histories but lack historical accuracy. CRT values revisionist histories that more accurately convey the stories of marginalized individuals on college campuses. As campuses revise collegiate histories, marginalized groups take an equal, if not primary, role in the accounts. Though painful tales of oppression and exclusion may surface, campus planners and architects can seize these opportunities to celebrate the oft-forgotten contributions of people of color uncovered in these efforts. These accounts also provide valuable insight into planning traditions that may, upon review, require revision. Furthermore, as colleges map the changing landscapes of their campuses, changes will reflect the evolving values and priorities of their institutions.

One important area for revisionist history to explore is the naming of campus buildings. Campus community members may be disheartened to learn that they live or attend classes in buildings named for individuals whose recognized contributions and values are in direct conflict to their own. In one such example, the University of Virginia's Barringer Wing of the school's medical center is named after Paul B. Barringer, a proponent of scientific racism and the eugenics movement (Cristol, 2005). The largely uncontested presence of this name and others on campus could be interpreted as a lack of institutional commitment to creating an inclusive campus environment.

At Indiana University - Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), a campus housing initiative sparked the construction of many new student residences. Recognizing that building names impact university communities, the school sought to "reclaim the history and culture of the space and place that [it] currently occupies" (Whitney & Mullins, 2003, p. 5). Consideration of the campus' history and the significance of building names led to the Board of Trustees of Indiana University approving the purposeful naming of 22 buildings; 17 of which recognize the lasting contributions of African-American individuals and women. As current and future community members traverse the landscape of this institution, the names they encounter and histories they learn belong to individuals whose gender or race often exclude them from or malign them through institutional memory. CRT on the college campus seeks to illuminate these untold stories about marginalization and oppression in an effort to liberate the oppressed and

dismantle the racist status quo.

CRT insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin

Vital to CRT is the power and importance of historically-silenced voices of color. Seeking to give voice to the experiences and knowledge of people and communities of color, campus planners embracing CRT as a guide for practice would seek the unique and valuable voices of color on campus. Seeking the knowledge and experiences of community members of color, planners, and architects can elicit information about feelings of safety, inclusion, and comfort on campus. This act of storytelling cannot be limited by White conventions and should be performed face-to-face. For people of color, the act of sharing these experiences, known as counterstorytelling, with those that adversely impact them can contribute positively to their psychological well-being (Dixson, 2006). Furthermore, seeking the experiences of marginalized individuals on grounds elicits information that is often lost in broad, campus-wide surveys.

In these stories, the intersections of multiple identities (intersectionality) may become clear in a way that only face-to-face exchange will allow. These narratives often challenge commonly held beliefs about campus realities and may expose White planners and architects to informal spaces that remain unnamed or unmapped. These counterspaces, formal and informal, social and academic spaces, created and inhabited by marginalized individuals e.g. "the Black bus stop" or "Black eating time," are theorized by Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) to be critical sites of resistance to insidious racism on college campuses. Through counterstorytelling, the existence of counterspaces on campus points to the spatial needs of students of color. Only through these counterstories can campus planners and architects accurately gauge the dynamics of an institution and work effectively toward eliminating landscape and architecture-based racism.

CRT is interdisciplinary

Both CRT and campus planning draw on multiple veins of discourse to form their ideologies. As the field of education has begun to delve into the realm of CRT, so too can campus planners and architects. Drawing from the work of Strange and Banning (2001) for educational, psychological, and sociological discourses, campus planners can begin to craft more educationally purposeful spaces. Infusing their planning and design with the values and structure offered by CRT, planners and architects can create college landscapes that are more inclusive, representative of the realities of American life, and stewards of more socially just college environments. Diversifying planning committees involves including students and faculty from a variety of academic and personal backgrounds while

eliciting counterstories from a multitude of campus constituencies. Mentioned earlier, The Building Names Project at IUPUI was a collaboration of student affairs administrators, faculty from several departments, students, staff, alumni, and community members. The diverse composition of this planning group allowed them to draw upon the expertise and perspectives of their community. CRT encourages campus planners to routinely traverse disciplinary and organizational boundaries. As a practice, this approach is an important part of the elimination of oppression on campus, the final tenet.

CRT works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of ending all forms of oppression

The tenets of CRT collaboratively seek the elimination of racial oppression. In addition, CRT aims to affect other forms of oppression through its own efforts to address racism. Within the realm of campus planning there is room to devote attention to actively designing and constructing college landscapes that are inclusive and promote equality of process and outcome for students from marginalized social groups. Wilkins (2007) speculates that, void of critical examination, architects, as "space-[shapers]" and "place-[makers]" will "remain complicit in the racialization of the built environment" (p. 25). Identifying "theoretical analysis" and "activist practice" as essential components to overcoming the perpetuation of racism through architecture and planning, Wilkins (2007) asserts that an "activist architecture [is] one that not only redefines architecture and architect, but that is worthy of the discipline's enormous gifts/abilities to make lives better" (p. 207).

As campus planners and architects seek to align themselves with institutional values of inclusion and justice, they should seek guidance from the tenets of critical race theory. Other critical social theories, such as queer theory, feminism, Latino and Asian critical thought, and critical White studies, will assert their role in these efforts as campus planners respond to multiple identities and marginalities of students on their campuses. As campus planners and architects become aware that they are complicit in the systematic marginalization of people of color, critical race theory offers guidance as they seek to undermine the oppression in which they previously participated. From exclusive college campuses to inclusive structures and landscapes, critical race theory offers higher education a pathway for (re)envisioning its future.

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Writing as Disclosure Therapy For Students: An Analysis of Technique

Jesse Wingate

In recent years, the mental health of students on college and university campuses has grown increasingly important to student affairs professionals and counselors. Unresolved mental health concerns such as stress, anxiety, and depression can develop into physical ailments, thus causing greater threat to students' health and wellbeing on college campuses. Students often lack the ability to cope healthily to stressors and mental health ailments that subsequently affect their overall well-being. This article will address the benefits of writing as a form of disclosure, while briefly introducing ways that students assuage symptoms of stress, depression, and anxiety. Through the consideration of journaling techniques utilized by psychologists today, this article will introduce student affairs practitioners and counselors to techniques in which writing can be therapeutic in daily practices.

Over the past 10 years there have been numerous conversations pertaining to the mental health of students at colleges and universities across the United States. From depression to anxiety, back pain to nausea, the prevalence of mental health issues and their physical side effects are taking a front seat with students in the classroom. Many times, students who have mental health issues also suffer from physical ailments such as nausea, headaches, and back pains, which make mental health issues even more of a concern for student affairs professionals. In a survey conducted by the American College Health Association (ACHA) in 2007, an astounding 64% of students surveyed declared that they had feelings of sadness in the previous 12 months, and 52% reported feeling hopeless as well. As these trends persist, it becomes increasingly apparent that counselors and student affairs professionals must adapt to these situations and explore new techniques and strategies to address mental health issues on campus. Though student affairs practitioners are not licensed counselors, they serve a primary purpose in receiving students' disclosure regarding relationships, anxiety, stress, depression, and myriad health-related issues. This article will survey various methods of disclo-

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sure in which students engage and further develop the case for prompted writing as a form of therapy in counseling college students.

The Call for Disclosure

Disclosure is simply defined as a way of revealing personal information that may be troublesome or stressful to an individual. Traditional-age college students (i.e., those between the age of 18 and 24 years old) endure a variety of stressors during the course of their college experience. Stress is known to increase levels of anxiety, create poor time-management skills, cause physical and mental exhaustion as well as the onset of depression. There is not one causal link that relates high levels of stress to maladaptive behavior, but it is popularly believed that it is a significant factor in the binge-drinking trends and other drug use activities adopted by students on college campuses.

Mental health issues are cumbersome and are comparable to the weight of heavy textbooks in students' bags. A bag with many textbooks will contribute to eventual back and shoulder problems. Nevertheless, college and university students today carry much more than books in their bags. Students are carrying issues and personal ailments that affect their health in a variety of ways. The American Psychiatric Association has reported that one in four people will experience a depressive episode before the age of 24 (American Psychiatric Association, n.d.). Taking this into consideration, and coupling national mental health data with the concurrent stressors of daily collegiate life, students must be provided with an opportunity to empty their bags.

There remains a question as to how students can positively develop healthy habits that would enable them to unload their stressors in a productive way. For many years, students have sought out quick fixes to their problems. At such a formative time in their lives, it is common to see students experimenting with drugs, alcohol, and promiscuous sexual activity. These actions merely provide temporary relief from the onerous mental health issues that may be consuming them. The temporary satisfaction of engaging in such activities may lighten the heavy bag for many students, but they do not suggest promising health implications.

While there is no definitive link between the statistics and the prevalence of mental illness in college age students, it does raise questions regarding disclosure. Are students turning to alcohol and drugs to relieve themselves from stress, depression, anxiety, or other mental illnesses because they are not comfortable seeking direct mental health assistance? In a report published by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, 41% of college students admitted to drinking heavily, which was defined as five or more consecutive drinks at one time in the 2 weeks prior to the survey (Johnson, O'Malley, Bachman & Schulenberg, 2008). The same

report listed that approximately 35% of college students also reported having used illicit drugs while in college. Although there may be many factors contributing to a student's use of drugs or alcohol, the belief that such behavior is a coping mechanism for mental health issues has been well-documented (Williams & Clark, 1998; Zaleski, Levey-Thors, Schiaffino, 1998).

Practicing Disclosure

There is an age-old stigma attached to seeking professional help for suspected mental illness. College students' schedules are undeniably overwhelming; therefore, the excuses for not seeking professional help are certainly justifiable. Much of students' stress comes as a result of being over-involved in extracurricular activities and academics. Student affairs professionals certainly notice this trend and agree that a response is absolutely necessary. A student affairs professional need not sift through literature in order to recall an instance in which a student has disclosed something personal or traumatic; this role, as a counselor of sorts, is a substantial function that individuals in the field already adopt. Students will often vent or relieve their stress through dialogue with a student affairs professional with whom they already have an established level of trust. Thus, these individuals are already on the receiving end when witnessing the disclosure of stressful events, or exposure of emotional conflict. Though student affairs professionals are assuming the role of make-shift counselors, it is imperative that students with significant mental health issues are referred to licensed counseling professionals on campuses.

Psychologists have found that there are distinct physiological, psychological, and emotional benefits to disclosing in counseling sessions (Smyth, Stone, Hurewitz, & Kaell, 1999; Kerner & Fitzpatrick, 2007). One of the biggest obstacles that a student struggling with mental health issues has to overcome is establishing a level of comfort with his, her, or hir therapist. Sometimes this can be difficult, especially if the student is unwilling to attend counseling in the first place. Students may limit their level of disclosure in a counseling session with the fear that their thoughts or emotions may be critically viewed, even by a counselor. Therapists and counselors on college campuses can be wholly beneficial to students who are grappling with mental health issues, yet students must first be willing to acknowledge the fact that they may need professional help and establish an adequate level of trust that provides them with comfort in the counseling setting.

Pennebaker (1990), in the text, "Opening Up," described the benefits of disclosure and the immense value associated with writing. He spent years examining the positive health effects associated with disclosure, particularly through writing. Pennebaker stated, "translating events into language and writing them down can reduce cognitive work in another way" (p. 109). In 1997, he asked a group of

participants in a study to write for 15 to 30 minutes a day for three to five days a week. After analyzing the results, he concluded that "when individuals write or talk about personally upsetting experiences in a laboratory setting, consistent and significant health improvements are found" (p. 164).

Pennebaker's work has set foundations in social psychology with alternative forms of counseling therapy techniques. With resounding success, the simple act of disclosing has transformed the way that people of all ages interact with secrets and traumatic life experiences. Many students believe the practice of simply keeping a journal is ineffective as a response to stress, anxiety, or depression because the results are not immediate; however, benefits do exist. Since the mid-1990s, scholars across disciplines have been experimenting with Pennebaker's beliefs on expressive writing therapy. Smyth et al. (1999) conducted an experimental study to examine whether or not writing about stressful life events had an effect on patients with asthma and rheumatoid arthritis. They found that patients who engaged in writing activities for four months had notable positive changes in comparison to those in a control group who had not participated in writing exercises. Thus, if writing in a journal can be beneficial to patients with diagnosed physical ailments, it is likely that the effects on mental health would be similar.

As psychologists and medical professionals continue to practice counseling on the mind and body, college students are continuing to augment the percentage of 18 to 24 year olds suffering from mental health issues such as depression (American Psychiatric Association, n.d.). Though many counseling centers already encourage students to journal or express themselves in positive and creative ways, there is still a population of students with mental health issues who do not seek help unless their physical health becomes jeopardized in some way. The following section will introduce alternative self-help techniques that involve disclosure as well as their benefits, many of which traditional-aged college students may not be aware.

Methods of Disclosure

Although some students wish to keep their secrets private, it is becoming apparent that there are some who desire to learn what causes them worry, stress, and sadness. A question that student affairs professionals may ask is: How often do students walk into the office and disclose something personal about their lives? Whether they speak nonchalantly of their stressful week or through tears in regard to a loved one or relationship, students confide in others around them and inadvertently participate in a form of disclosure that is purging and cathartic. Frequency of face-to-face disclosure is evident in student affairs practice, yet the barriers with which students guard themselves still remain. Men, for instance, are traditionally less likely to seek out counseling than women (Berger, Levant,

McMillan, Kelleher, & Sellers, 2005; Good & Wood, 1995) and may not feel as comfortable disclosing their stressors or mental health concerns with student affairs practitioners. Thus, the methods of disclosure are continuously changing and becoming more accessible to even the most reserved students.

Over the past decade, technological advances have changed colleges and universities in a unique way. In the late 1990s, the Internet entered the arena of media available for student disclosure. As the use of instant messaging programs, social networking sites, massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs), and online journals became popular, students began to address their mental health woes in a technological universe. Anderson (2001) stated that one of the most common reasons students use the Internet in college is to communicate with friends and family from home. This is not surprising, as students who are in college often struggle to find a connection with individuals who are already familiar with their history, hence their inclination to keep in close contact with family and friends from home (Gemill & Peterson, 2006).

Another example of Internet disclosure is the online journal or blog. People from all over the world are updating online journals on a daily basis, many of whom disclose some of the darkest points of their lives. Participating students will share more about their lives in an online journal than they would in person to one of their closest family members or friends (Joinson, 2001). This is a phenomenon that can only be explored by analyzing the differences between online and face-to-face disclosure. For anyone who has written an angry or upsetting email, or found consolation from their woes by posting in a blog, this method of disclosure can be far easier than having to confront such issues face-to-face. Joinson found that it was less of a burden for individuals to disclose online because of the degree of visual anonymity and the text-based mode of communication. When considering the tenets of online disclosure, whether in an instant messaging program, online journal, or email message, it is important to examine the absence of emotion that usually comes with face-to-face interaction.

Student affairs practitioners and college counselors are witnessing the online disclosure phenomenon all over the world in a variety of ways. The text component of online communication permits students to control the situation and avoid any threatening response that may emerge from having disclosed personal information that is embarrassing or stigmatizing (Joinson, 2001). It is almost as though a person disclosing in an online journal is hoping for someone to read their most intimate thoughts and then respond to them in a non-threatening way, which is therapeutic in itself. The benefits of having an online journal are bountiful, in that the author reserves his/her/hir identity and manages the possibility of displaying personal information to those with whom they trust.

The role of technology on college campuses is essential, and student affairs practitioners can benefit from incorporating such methods of disclosure into their conversations with students. As technology becomes more interactive, student affairs practitioners and counselors have the ability to effectively acclimate themselves to the tech-savvy ways of traditional-age college students. It is particularly important to consider the actual act of disclosing to a person willing to receive and offer feedback on students' mental health concerns. As counseling centers experience annual increases in visits, it is important to consider the methods of therapy used beyond the realm of the closed door, 50-minute session. The following section will describe ways in which student affairs professionals and counseling centers can incorporate the practice of writing and disclosure therapy into meetings with students and will introduce benefits that can come from incorporating technology into general counseling practice.

Fusing Writing Techniques with Conversations

Student affairs professionals and counselors alike ask students to consider journaling or openly talking about their traumatic and stressful experiences. In some cases, a counselor or therapist may even ask to read over journal entries and offer constructive feedback to the student. Of course there is no definitive way of forcing a student to write in a journal, but there are some methods that can be employed in counseling sessions or conversations that will help students feel as though they are accomplishing something outside of the confines of their appointment or meeting.

Student affairs professionals who counsel students with mental health concerns should consider creating a plan to guide their conversations. Having a tangible product and mutual understanding of expectations in a meeting fosters an environment that is conducive to disclosure, which is why it is important to craft weekly goals or plans for the student to take with them as they leave a meeting. As the student prepares to leave, the student affairs professional or counselor should encourage them to write in a journal with a specific prompt. Professionals in the student affairs field should have the student write down a few questions that emerged from the counseling session and advise that he, she, or ze participate in at least 15 minutes of writing every day until the next session (Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999).

The essential component of this technique is prompting the student to partake in writing about acutely traumatic experiences that he/she/ze has had. As previously mentioned, students are more likely to seek out help if the mental health ailment manifests itself through somatic symptoms. While writing about traumatic events, experiences, or stressors may be difficult for many students, the act of disclosing becomes important for unloading the weight of mental health

concerns, much like lightening a backpack will reduce back and shoulder pain. It is important for students to conjure up the disturbing and most challenging thoughts and disclose those in a journal format. Having engaged in this activity, students can relieve themselves of carrying the unnecessary weight of their stressors and emotional experiences and are more likely to improve their mental health through rationalization of their emotions in narrative form (Pennebaker, 1990). Pennebaker wrote:

> Once we see the psychological basis for a particular health problem, we can then use the health problem as a signal of distress. By focusing our energy on reducing the cause of the distress, we more quickly resolve the underlying psychological issues that we may not have known were issues in the first place. (p. 19)

In other words, when students are able to realize the cause of their back pain, or headaches, or lack of sleep, they can consciously make an effort to address this on paper or in counseling rather than letting it recycle itself within their minds.

Conclusion

Students persist through their struggles in the collegiate environment and often partake in activities that are dangerous (e.g., binge drinking, drug abuse, and unsafe sex) as ways to cope with the daily stressors in their lives. Amidst these activities, students suffering from depression, anxiety, and stress are finding ways to disclose through the use of technology and in conversations on a daily basis. With the help of counseling centers, students can develop healthy disclosure techniques in order to better their health and coping mechanisms. By writing about deeply personal issues, traumatic experiences, or simple stresses, students are likely to experience improved clarity of mind and an understanding of the causes for their depressive episodes, anxiety, and stress. With mindful awareness of such issues, they can then begin to take proactive steps towards a more sustainable and healthy lifestyle for the remainder of the collegiate experience.

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V

THE MORAL CONVERSATION

The Moral Conversation, a concept developed by Dr. Robert J. Nash, is a scholarly genre of writing and discussion dedicated to argumentative thought and critical dialogue. A significant component of the Moral Conversation is the analytical examination of a specific issue within higher education, reflecting on the complexities of the truths within the many arguments about the issue. Our goal in dedicating a section of *The Vermont Connection* to the Moral Conversation is to present articles that examine the multiple perspectives of a given theme.

The theme for this year's Moral Conversation is *There and Then, Here and Now; Reflection and Meaning Making in Student Affairs.*

The First-Generation Student Journey: Dismantling Obstacles to Success

Gretchenrae Callanta & Adam J. Ortiz

This article addresses the importance for student affairs professionals to have proficient knowledge of the issues facing first-generation college students. A first-generation college student, the child of parents who never attended or completed college, often faces much adversity due to the lack of cultural capital, familial animosity, confusion about socioeconomic status, and a shortage of institutional support. In most cases, the identity of a first-generation college student is entirely invisible to others unless the individual makes other people aware—an oftentimes embarrassing disclosure. The Documenting Effective Education Practice (DEEP) project "examined the everyday workings of a variety of educationally effective colleges and universities to learn what they do to promote student success" (Project DEEP Overview, n.d.). Campuses involved in Project DEEP focus specifically on first-generation students. In this article, the authors will explore the methodology and practices of these campuses, share personal stories as first-generation students, and highlight the importance of student affairs professionals who focus on the support and development of first-generation college students.

Background

First-generation college students are a difficult group to visibly identify. Whereas many marginalized identities are often visible due to physical identifiers such as gender or race, the first-generation college student exists in a world where, in most circumstances, he/she/ze must actively choose to disclose his/her/hir first-generation status. Scholarly research and personal experience has demonstrated that first-generation students face a high level of difficulty upon enter-

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Adam J. Ortiz is a first-year HESA student who received his B.A. in English from Wheaton College (MA) in 2005. His experiences as a bi-racial, first-generation student have led him to focus largely on the schism that exists between higher education and traditionally underrepresented identity groups. Adam aspires to one day become a faculty member and maybe even write a good book of poetry.

ing college. As future student affairs professionals and first-generation students ourselves, we have chosen to write about the importance of student affairs in the lives of this frequently ignored and potentially invisible minority group.

While institutions of higher education have traditionally been reserved for the cultural elite, institutional types such as junior colleges, community colleges, private colleges, online colleges, and an emphasis on diversity and access have opened up many doors to higher education for first-generation students. As a result, the attendance rate of first-generation students is at its highest level ever. In 1994, 59% of first-generation college hopefuls enrolled in some type of higher education institution within 2 years of graduating high school (Choy, 2001). As the numbers continue to climb, student affairs professionals must actively seek these students out and provide them with the support necessary to successfully complete a degree in higher education. First-generation students who attend 4-year colleges are twice as likely to drop out of school than are students with at least one parent who has earned a Bachelor's degree (Choy, 2001). This startling statistic should serve as a warning sign that without proper support, first-generation college students face major roadblocks on the way to graduating. Student affairs professionals must be proactive in supporting first-generation students through as many functional areas as possible. Failing to do so will undoubtedly lead to the disadvantage of a struggling minority in higher education.

Project DEEP

Some of the most common difficulties faced by first-generation college students include: lack of academic preparedness prior to entering college, lack of admissions and financial aid prowess, lack of familial support, and a lack of general navigational ability within the higher education experience (Vargas, 2004). Since higher education is foreign to most first-generation students, healthy socialization, pre-college preparation, and confidence are constant struggles. The Documenting Effective Educational Practice (DEEP) project, conducted by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), assessed how institutions provided the services and support needed to ensure student success—specifically to those who identify as first-generation students. This project was formed "to examine the everyday workings of a variety of educationally effective colleges and universities to learn what they do to promote student success" (Project DEEP Overview, n.d.). Diverse types of campuses were involved in this project: large, small, public, private, selective, and non-selective. The campuses involved in Project DEEP have had remarkable success in maintaining increased graduation rates and ensuring all campus community members are invested in the success of their students by providing efficient while effective services and building intentional and long-lasting relationships.

Effective institutions have six common factors and conditions that contribute to their success: a "living" mission and a "lived" education philosophy, unshakeable focus on student learning, clear pathways to student success, environments adapted for education enrichment, improvement-oriented campus culture, and shared responsibility for educational quality and student success (Project DEEP Overview, n.d.).

Our research will delve into Project DEEP while exploring our own higher education experiences as first-generation college students. One of us attended a DEEP campus while the other did not. Based on our experiences, we will make suggestions for how student affairs professionals can further enrich the time spent in higher education by those students who endure the struggles of the first-generation college student.

Adam's Story

I do not quite remember the exact moment I decided to apply for college. If memory serves me correctly, I believe the only sincere impetus I had for doing so was a whimsical fantasy I had of some day becoming an English professor—having no real concept of what that meant. Despite coming from a family where no one had attended college, my mother always encouraged me to embrace my imagination and strengthen my mind by reading. As a result, I became fond of introspective poetry as a teenager and, based primarily on cinematic portrayals, decided it would be pretty cool to be Professor Ortiz. I still do.

As I said, no one in my family has ever attended college. My father has spent his life working in the radio business while my mother has devoted her energy to creating a beautiful home and family life for her children. Both of them, in their fields of focus, have been successful. The most important lesson I have learned from my parents is that happiness comes from embracing what we as human beings are good at. It would not be hyperbole to state that for as long as I can remember, I have been both plagued and blessed with an overactive imagination and an obsession with recondite philosophical ideas. Again, based on what I had seen in movies like *The Dead Poets Society* and *Finding Forrester*, I felt that my home would be in academia.

Unfortunately, I did not know where to begin. Because of various factors, my high school education was completed through a state-sanctioned correspondence program—the same type of program in which peripatetic adolescent celebrities enroll. As a result, when the time came to start thinking about applying to college, I was clueless about where to begin. I did not even know what college *was*. I distinctly remember sitting around the dinner table one afternoon with my mother musing over what type of degree I should apply for. During this particu-

lar conversation, we came to the conclusion that a Bachelor's degree is an intro-level degree for men and figured the female equivalent must be a Bachelorette's degree. Thankfully, we realized we needed help and sought the assistance of a college admissions counselor advertised in the newspaper.

At our initial meeting, the counselor was shocked by how little I knew about the college process. When she asked if I wanted to go to a state or private school, I shrugged. When she asked what I wanted to major in, I told her I did not know what that meant. When she asked what type of school I was looking for, I told her I wanted to go to one where I could become an English professor. In retrospect, I cannot help but wonder if she doubted I could survive in such a place, having so little knowledge. She used foreign words like "FAFSA" (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) and "registrar." Again, I was clueless. Abysmally lost and disenchanted, I felt powerful discomfort and disbelief that I could ever fully understand the realm of higher education.

After our initial meeting, I gave up hope and started researching jobs that require no degree. I did not answer the counselor's follow-up phone calls, I did not work on applications, and I did not research schools. Every time I thought about doing so, I was reminded of the barrage of words I did not understand. Finally, one snowy night in December, I received a fiery telephone message from the counselor, informing me that her help was going to disappear if I did not take action immediately. She suggested, at the very least, that I visit Wheaton College—a school only 15 minutes from my house—and fill out their application. That night, I wrote a statement of purpose essay in which I described how I had fortuitously discovered Walt Whitman. My college experience, I always felt, would be equally providential.

The time I spent applying to Wheaton was tremendously emotional. Upon taking a campus tour of my future alma mater, I was overwhelmed with how peaceful a place the institution seemed to be. Located in the quaint town of Norton, MA, Wheaton is an archetypal old, private New England college, and has been used as a mock Harvard in a number of films. Among the brick buildings and ivory columns were students dressed in preppy winter attire, seemingly content within their comfortable, educated world. Every person I had the opportunity to speak to enthusiastically lauded their experiences at Wheaton College, noting that the pros outweighed the cons. One woman in particular, a student admissions interviewer, even went so far as to write me a personalized note after our talk, informing me that she had gone through pains to make sure the admissions office paid special attention to me. I would not know until studying student affairs, nearly 7 years later, how meaningful her action was.

Despite the high level of enthusiasm I felt for Wheaton, I felt a crushing blow the

moment my family received our FAFSA statement, indicating that our payment would be an amount that neither I nor my parents could realistically fathom. We were all floored—completely dumbfounded that anybody could afford to pay so much money. Again, I sank back into the hopeless feeling that my prospects of going to college were dim. I did not know about loans. I did not know about state schools. I did not understand community college options. I just knew that for a few weeks I had fantasized about some day wearing a Wheaton College sweater and getting that doctorate, and now the dream was over because of money. Still, I applied.

I was working at Barnes and Noble the day my decision letter arrived. My mom and sister got on the telephone and called me while I was at work, asking me if I wanted them to open up the envelope with a Wheaton logo on it. I recall saying something along the lines of, "Well, it doesn't matter anyway since we can't afford it. Go for it!" Within the next two minutes, my mom read me an acceptance letter, along with a notice informing me that I was being awarded an illustrious scholarship. I started crying because I was so overwhelmed with happiness. I immediately envisioned walking across the college green, book in hand, heading to class with those same students who were so enthusiastic when I visited.

I wish I had the space to detail all of my experiences at Wheaton, especially those that led me to become a graduate student studying higher education and student affairs. I learned a lot from an abundance of wonderful, influential people and ultimately feel as though I graduated with a high level of respect from both my peers and my mentors. Wheaton's status as a DEEP campus undoubtedly played a significant role in my success. Yet, I experienced a tremendous number of challenges. I will focus on those experiences that I feel were most related to my background as a first-generation student. These experiences have driven me to a firm belief that first-generation students are a frequently ignored identity group on college campuses, and need as much assistance from student affairs professionals as possible.

One of Wheaton's most effective practices, in my opinion, is its emphasis on the first-year experience. Prior to move-in day, incoming first-year students are required to read a social justice-related book and write a three-to-five-page reflection paper on what they found particularly interesting. Students also choose a first-year seminar course; an engaging class that serves as a semester-long introduction to the institution of higher education. The class facilitators make the courses intensely thought-provoking and also become the academic advisors for the group. I chose "Dracula, Frankenstein, and Mephistopheles: The Other in Film and Literature." Upon moving into Wheaton I learned that those of us who chose the class were also put in the same residence hall. The value of this practice, in my opinion, cannot be overstated. The situation we were in—taking a

first-year seminar with students who possessed similar interests and who shared a residence hall—created a feeling of solidarity that was crucial to our healthy adjustment. The experience developed a social support network and allowed most of us to find friendships that would last the duration of the college experience.

Despite Wheaton's exceptional policies, however, there were still considerable challenges. During the first week of classes I found myself disheartened and scared because I realized how little I knew about so many areas of academics. In an introductory writing class, for instance, my professor mentioned the importance of a strong thesis statement, at which point I raised my hand and asked what a thesis statement was. The looks on the faces of my classmates made me feel like the weakest person in the room. Throughout my first 2 years at college, this was a common occurrence. While one could argue that this was purely the result of my home schooling, there were countless moments where fellow students were familiar with concepts and had cultural knowledge because they had grown up with the information circulating in their families. Thankfully, my strengths were creativity and critical thinking; two floatation devices I used while learning how to swim in the sea of academics.

How little I knew about the world of college further demonstrated my lack of cultural capital. Over the course of my 4 years at Wheaton, I accrued a substantial amount of cultural capital from many people, but one person in particular helped "train" me in the ways of fitting into the college environment. My best friend, and also the first person I met in my residence hall, is a gentleman named Matthew Wolfson. During our initial meeting, Matthew playfully claimed to be an Aristocrat with a yearning to someday become a Dandy. Hearing this, I let out a chuckle and pretended to understand his joke. Upon looking up those words in the dictionary, I still did not grasp the humor. Regardless, Matthew became my closest ally, and through the course of 4 years he helped transform me from an awkward, first-generation novice into a refined young academic. He taught me how to dress "properly," the decorum of public dining, and how to use powerful words while speaking. People often use the film *Pretty Woman* to illustrate examples of accruing cultural capital. Vivian's transformation from a street prostitute to a posh "lady" has many parallels to my own journey from academic neophyte to well-informed graduate student.

Another area in which I struggled was reconciling my home and academic lives. My entry into the world of higher education meant an exit from the world of family, a common experience among first-generation students. Since neither I nor my parents had any idea what to expect in this experience, hurt feelings and misunderstanding formed a deep schism between us. While I was embarking on new and exciting adventures, my parents felt that I was abandoning them and rapidly becoming an academic snob. To a certain extent, they were right. As a

result of my own insecurities, I suddenly felt as though every ideological position I had been exposed to while growing up was incorrect and that the enlightened path could only be found within the confines of the intellectual mind. We often went weeks without speaking to one another, and when we did, it was almost always a superficial conversation. Simply put, I felt like my parents could not relate to my experiences and thus lost the desire to share them. It was not until commencement, when my parents playfully blew an air horn when my name was called, that I realized they were proud of my accomplishments in school. Fortunately, since then, we have reconciled our relationship and it was my mother who encouraged me the most to go to graduate school.

The most difficult element of college for me, as a first-generation student, was in knowing where to invest my time and energy. I knew I had to do well in classes. Aside from that, I received virtually no guidance in my decisions regarding my involvement. In most instances, my choices for extracurricular activities were accidental. For example, during my first year I got a job working in media services because I happened to bump into a recruiter looking for student employees. As a result, film editing became my campus job. With the sole intention of supporting my shy musician roommate, we both tried out for an a cappella group during sophomore year. Much to my surprise, I was selected. In addition, I wrote for the campus newspaper, acted in plays, produced the college president's tribute video, studied abroad, and for 2 years facilitated an education-based residential suite.

As enriching as many of these experiences were, they all served as an icy glass of water that would hit me in the face upon graduating. Had I come from a well-off family that supported the leisurely activities I chose to embrace in college, I probably would not have been so panicked while approaching commencement. Instead, I found myself holding a diploma, a student loan bill for $60,000, and a resume that included "singing in an a cappella group." Given the opportunity, however, I would not change my college experience. I was exposed to some dynamic thought that formed the essence of who I am today, even though I found difficulty even getting a job waiting on tables due to my lack of preparedness and practical guidance. These particular experiences were the direct result of being a first-generation student trying to navigate an institution rich in history and tradition. While Wheaton's DEEP status—with its emphasis on first-year development and mentorship—no doubt helped me succeed in college, I still feel as though there are other crucial needs that could have been addressed. I would have benefited from a basic introduction to higher education as an institution, as well as financial, career, and social guidance.

Gretchenrae's Story

Neither of my parents went to college, even though my mother's parents had

worked in higher education as a financial aid officer and as a faculty member. My mother has worked jobs here and there while taking care of three children. My father has worked as a mechanic with the Boeing Company since 1986. Even so, college was encouraged and, in some ways, expected in my family. Together they moved to the United States from the Philippines in hopes of providing what most Filipino immigrant parents want for their children: better education and job opportunities (Espiritu, 2003, p. 179). My parents emphasized the importance of furthering my education to create a better life for myself—better than what they could provide for me. At that time, their desire for a better life for me ultimately motivated me to pursue higher education.

There was a buzz around the concept of college created by my family and my high school teachers. I was formally introduced to college and the application process during my junior year of high school. The thought of college was pleasant until I met the application process. My senior year of high school, I was enrolled in a study hall class that focused on excellence in academia and assisted students in the college application process. I can clearly recall the feeling of unfamiliarity when it came time to seriously pursue college. It seemed to come so naturally for some of my peers. I assumed it would come naturally for me too.

The class gave me an opportunity to visit one of our local colleges where I got a glimpse of post-secondary education—the world that I had only dreamt about. I was eager to explore the mysteries of college life. I wanted to know more than what I had seen in the movies or what I had heard from teachers. The class took a trip to Western Washington University (WWU) that spring. When we unloaded the bus to meet our tour guide, I was immediately overwhelmed by the sights. My heart warmed. As I saw bits and pieces of campus, I closed my eyes and tried to envision myself as one of "them"—college sweatshirt on, textbook in hand, chatting about philosophy. I was going to be in college, and I committed myself to doing what it would take to get there. Little did I know, I was only starting my marathon run to higher education.

I opened my eyes, and reality hit me. I went from touring WWU to applying to colleges in a snap. The application process was foreign to me, like studying a different language. I did not know what a personal statement was or what required paperwork like the "FAFSA" meant. The process evoked a sense of doubt and self-consciousness. I doubted whether or not I was meant to go to college because I could barely fill out the paperwork. I questioned my strength in surviving the academic rigor and the intensities of college life.

I decided to apply to Seattle University. I had a close family friend attending, and I had heard good things about the institution. Although far-fetched, I dreamt of going to school out of state at Stanford University, Brown University, or New York University. Those were the big names in my head. My parents refused to allow me move out of state. Although I was expected to attend college, I felt forced to apply to schools close to home—similar to other Filipina women who are first-generation college students (Maramba, 2008). With that said, I knew that I could not get there anyway. Their refusal reinforced that.

I had very little familial support in college, let alone in the process of applying. It is common for children of parents who had not attended college to receive less help from their parents in applying to college (Choy, 2001). Their knowledge was limited. As my parents signed papers, they asked what each document was and what it meant. I described the bits and pieces of the document without really knowing them myself. It got to the point where they stopped asking me what they were signing, because we were all so frustrated by not knowing how to get through the process with ease. Their lack of investment in the application process rubbed off on me. It was tough to follow a new and unfamiliar process without the proper support—especially from the ones that had encouraged me from the beginning.

Things continued to go downhill when I received the results from my FAFSA statement. My Expected Family Contribution (EFC) was higher than we could afford. It was discouraging because I knew they could not pay for it. I had not received my notification letter yet, and my heart broke as my potential to be a Seattle University student slipped through my fingers.

The day I got my acceptance letter from Seattle University is still so clear to me—even five years later. My mother and I were in the car pulling up to the mailbox to check the mail before pulling into our driveway. I collected the mail, got back in the car, and started rifling through it in my lap. There was a large envelope from Seattle University addressed to me. I remember being told that if I received a large envelope it meant I got accepted. If I got a small envelope, it meant that I got rejected. I was ecstatic, to say the least. I ripped open the envelope, read the letter aloud, and screamed. I jumped out of the car and raced inside to tell my brothers and my father. Their reaction was one that I least expected. They replied with a mumbled, "okay." That was it. Like a poke to a bubble in mid-air, my excitement had burst.

The lack of enthusiasm from my family continued when I moved to college. As I said my goodbyes to my parents, I realized that I was moving onto something new. I was leaving part of my life behind. My relationship with my family slowly dwindled as I continued through my undergraduate career. As I began to excel, the distance between me and my family grew. Filipina women whose parents did not go to college believe that all their daughter does in college is "just study" (Maramba, 2008, p. 340). My parents thought I had nothing else to do. They

wanted me home every weekend to take care of the household and to disregard anything that had to do with college while visiting. So, I tucked my homework away every weekend for the first year. They held me back, and I fell behind. They did not know that I needed to study to get the degree that they wanted for me.

I struggled in all aspects of college life—academically, socially, and emotionally. I doubted myself in the classroom, and I did not feel like I was at the intellectual level of my peers. I am still weighted by those feelings of doubt and lack of intelligence. I constantly compared myself to "them" and fed myself the idea that I was not fit for college. There were many moments when I felt silenced because I could not articulate myself in the way my peers could. I skipped class frequently to take jaunts to downtown Seattle where I got lost in the crowds of people who succumb to retail therapy. Socially, I did not connect with my fellow floor mates in my residence hall. I spent a lot of time with my roommate who I had known since high school. I found security in her. In addition, I did not get involved in extracurricular activities. Traditional Filipino parents believe that extracurricular activities are a "waste of time" (Maramba, 2008, p. 340). I felt as if college clubs and organizations and the students involved in them were out of my league anyway. I felt inadequate, because I did not possess the experience or skills to engage with other students.

I was doggy-paddling through the waves of college life. I started my first job as an Office Assistant at our on-campus Career Development Center (CDC). I hid it from my parents for awhile, because they only wanted me to focus on my studies. I knew I needed the financial assistance. Working in the office turned out to be one of the best experiences of my undergraduate career. The office was invested in me—not just as a work-study, but as a person and college student. They provided an outlet for me to unpack the feelings I had about my transition into college and struggling in academia. They helped me navigate my way across campus and seek services that would help me write college-level papers, get connected to student organizations, and build relationships with my faculty members.

They also helped me see a different side of college life. I had been so caught up in the notion of college being a place where one gets a degree to get a high-paying job upon graduation. The staff introduced me to the concept of vocation which Palmer (2000) defined as "a calling that I hear" (p. 4). Knowing that I was the first in my family to go to college, they knew there was a fire for success burning within me. They could tell that the fire for success was being smothered by my lack of knowledge of how to navigate college. I could not focus on what it really meant for me to be in college. Little did I know that I would define the college experience not by education in order to get a good job, but by finding meaning in life and utilizing one's strengths.

In my second year at the CDC office, the director encouraged me to run for our student government, the Associated Students of Seattle University (ASSU). Serving as the Minority Representative on ASSU, I began my work with student affairs professionals and served on several university committees. While sitting down with our Dean of Students one day, he asked if I had thought about a career in student affairs. I had gotten so lost in trying to survive in the world of academia that I had not thought about what I was going to do after graduation. He encouraged me to attend the 2007 NASPA/ACPA Joint Conference and introduced me to the NASPA Undergraduate Fellows Program (NUFP). A key component of the program is connecting with a student affairs professional who serves as a mentor for the year. I found a mentor, applied, and was accepted into the program for the 2007-2008 academic year. The program and my mentor helped me make meaning of my undergraduate experience and uncover what I was being called to do—become a student affairs professional.

Student affairs had given so much to me as an undergraduate, and I wanted to be able to provide that kind of aid and guidance for others who were in my shoes. Student affairs is something that "I can't not do, for reasons I'm unable to explain to anyone else and don't fully understand myself but that are nonetheless compelling" (Palmer, 2000, p. 25). The values of social justice and holistic growth are very much complementary to my own. Ultimately, discerning student affairs as my vocation and having strong mentoring relationships led me to graduate school—something that had seemed so unattainable a couple of years before. It was the experience and the personal touch of a mentor that made it realistic for me.

It took me a couple of years, but I found my niche. The student affairs professionals at Seattle University played a significant role in the outcome of my college experience and saved me from falling into the depths of self-doubt. They recognized my potential and guided me on a path to discovering the type of work in which I would fulfill a growing passion.

Discussion & Implications for Student Affairs Professionals

Upon reflection of our respective struggles, we acknowledge that other first-generation students may not all share the same experiences that we have had. The practices we propose would be beneficial to those students who may endure the obstacles that both scholarly research and personal narrative have offered. These would begin to improve the experiences of first-generation students in college, on both DEEP and non-DEEP campuses. Not only will it help institutions create a more collaborative community internally, but it will also aid in the recruitment and retention of first-generation college students.

First, there should be an intentional, proactive influence on first-generation students as soon as they have been accepted into an institution. This could manifest itself in multiple ways. Schools should include the option for students to disclose on their applications if they are first-generation. Institutions should approach accepted students who have identified as such with a compassionate understanding that the student is beginning a daunting expedition into the unknown and may require assistance in various parts of the beginning of their collegiate journey. These may include, but are not limited to, applying for financial aid, connecting with faculty members, and knowing what other services are provided to aid in student success inside and outside of the classroom.

Basic information pamphlets on the college application and transition process would be an excellent resource for first-generation students. While ample information about college exists, oftentimes first-generation students quite literally do not know what to look for. Furthermore, a mentorship program should be established so that students have the option of building a connection with at least one person on campus. The mentoring relationship should begin prior to arrival, establishing rapport as well as making certain the student feels prepared.

As the welcoming semester draws near, first-generation students should be invited to an early orientation to be "systematically introduced and acclimated to campus mores" (Kinzie & Kuh, 2005, p. 2). An ideal first-generation orientation would include an introduction to on-campus resources, a brief history of higher education and related language, team-building programs, staff mentorship, and exposure to academic advisors with familiarity of first-generation challenges. This will give them an advantage in learning institutional etiquette, such as how to appropriately interact with professors and professional decorum. This orientation should include both student affairs professionals and academic affairs professionals. Students would have the opportunity to meet and build relationships with others in a similar academic position, and receive special attention by the orientation staff. The collaboration between academic and student affairs help develop and sustain learning communities that support these students (Kuh, 2005).

Parents are also stakeholders in the educational journey taken by students. An additional part of the orientation should include information for parents to aid in their own personal transition. Both of us found that, for our parents, sending a student to college with no parental preparation is destructive and traumatic. Although it is important to focus on the student's life on campus, it is also important to build a bridge between the student's parents and college life. Because first-generation students are likely to receive less support from their families while attending college (Thayer, 2000), we must take a holistic approach to the student transition.

Finally, first-generation students need rigorous career counseling through the duration of their undergraduate years. Effective career counseling would pay explicit attention to first-generation students and debunk the myth that college degrees automatically lead to financial stability. Career counseling should offer these students guidance in how to effectively choose campus involvement that would be beneficial to their interests, passions, and/or career goals. It should also encourage students to take inventories such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) to better understand their learning styles and personalities. This will help guide students through the process of vocational discernment: discovering what college means to them and what it is they are being called to do.

Despite many of these services being "available" on college campuses, it is a responsibility of student affairs professionals to be intentional about seeking out first-generation students and ensuring that their needs are being met. Access to available services is not enough for them to be successful because they are not aware of what services will benefit them. Student affairs professionals must be cognizant of the fact that first-generation students are navigating through a world that is, in many cases, entirely foreign and that they cannot assume any level of competence.

Student affairs professionals impact student lives on many levels. The profession is about building intentional and long-lasting relationships. In addition to supporting students personally, they must also take responsibility for assisting in professional development. We must invest in programs and initiatives that work. As we look forward, student affairs professionals must keep in mind the first-generation student identity. First-generation students are susceptible to having their needs, both personal and professional, underestimated or ignored by those in academia. We must keep in mind that we are "an extension of the classroom" (Kezar, 2005). If we keep them at the forefront of our efforts, we may find ourselves creating a generation of enthusiastic, successful alumni who will someday be able to guide their own children through the process—the tradition—of higher education in the United States.

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Defining Reflection in Student Affairs:
A New Culture of Approach

Jason Johnson

Higher education offers both students and student affairs professionals countless opportunities for personal and professional growth, but often does not allow for reflection on the experience. In this article, a comprehensive definition of reflection is offered to assist student affairs professionals in their work with students. The concept of reflection is incongruent with the fast-paced attitude of students in the millennial generation. By taking deliberate action in role modeling positive reflective behavior, student affairs professionals can better serve millennial students. Reflection is an important skill that many millennial students lack. Strategies such as creating an inviting and supportive environment, modeling behavior, incorporating daily reflection, and continually questioning are suggested as ways to enhance the abilities of student affairs professionals in restructuring, challenging, and changing the culture of reflection on campus.

The idea of "reflecting" or "reflection" is not often a top priority for members of the campus community. The countless academic, professional, and personal opportunities and challenges frequently take precedence over finding time to reflect. The word "reflection" is regularly used across campus without any consideration given to its true meaning. Student affairs professionals rarely have the time to simply digest and unpack the meaning of an experience. Students, especially millennial students, come to college with a foundation for multitasking, not for questioning their experiences (McGlynn, 2005). Lerch, Bilics, & Colley (2006) suggested that "as educators we need to facilitate critical reflection to enable students to move beyond a superficial understanding of their world" (p. 5). Do practitioners need to model the concept of reflection in their professional lives as well? In this article, the author will develop a working definition of reflection and elucidate how a culture of reflection can be created for both student affairs practitioners and millennial students.

Reflection is not a new concept (Dewey, 1938) or a process limited only to the field of student affairs. It has been regarded as a necessity in other fields such as math, science, and medicine (Schön, 1983). The potential value of reflection for students in the education sector, specifically student teachers, has also been well

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documented (Korthagen & Wubbels, 1991). It is often structured into "events" in or around the campus community—tragedies, trainings, and service. Participants are asked how an event made them feel, how it relates to their experience, what issues were raised, and what questions remain. Other opportunities for reflection certainly do occur, but these are the most prevalent times when reflection is titled just that: reflection.

Student affairs professionals often struggle with defining reflection in the context of their jobs and experiences. A clear charge has been made by various professional organizations to reconsider student learning (American College Personnel Association [ACPA] & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators [NASPA], 2004), but it is imperative to take into account one's experiences more frequently. In the publication, *Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience*, ACPA and NASPA (2004) ask student affairs professionals to "re-examine…widely accepted ideas about conventional teaching and learning, and to question whether current organizational patterns…support student learning in today's environment" (p. 3). In addition to being a partner in teaching and learning to the greater campus community, student affairs must make progress towards a more comprehensive and holistic learning structure. Daily reflection can lead to better decision-making and critical thinking skills which, in turn, allow student affairs professionals to guide students in more effective ways (Short & Rinehart, 1993; Hart, 1990).

As millennial generation students continue to find their way into institutions across the country, it is clear that involvement is an important aspect of their college experience. The millennial generation is defined as students born between 1982 and 2000, typified as: (a) "conventionally motivated and respectful," (b) "structured rule followers," (c) "protected and sheltered," (d) "cooperative and team-oriented," (e) "talented achievers," and (f) "confident and optimistic about their futures" (Elam, Stratton, & Gibson, 2007, p. 23). Some students rarely find the time to reflect on their involvement and experiences. It is critical that they learn lifelong reflection habits from student affairs professionals. Student affairs professionals must be careful when working with millennials because they could easily find themselves on the same path of involvement (or over-involvement) as the students. This will not only help them become more self-aware, but better prepare them to help create the world in which they want to live (Astin & Sax, 1998).

Defining Reflection

By defining reflection, the initial challenge of having discussions around experiences and reflection can be alleviated. Without a clear definition, there is no possibility of movement toward finding the deficiencies in our practices around reflection. Although there is no all-encompassing definition that clearly conveys the concept of reflection, there are many perspectives from which we can draw to find the definition that best suits our work in student affairs.

For reflection to occur, one must first have some sort of experience. Dewey (1938) provided a useful definition, calling reflection "a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment" (p. 41). The idea that an experience is a "transaction" also supports Dewey's assertion that "experience does not go on simply inside a person" (p. 33). There is a need for both individuals and the environment in which they are involved to gain something from the interaction. This does not mean, however, that every experience is educational, but that every experience offers the opportunity for reflection on the transaction.

In preparation for writing this article, I engaged in a series of informal conversations with peers and colleagues in an attempt to gain a better understanding of reflection in a practical sense. With these conversations and my own thoughts in mind, I identified the following themes as important factors in the meaning making aspect of reflection:

1. Reflection is both personal and professional.
2. Reflection has the ability to have both internal and external impact.
3. Reflection can be either important or inconsequential.
4. Reflection can act as a bridge between experience and theory.
5. Reflection must be learned.
6. Reflection is like a muscle—it needs to be nourished and exercised.
7. Reflection allows one to find new or different meaning.

It should be noted that these themes come from a student affairs perspective and may not represent themes across all disciplines.

Published definitions offer more themes than can be considered in this short article on the topic. Not only does reflection require constant practice (Hart, 1993), but it is also "a lifetime commitment" (Hart, 1990, p. 164) that "includes open-mindedness, whole-heartedness, and responsibility" (p. 154). Reflection is a process, but also requires action (Osterman, 1990). Kottamp (1990) described reflection as "a cycle of paying…attention" (p. 183) to intent in relation to future and current impacts. These perspectives are supported by the themes that I identified earlier. In comparing the published definitions and my themes, reflection is defined in this article as: a fluid skill that examines both the experience and the process that attempts to provide an opportunity to attach meaning to the experience. By describing reflection as a fluid skill, it is implied that it can be learned and changes with time. It is important to note that reflection in and of itself may

not result in resolution when conflict surfaces.

Reflection can occur both during and after an experience. It is not limited to a time when one has completed or is distanced from an event. The differing times of when reflection can occur are defined by Schön (1983) as reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflecting while an action or experience is taking place implies that one is not simply using possessed knowledge, but reframing both the meaning of the experience and how one responds to such an experience in the future. Dewey (1938) also made note of this in his work, calling it the "reconstruction of experience" (p. 111). Kottamp (1990) suggested the idea of "stop action," where the action is "literally stopped…and students are asked to reflect on what has just transpired" (p. 186). Schön's other concept, reflection-on-action, is what is commonly understood as reflection. Once removed from an experience, one can attach meaning to the experience by having a chance to rethink and evaluate one's own beliefs. This removal from the action allows for one to give "full attention…to analysis and planning for the future without the imperative for immediate action" (Kottamp, 1990, p. 183). Based upon one's environment, both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action can provide benefits that the other cannot.

Reflective practice cannot occur until a specific, personal definition of reflection is determined. Although a general definition is offered here, please note that the definition should be adjusted to fit one's personal needs, goals, and experiences. Additionally, it is important to remain cognizant that reflection is a fluid process and will continually change as experiences shape how new situations are approached.

Where Are We Now?

Assessment of the purpose and role of student affairs professionals in relation to student learning has been a topic of discussion since the creation of the field. A comparison document published by NASPA (1989), which included the 1937 and 1949 publications of the *Student Personnel Point of View* along with *A Perspective on Student Affairs* published in 1987, showed the continued push to educate the "whole" student rather than to only teach the student in the classroom setting. The role of student affairs professionals defined by those perspectives is shown to be continually changing in order to better meet the needs of both the student and the institution. This has been true throughout the history of higher education; the needs of the student have been as much of a priority as the needs of institution. If there are no students, there is no institution. Many institutions realized this during the late 1800s and early 1900s, as a number of colleges and universities opened and subsequently closed during this period due to low student enrollment and lack of funds (Rudolph, 1990).

Development of the "whole" student ties into reflection and learning. Specifically, the focus must be on how student affairs professionals encourage student learning and empower students to become active participants in the learning process (ACPA & NASPA, 2004). Some of the questions that arise from this statement include: As student affairs professionals, are we helping our students learn to critically think about themselves, their environments, and the new information they are acquiring? As professionals, do we teach them how to critically think and reflect? Do we support and encourage reflection through our day-to-day practices or strictly within the context of events on campus?

Before an attempt can be made to help students reflect, student affairs professionals must take steps to critically examine their own practices concerning reflection as well as the obstacles that are both internally and externally present. Brown, Podolske, Kohles, and Sonnenberg (1992) showed that the external barriers to being reflective include "the demands of others, the institutional culture, multiple job responsibilities, and the lack of trustworthy colleagues as resources" (p. 311). The same authors also stated that some personal barriers are "lack of energy and attention, poor decision-making, failure to set priorities, and inability to manage volatile emotions" (p. 311). There is not a conflict between these barriers, but they work together in adding to the difficulty of making reflection practical. One should consider internal and external barriers to better understand and find ways to work with and around those barriers. If student affairs professionals fail to recognize the barriers, they cannot make reflection-in-action part of their practice nor can they effectively encourage and empower students to also practice reflection.

It is imperative that reflection become a skill that student affairs professionals continually incorporate into their day-to-day experiences. Hart (1990) expanded upon the original concept introduced by Weick in 1978, where the relationship between the amount of reflection and experiences greatly increases the ability to make choices and think critically in the future. Hart analogized Weick's original model to that of a toy for children: a small frame that holds a matrix of metal pins. When an object is pushed on one side of the pins, it creates both a negative relief inside the pins and a positive relief on the opposite side. The more metal pins or spines, as used by Hart, the more accurate the depiction of the original object. In relating this to reflection, the impacts (both positive and negative) can be more clearly determined if there are more experiences from which to draw. Having a multitude of varied experiences will allow us to better work in a mode of reflection-in-action rather than simply reflection-on-action (Kottamp, 1990).

In 2004, ACPA and NASPA published a document that emphasized a focus on reconsidering how the whole student learns and is taught. It is a charge to student affairs professionals to work in collaboration with the institution in helping shape

a student's course of development. Not only is collaboration needed between student affairs and the academic realm, but the entire institution must reexamine and assess whether it is serving the needs of the student or the institution (Schroeder, 1996).

The Millennial Generation

Institutions today are filled with the students of the millennial generation. They are a new breed of students that have strengths including "goal orientation, positive attitudes, a collaborative learning style, and multitasking" (McGlynn, 2005, p. 14). These students also have had very active childhoods where free time was seen by parents as a place in which to schedule opportunities for involvement (McGlynn, 2005; Zemke, 2001). To simply say that they were busy is an understatement based upon how structured and scheduled their lives most likely were. As college students, their need for constant involvement continues and, in some cases, these students feel they are entitled to opportunities and experiences at the collegiate level. This can make it difficult for student affairs professionals to assist them in their development. McGlynn (2005) offered a different perspective:

> Many of our college students expect individual attention, extra help, and other institutional resources to be provided in order to help them with any difficulties which they encounter. Understanding the culture of our students may help ease our frustration with what we might perceive as being their sense of entitlement. (p. 14)

Due to the tendency of these students to be over-extended, student affairs professionals are faced with having conversations about involvement levels and burnout as part of the developmental process. It also highlights the fact that a stronger emphasis on reflection in both the academic and student affairs settings would be mutually beneficial to all. To create a more critically conscious culture, students must become aware of the number of experiences they are having upon which they have no opportunity to reflect. If student affairs professionals can successfully assist students in becoming mindful of their involvement, the process of reflection can truly become a part of their day-to-day lifestyle. McGlynn (2005) stated "the use of examples which students can relate to and asking students to develop their own examples are ways to create meaning between students' life experience and the material which we want them to be learning" (p. 16).

In many cases, the millennial generation does not feel as though an experience is worth their time if there is no learning or advancement opportunity (Zemke, 2001). This suggests that students today reflect to an extent, but that they reflect differently than previous generations. The combination of technology and the

millennial generation's "go, go, go!" attitude creates an "online" sense of reflection, where students have the internet, email, discussion forums, online classes, etc. at their disposal at any time of the day for reflection. Students are being presented with online classes and electronic bulletin boards that act as a complement (and in some cases, as an additional requirement) to the classroom discussions. The notions that entitlement and less focus upon reflection in their pre-college education also have an effect upon reflection. Students today have a greater sense of entitlement than previous generations which does hinder their ability to think about their impact on the world and others. It is not that students are not open to reflection, but it is that practitioners must motivate students in seeing reflection as an essential part of the learning process (McGlynn, 2008).

Implementing Reflection

There are multiple strategies that can be used to implement reflection. The ideas mentioned below are the consistent themes and suggestions made by the sources examined in this article.

Create the environment

By promoting an environment where students are active participants in designing the curriculum, students have a higher investment in its success. Schroeder (1996) suggested that this can be done intentionally in order to create a place where learning can happen and meaning can be attached to both old and new experiences (Lerch et al., 2006). Collaboration among students, faculty, and student affairs professionals is also important as common goals and objectives can be developed to better serve all constituencies.

Model behavior

Student affairs professionals cannot simply encourage students to become aware of their involvement but must be aware of their own involvement as well. As students work to define themselves within the institution, they look to student affairs professionals for guidance and, in some cases, role modeling. As they see student affairs professionals working to create and cultivate change on campus, students will examine the methods and processes which are successful and incorporate them into their own activities and experiences. Students will benefit from seeing student affairs professionals use each interaction as an opportunity for reflection.

Incorporate reflection daily

By allowing experiences to advance critical thinking skills, one can respond in situations more clearly and definitively. Additionally, by having reflected on one's own experiences, the student affairs professional will be more effective and successful at guiding students and providing leadership. It is important to remember that reflection can happen at any time, during any event—not just tragedies, trainings, and service events—but in the classroom, in the residence hall, on the field, and in the community. Reflection should be encouraged to happen anywhere one sees fit.

Continually question

In order to maximize reflection, one must continue to question beliefs and recognize assumptions both internally and externally. Professionals must also consistently update their definitions of reflection and their process of reflection. Challenging routine and traditional processes will allow the student affairs professional to determine whether their work is meeting the needs of both the student and the institution.

Future Directions for Research

The intersection and impact of different types of identities could influence how individuals view and process reflection. There does not appear to be current research in this area and it could provide interesting results. One example could focus on how gender affects the level and authenticity of reflection. Cultural and religious traditions could also impact how and when individuals reflect. Does identity impact reflection or teach one how to reflect? Just as each identity impacts how one views and experiences the world, it may also impact how it is reflected upon.

The difference between individual reflection and group reflection was also not identified within this article. Group dynamics and methods such as tracking, or non-judgmentally noting how privilege and oppression occur in daily interaction, play into how an experience is processed and how one may respond in the future. The opportunity to be aided by others who are also reflecting can add more layers of processing and understanding. Alternatively, group reflection could result in less self-reflection, whereas the attachment of personal meaning to a specific experience is non-existent.

The information presented speaks strictly to student affairs professionals and focuses primarily around events on campus—tragedies, trainings, and community service or service-learning events—but does not examine other areas where reflection may be a consistent and useful theme. A complete examination of the institution as a whole (both academic curriculum and co-curricular activities) could offer more examples and uncover additional facets to the concept of reflection. Areas such as career development and planning, athletics, and counseling would surely provide more insight and could help to better define reflection within the institution.

Further research is also needed around the differences in use and definition of reflection by students and student affairs professionals. If we do not understand how students currently define and use reflection, student affairs professionals cannot begin to dictate solutions based upon their own perception of the students' needs. Students must be active agents in developing the learning process, not simply participants within it. How student affairs professionals view and develop reflection may be very different from what any particular student needs developmentally, so it is important to be open and cognizant of the differences.

Lastly, this paper does not explore the impact of consistent recruitment of the same students for involvement purposes and how their growth could be helped or hindered due to this phenomenon. Once strong student leaders are found on campus, it is often difficult for student affairs professionals to look outside of that group to find new students to get involved. An examination around student leader burnout and reflection could provide a new lens and method with which to approach student development.

Conclusion

Reflection is a challenging philosophy, not only to define, but to implement into daily practice. It continues to be a difficult area for both students and student affairs professionals to grasp and define as a necessity in daily work. Student affairs professionals must attempt to reflect both on-action and in-action to become more effective. The more experiences that student affairs professionals gain and reflect upon will result in a better ability to critically examine future experiences. The belief that reflection is only part of events and not an area that can be collaborated upon is outdated. Reflection should be viewed as a way to form new and creative partnerships with different stakeholders across the institution. Not only can it provide insight into ways of enhancing the student experience, but it can create a new sense of meaning for practitioners. Reflection will help create more capable student affairs professionals who are better able to work in a variety of capacities with students.

Because of the attributes of the millennial generation in institutions of higher education, there is a need for student affairs professionals to assist students in becoming more critically aware of their involvement levels. If that can be ac-

complished, there is a direct opportunity to engage the student in reflection. This is a process of growth for both the student and the student affairs professional. The millennial generation needs guidance in becoming reflective and learning how to view their world through a critical lens. It is from this critical analysis that students will find meaning in their experiences. Ultimately, reflection will lead not only students, but student affairs professionals as well in their quest for meaning.

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All Signs Point South:
A Canadian's Journey Through an American Student Affairs Graduate Program

Hung Q. Mai

The path to a career in student affairs is rarely a simple one. Aspiring professionals come into this field from many different institutional and educational backgrounds and for a myriad of reasons, but as unique as each of these individuals are, they share some similarities. Framed by literature on both general career decisions and those specific to student affairs and higher education, this article tracks the path of a Canadian student on his journey through an American graduate program. As the author approaches graduation, he reflects on the choices that led him to where he is today, the choices that will guide his next steps in the profession, and the implications those choices have for other Canadian students who wish to enter the field.

Life is About Choices

Do you ever get the feeling that you have everything figured out? It is as if all of your choices have led to this exact moment in time and that the pieces of your life have rotated, shifted, flipped, and dropped into place like a perfectly executed game of Tetris. It is a wonderful feeling until the pieces begin piling higher and faster. Sometimes the cascading pieces pile up so high and so fast that the only outcome is a catastrophic "game over." Yet at other times, by some combination of skill, forethought, coincidence, or just plain, random luck, there is an avenue of escape that will let you clear enough blocks to give yourself a second chance.

This is the story of how I found my path to where I am today. Since arriving at this student affairs and higher education graduate program, I have learned to appreciate the value of taking the time to reflect on the path that leads one to a particular moment and where that path might lead next. I have spent just over a year and a half here and I am months away from graduating. It is time to look back on the choices that led me to where I am today, the choices that I am now

Hung Quang Mai is one of a handful of Canadian students to have gone through the HESA program. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Law with a Concentration in Business Law from Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario. He is currently a second -year HESA student and serves as the Graduate Assistant for the Dean's Office of the College of Education and Social Services. He wishes that more of his cohort would use the metric system, spell things with "ou," and pronounce the letter "zed," not "zee!"

making, and where they will lead me tomorrow.

It Is Easy to Choose When You Only Have One Choice

The step that started it all was the one I made to pursue legal studies in my junior year of high school. Law, you ask? It may seem completely unrelated, but just follow the story. A conflict in my schedule gave me only two course options, chemistry or law. I chose the latter not because I was thinking about it as a career, but because I could not balance a chemical reaction equation if my life depended on it. I had no idea what the difference was between common law and civil law. I had never even seen a copy of the *Criminal Code of Canada*. I probably would not have known what *stare decisis* meant if it was staring me in the face, but any of it, all of it, had to be better than counting valence electrons.

According to Marcia (1966), development has two distinct stages: crisis and commitment. Crises occur when an individual's values or choices are re-evaluated, the outcome of which leads to commitment to new values or choices. Marcia's model of identity development uses these two stages to come up with four distinct states:

1. Identity Diffusion: The individual may or may not have experienced a crisis, and is characterized by a lack of commitment.
2. Identity Foreclosure: The individual has not experienced a crisis, yet has made a commitment.
3. Identity Moratorium: The individual is experiencing a crisis and is engaged in an active struggle to make a commitment.
4. Identity Achievement: The individual has experienced a crisis and has made a commitment to an ideology and occupation after extensive self-examination. (p. 551)

I will admit, my career choice was not made by the greatest decision making strategy ever employed, but it made sense at the time. Instead of asking myself whether a few high school courses and reruns of *Law & Order* were enough to drive my commitment to the legal field, I jumped in headfirst because I had no other obvious option and was not bright enough to look for others. I was locked squarely into the Identity Foreclosure stage throughout the entire process of choosing a major and a university, and throughout most of the four years I spent earning my Bachelor's degree as well.

"Just Something to Think About"

My first year at university was uninspiring and built on routine; my time was divided between the lecture hall, the dining hall, the fencing piste, and my com-

puter. These activities formed the core of my existence for the year; it was not until my second year when I finally got a job at Career Services that things began to get interesting. This job opened the door to further leadership opportunities and introduced me to the person whom I would consider my mentor throughout this entire process. These two factors, exposure to student affairs work and the influence of a mentor, were noted by Taub & McEwen (2006) as primary influences in the decision to pursue student affairs as a career. Career Services was a fantastic office and I worked with some amazing people, but it was my next job that opened my eyes to a whole new world.

A dozen of us, under the direction of four senior students and Jen, the newly appointed Acting Director, formed the staff of the brand new First Year Experience Office (FYEO). Our mission, which we gladly accepted, was to implement a newly redesigned summer orientation program. We spent weeks in training getting to know each other and figuring out our roles. I spent most of my days inside answering the phone and, even though I did not have a great deal of direct contact with students, there was something about the relaxed atmosphere and the energy of the people in the office that just felt *right*. Out of all the fantastic times we had as a group that summer, the thing I remember most about the entire experience was something that was said to us on the very first day of training. Meg, the Director of the Student Academic Success Centre (SASC), came in to talk to us about why the work that we would be doing was vital to student success. She told us that it was probably too early to think about it, but that if we enjoyed our work over the next two months, that we could very well make a living at it. With that, she wished us luck and the last thing she said as she left was, "Just something to think about."

Detour Ahead

In the midst of all of this, I was still stuck in the Identity Foreclosure stage and exploring every single law elective that sounded even remotely interesting, and quite a few that were dreadfully boring. For example, if you wanted to ship a container full of stuffed animals from Montreal to Djibouti, I could probably recite for you every legal step along the process. As if that was not enough fun, the day I finished my third year of classes, I bought LSAT test preparation books and began what seemed like endless days of studying. This led to the dénouement of my university legal career: the six-hour ordeal that was LSAT test day.

When I received my results a few weeks later, I was faced with another tough decision: was this really the path I wanted to follow? Based on factors such as my test score, my GPA, and my extracurricular involvement, I stood a reasonable chance of being admitted to the law school I wanted, but it made me ask myself the question I should have asked much earlier: was the legal field right for me? It

may have taken three years and several thousand dollars in tuition to get there, but I had finally reached Marcia's Identity Moratorium stage. I had experienced the crisis Marcia referred to and I did not like it at all. The legal studies program, however, did exactly what I wanted it to do: it helped me decide whether there was a particular area of law I could see myself practicing. The answer, as it turned out, was not something that I was expecting at all. After spending three years buried up to my eyes in the nitty-gritty of contract clauses, statutes, bills of lading, criminal convictions, and international treaties, I could not see myself practicing any of it.

If I was not going to be a lawyer, what was I going to be? All of my carefully laid plans had evaporated and I had run out of options again. The thought of entering my fourth and final year without any solid idea of what I was going to do after graduation gave me stomach-churning anxiety on a level I had never experienced before. My entire university career had been built around a choice that was no longer viable. So, I thought to myself, "this is what a life crisis feels like." But from somewhere in the back of my head, Meg's words came to back to me.

All Signs Point South

"Why not?" I thought to myself. Working for the FYEO had given me the two best years at school, so why not go on to help other students make the most out of their post-secondary experience? I sat down with Jen at the start of my senior year and told her about my change in plans, asking her if she could help me through the process of choosing and applying to a graduate program in student affairs and higher education. Throughout the entire time I had worked for them, there was never any pressure from Jen or Meg to choose student affairs as a career. They had provided me with plenty of leadership opportunities and experiences in response to my interests that would broaden my exposure to the field, but never forced the issue. The advice that they both offered did have one thing in common, though; both steered me to an American graduate program. Canadian program options were never made a priority, and even if they had been, the options were limited. The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), one of the professional associations for American student affairs professionals, lists 107 graduate programs, while the Canadian Association for College and University Student Services (CACUSS) only lists four.

I had been working with students for 3 years now, but felt the need to know why I was doing the things I was doing in my job. This practice of acting without reflection, according to McGrath (1998), is one of the many reasons Canadian students end up in American graduate programs; they want to move away from the Canadian profession's "ground[ing] in the artistry of practice" (online, para. 12) towards a praxis involving both theory and action.

Implications for Mentorship

My story is not a unique one. Though the literature on career paths has been described as "woefully inadequate" (Brown, 1987, p. 7), my journey closely follows the results of Taub & McEwen's 2006 survey of 300 students across 24 different college student personnel/higher education graduate programs. The study does not identify students' nationalities, but it is safe to assume that the majority of them graduated from American undergraduate institutions. Even so, my experience closely follows those of the participants of the study. The trend is that students generally do not become aware of the profession or consider it a career for themselves until late in their postsecondary experience, or even after graduation. When they do finally become aware of it, the most valuable sources of information are current professionals and involvement in student activities.

All of this raises the question of who is being mentored into this profession and the direction in which they are being pointed. In 1989, it was estimated that the majority of students enrolling in these graduate programs were White women (Task Force on Professional Preparation and Practice, 1989). It has been almost two decades since those numbers were released, so it would be beneficial to see whether strides have been made on recruiting men, particularly men of color, to the field. American statistics have indicated that racial and ethnic minority groups comprise over 21% of the general population and 17% of college students, but only 10% of student affairs administrators (Sagaria & Johnsrud, 1991, cited in Taub & McEwen, 2006). Statistics Canada has indicated that Canadian figures are comparable, with 16.2% of the general population identified as belonging to a visible minority (Statistics Canada, 2008b). Individuals of Chinese background are of particular interest, as they currently make up 3.5% of the total national population and 26% of the visible minority population (Statistics Canada, 2008a), and have been the leading source for international visa students since 2001 (AUCC, 2007).

Are these students being served by professionals who understand the culture they come from and with whom they can relate? Don't get me wrong; as an aspiring student affairs professional, the mentorship and guidance I received was invaluable. As an Asian male, however, I would have also benefited from seeing leadership figures that reflected my own identities and hearing their struggles and triumphs. The same could be said for students of all different identities. One effort being made in the United States to ensure this is the NASPA Undergraduate Fellows Program (NUFP). Its mission is to increase "the number of persons of ethnic-minority, persons with disabilities, and/or persons who identify as LGBT in student affairs and higher education" (NASPA, 2008). To date, this program has seen over 1,000 alumni and current fellows, many of whom are currently in the field or preparing to enter it. The Canadian profession would benefit greatly by establishing a similar program and training future professionals who are better able to respond to the needs of the changing student demographic.

"Toto, We're Not in Toronto Anymore"

Where are aspiring professionals being led? The answer, for the majority of Canadians who wish to enter this field, is to American graduate programs. The problem, as noted by McGrath (1998), is that in a profession heavily influenced by interpersonal connections, the opportunities to network with Canadian mentors and advisors in the American system are few and far between. Aside from the relative lack of Canadian options, what are the factors that lead Canadian students to American graduate programs? Further research needs to be conducted on this question, the answers to which may help the four existing Canadian programs in their efforts to attract Canadian students and benefit American programs that have a history of enrolling a high number of Canadian students to create a more enriching experience for them.

I was not sure how I would adjust to life in the United States. I believed that the images of American life from movies, television, documentaries, and books would provide enough context for me to get by, at least for two years. I believed that I was immune to culture shock, defined by Chapdelaine and Alexitch (2004) as "the multiple demands for adjustment that individuals experience at the cognitive, behavioural, emotional, social, and physiological levels, when they relocate to another culture" (p. 168). For the first month or so, the biggest adaptation I had to make was getting used to the fact that all American currency was the same color, which was not a bad way to start.

As the program continued, however, I found myself torn between two countries and experiencing another instance of Marcia's Identity Moratorium stage. I still have not made a firm decision about whether to remain in the U.S. and work here after graduation, or return immediately to Canada. Consequently, I find myself doing twice the work by (a) applying American concepts, theories, and examples learned in the classroom to my every day work and remaining present in the context in which I am currently immersed, and (b) attempting to make those same connections to the Canadian context where I will eventually be returning to and bringing the reflections from my Canadian experiences to the context of higher education in the United States. Sometimes I feel like I cannot figure out where any of the Tetris pieces go, but it is rewarding when I can fit the pieces together and achieve praxis.

"There's No Place Like Home"

My journey has been a winding one, but it is by no means unique. I follow in the

footsteps of many other Canadian student affairs professionals who have gone south before me to pursue graduate education in this field, and I do not doubt that there will be others who follow in my footsteps. This is challenging in the short-term because it means that many more students will potentially face the same struggles I did in attempting to make the curriculum of an American graduate program relevant to them. It is not an impossible task and there is something of value to be gained from the critical thought involved in the process, but it does add an additional level of complexity to what can be a very hectic and demanding two years. The lesson to be learned from this experience is that students looking to enter this field by pursuing further education should do their research on graduate programs, whether American or Canadian, in order to make an informed choice that is a good personal fit.

Chris, a graduate of this program, recently shared the following with me in an interview:

> The student affairs profession in Canada will [n]ever be as well served as it has been by people who have gone through the American program simply because there is yet to be an institution in Canada that really thinks critically and models praxis in its preparation of new professionals… Until we get to a point where institutions…in Canada are looking at the work that we do as a very intricate match of theoretical and practical, I think we will always have students going south of the border, and by virtue of that, we will always have professionals who will find it challenging to get back north. (personal communication, November 28, 2008)

As challenging as it has been and may continue to be for me as a professional, there is also some hope in this. There are already a number of professionals in Canada who graduated from American programs and, as more and more students pursue American graduate degrees and return, student affairs in Canada comes closer to achieving a critical mass of professionals who understand the value of praxis. I am confident that a few years from now, I will be able to close my eyes, click my heels, and be back home, working with colleagues who have experienced the ups and downs of both systems and know where to draw from both.

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REFLECTIONS

As members of the UVM HESA community, past and present, we acknowledge the value in listening to one another's stories. To commemorate the 30th volume of *The Vermont Connection*, authors were invited to reflect on meaning making and lessons learned from higher education and student affairs, the HESA program, and the community that unites us. We hope that you will enjoy these reflections as they chronicle the continuing journeys through HESA's past, present, and future.

The Vermont Connection:
Some Thoughts and Lessons Learned

Keith Miser

It's a great honor to be invited to write a reflection paper as part of the celebration of the 30th volume of *The Vermont Connection*, the student affairs journal for the University of Vermont. I was invited to give some thoughts about the early days in the creation of the journal, student affairs as a profession, and the University of Vermont over these past 30 years.

The Vermont Connection is a unique journal: created, edited, and produced by students from one of the top graduate programs for student affairs in the nation. In many ways, the development of this quality journal parallels the development of the Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration graduate program. Nearly 30 years have passed since *The Vermont Connection* began. At that time I was serving as the Dean of Students and the Associate Vice President for Administration at the University of Vermont and was honored to be a faculty member in the student affairs graduate program. Several other nationally-ranked student affairs programs had journals at the time, and the UVM faculty supported creating one. I volunteered enthusiastically to be the advisor and to help develop the journal. I discussed the concept in the student affairs capstone class I was teaching for second-year students. The students in my class embraced the idea, and many volunteers came forward to design and create the first volume.

To get started quickly, I asked Mike Dunn, my graduate assistant, to serve as the first editor as part of his assistantship responsibilities. We also asked for volunteers from across the student affairs program to be involved, and again, many students expressed enthusiasm for the project. The name for the journal and the style to be used were controversial, and in typical HESA style caused much debate, discussion, and occasional arguments. The idea of the journal connecting

Keith Miser currently serves as the Special Assistant to the Chancellor for International Programs at the University of Hawaii at Hilo after being the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs there since 2000. Prior to this, he was the Vice President for Student Affairs at Colorado State University, 1988 to 2000, and was the Dean of Students and Associate Vice President for Administration at the University of Vermont from 1975 to 1988. He was the Director of Residential Life at UVM from 1971 to 1975. Dr. Miser was a faculty member in HESA and greatly enjoyed serving HESA Students and assisted with The Vermont Connection. Dr. Miser holds his BS in Biology, MS in Counseling and his Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration, all from Indiana University.

HESA students with each other and with alumni became the basis for the name *The Vermont Connection.*

The style was to be more formal, reflecting high quality intellectual and academic discourse. The style also set this journal apart from other graduate school journals which leaned toward an informal and less professional style. I believe it was this concept of style and quality that gained *The Vermont Connection* recognition throughout the nation as the premier journal for a graduate program in student affairs.

The Editorial Board and the leadership of the journal worked magnificently, building policies, procedures, and responsibilities for the production of the journal. In those early days, absent computers and word processing, the production of the journal was difficult and tedious. Most of the first journals were typed, cut, and glued together to be photographed for later production. The journal was mailed to alumni and friends of the program, and the response was outstanding. It was a few years later that the "unveiling" was changed to occur during the national NASPA and ACPA conferences.

For several years, the journal produced two volumes per academic year. After 4 years, the Editorial Board decided to move to one annual publication and to double the length of the journal. This decision allowed more time for writing and editing, and created an environment for greater involvement of HESA students in the journal production. In the early years, the funding for the journal was very difficult, and the cost was budgeted through the Dean of Students Office. In the 1980s, development efforts were initiated in order to raise money from alumni and friends for the journal to make it independent from a University budget. This independence allowed more stability since the journal would not be affected so much by possible institutional financial crises.

The Vermont Connection captures the vision and the hope of an outstanding group of graduate students as they do their best to create a journal of high quality. The journal has grown, developed, and been strengthened over the years through the input of successive Editorial Boards and area editors. Each edition was built on the success of the past to become the journal it is today. This journal demonstrates that sustained effort over three decades can produce something that is of the very highest quality whose voice helps form the soul of the graduate program.

A Student Affairs Career: Lessons Learned from Vermont

I was very fortunate to serve for 4 years from 1971 to 1975 as the Director of Residence Halls at the University of Vermont and from 1975 to 1988 as the Dean of Students and Associate Vice President for Administration. From Vermont I moved to be the Vice President for Student Affairs at Colorado State for 12 years before coming to the University of Hawaii at Hilo as the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs in 2000. In January 2008, I began my transition to retirement and am serving in an exhilarating position as the Special Assistant to the Chancellor for International Programs and the Executive Director of the Center for Global Education and Exchange.

Each of my senior student affairs positions—spanning 37 years—have been challenging, stimulating, and professionally and personally fulfilling. I cannot think of any other profession, positions, or universities that I would have enjoyed more than those I have served. Each of these institutions is distinctive and preserves strong student affairs programs that are student-centered, philosophically sound, and educationally vibrant.

Looking back at the beginning of my career at the University of Vermont, I am filled with emotion and excitement. I think often of the many students, colleagues, and faculty members who enriched my life as a young professional, many of whom I still see and hear from. Student affairs is an extraordinary profession, and the University of Vermont and its student affairs graduate program are of the finest caliber. I remember how our years at UVM contributed so positively to the lives of both Ann and myself and prepared us for our next professional challenges. Both of us learned many lessons at the University of Vermont that became the foundation for the rest of our professional lives. Upon reflection, the following truths learned during my tenure at the University of Vermont had unique and important significance to me as I began my career in student affairs. They reflect the values, ideals, and uniqueness of the HESA program, the University of Vermont, and the state and its people.

Freedom as a Value

The state of Vermont and its great state university are built on the history and principle of personal freedom and its accompanying responsibilities. The freedom to speak, to write, and to act in order to learn are values demonstrated in the everyday lives of Vermonters. These ideals are woven into the fabric underlying the policies, practices, programs, and initiatives at UVM. This notion of personal freedom is so important in thinking about the role of student affairs on a campus. Creating learning situations and policies that reinforce student freedoms is one of the foundations of the student affairs profession.

Compassion for the Human Condition

Vermont is a humane place where society reaches out to those in need of per-

sonal and institutional support. Vermont is a state that cares about the poor, disabled, and those in need of assistance. These values are reflected in most student behavior at UVM and in behavior modeled by most faculty and student affairs staff on the campus throughout the year. The University of Vermont is constantly being challenged to build a university community that is inclusive and diverse and embraces the improvement of the human condition through volunteering, environmental sustainability, and accepting one another as brother and sister.

Sustainable Development

Before the concept of sustainable development became a national concern, the University of Vermont was deeply involved in creating a university that was sustainable and able to operate on a financial margin. The state of Vermont and the university have always been underfunded in relationship to their quality and aspirations and have struggled to maintain a quality educational environment with the financial support that was available. Lessons can be learned from the University of Vermont about prudent expenditures and working hard to sustain an environmental conscience. The University of Vermont and the HESA program have thrived over these past 30 years even with a very low funding base. The example set by the program and the university could be a powerful lesson for other universities and programs across the nation.

Importance of History

Vermonters and the University of Vermont live history every day. Programs, activities, and the ethos of the campus are built on a foundation of historical roots. From its founding in 1791, the University of Vermont has acknowledged history and its proud traditions as a basis for vision and practices that have developed the present university. Using the best of these historical truths and rejecting some that were not appropriate, the university has grown, developed, and matured. Over the past 30 years, the HESA program has been part of this exciting change and development. Good leaders in student affairs are keenly aware of the history of their organizations and the role they play in creating history for future generations of student affairs professionals and leaders. The University of Vermont offers a superb opportunity for HESA alumni as well as staff members to think about history and its role in building a strong and vital future.

Student Affairs Professionals as Advocates

Student affairs staff at the University of Vermont see themselves as tireless advocates for the minority. One can be an advocate for a minority of thought, race, culture, sexual orientation, national origin, age, or disability, to name a few. This notion of being a strong advocate and educator is socially reinforced by

the values of the University of Vermont and through the practices of the state of Vermont in general. Student affairs staff and faculty frequently advocate for groups of individuals who are not able to speak for themselves against oppression, unfair and biased rules, or institutional or individual discrimination. Student affairs staff must act to reflect the highest ideals of a social institution.

HESA Program and the Liberal Arts

The University of Vermont's HESA program is built on a strong and positive foundation of the liberal arts, challenging graduate students to discover, think, and celebrate the liberal arts perspective of the education they are receiving. Many student affairs preparation programs are designed to teach graduate students how to do things. The UVM program is unique by teaching students primarily *why* things are done, in addition to some education about *how* they are done. UVM graduates are ready to face challenges, make decisions, and build social institutions because they chose a program that has this particular philosophy. This perspective puts UVM graduates ahead of many other emerging professionals because of the perspective that the HESA faculty have given them and their ability to think about why programs, policies, or procedures are created.

These six concepts above I learned and had reinforced each day during my tenure at the University of Vermont. They have been a part of my journey through student affairs. My professional experience has been abundantly rich, and I have been so greatly honored to work with students who have given me amazing joy, energy, excitement, and perspective that I would not have had working in any other profession. The University of Vermont was a magnificent place to begin this journey.

Finding Purpose

Rick Gatteau

*"From disciplinarian to innovator to role model to confidant to mentor,
the role of an administrator is a challenge that I am excited to undertake."*

Little did I know that this sentence, excerpted from my 1993 application to the Higher Education and Student Affairs program at the University of Vermont, would so well define my purpose in the higher education profession over the past 15 years.

I must admit that when I first stepped foot on the University of Vermont campus for my interview back in March 1993, I did not fully grasp what it meant to earn a degree in "Higher Education and Student Affairs." During my undergraduate years in the late 1980s, I knew there were people who were "administrators" who worked with college students. There was a beloved Dean of Students, a Psychological Services Center, an Office of Residential Life, and a Career Development Center. The staff in these areas cared about students like me, encouraged our leadership development, and helped establish a meaningful co-curricular experience.

Knowing that I would not be happy at college unless I got involved, I found a home in the Residence Hall Association and as a student worker in the Office of Residential Life. During my senior year, I remember a conversation with one of my mentors who said I should work in a college. I considered it for a moment, but had my mind set on other aspirations; I was a business major and thought I should enter the corporate world.

During college and after graduation, I dabbled in a few fields including law, television news, and the retail industry. Not seeing any as a lifelong career, I realized working in a college might be the right place for me. When I called up that same mentor to inquire about graduate programs to consider, the University of Vermont was one of her top recommendations. So, I applied, not knowing much about the program (and knowing even less about the very cold winters in Burlington).

Rick Gatteau graduated from the UVM HESA program in May 1995. He earned his Ph.D. in Educational Administration from Fordham University in May 2000. Rick currently works as the Director of Academic & Pre-Professional Advising at Stony Brook University. He resides in Long Island, NY.

My first recollection of UVM was my interview weekend—actually, interview day. The trip was a whirlwind; I was on UVM's campus for exactly 24 hours, changing my flight to leave Burlington and return to New York just before a huge snowstorm hit the Northeast and closed the campus for two days! In those 24 hours, my life changed for the better. I knew it was the right place for me, with the best faculty and professionals, and a supportive group of peers. Days later, I vividly remember receiving the phone call with my offer of admission and the assistantship to be a graduate residence hall director. I was ecstatic that I finally had some direction, and hopefully purpose, in my life as a twenty-something.

UVM had so much to offer. I discovered more about myself and the student affairs profession in 2 years than I have in my entire life. Here are just a few of the more important life and career lessons learned:

Don't compete against anyone other than yourself.

Don't worry about the grades; worry about what you're learning.

Never put a Tic Tac in your mouth just before a presentation; you'll have fresh breath, but you might (in my case, will) choke.

Have the courage of your convictions.

It's good to know how to use a fire extinguisher when you work in a residence hall.

Always be prepared for class, especially when Robert Nash asks to engage in a dialogue with you.

Applying theory to practice in the practicum makes the experience even more rich and meaningful.

Finding a mentor, or two, or three, helps you make better decisions.

It's important to have open dialogue about topics that are often the most difficult (and even controversial) to discuss; that's an essential part of becoming an educated person.

Being a hall director is a 24/7 job, but a very good place to get experience "in the trenches."

Forming your identity is an ever-evolving process; it takes time to discover, understand, and appreciate your true self.

Since graduating from UVM in 1995, there have been countless examples of how I have applied these lessons learned to my daily life. UVM provided the solid foundation of teaching about higher education as a profession as well as the mentors to guide practice in the field. For me, the experiential nature of my two years at UVM proved invaluable to later help navigate through political waters and make informed choices as a student affairs professional. The simple truth is

that having experience under your belt helps you avoid making similar mistakes, and ultimately improves your decision-making skills.

As my career has evolved, I have been fortunate to work on several college campuses—large and small, public and private. Each has been unique in its mission, focus, and campus culture—aspects which have required me to listen, learn, and adapt to my surroundings. It is no easy task, particularly when your belief system is different from the institution or department where you work. In times of challenge, disagreement, or difficulty, I often reflect upon a rich, insightful quote from Professor Robert Nash to guide my thinking: "Find the truth in what you oppose, and the error in what you espouse."

Regardless of institution type or conflicting ideologies, I have come to realize that every institution of higher education has one common purpose: to educate students. And that is why I am in the field today. I could not imagine working in any other place. I get up every morning excited to go to work, lead a staff, and interact with students. I have the opportunity to be creative, help students make informed decisions, speak to large audiences, employ more efficient and effective business practices, motivate and recognize staff and students, teach others new skills, interact with colleagues across the nation, and help make a difference. I have a career that has meaning and purpose, one that truly helps others define and achieve their own potential. Someday, if I can say I have been successful in my career, it will be because I have given back to students as a mentor just as I was mentored by many incredible individuals associated with the UVM HESA program.

Although it has been 15 years since first stepping foot on UVM's campus, it still feels like yesterday. Truthfully, I am glad to no longer have the daily pressures of being a student—reading books, writing papers, and balancing the practicum with my assistantship. But, it was this experience, more than any other, which has shaped me as a person and a professional. It's the reason why, when asked where I went to graduate school, I say with great pride, "UVM HESA."

The Art of Accompaniment:
Unexpected Lessons Learned in Student Affairs

Michele C. Murray, Ph.D.

In the third grade my class learned to play the recorder. You remember the recorder—that long, chocolate-brown, plastic cylinder with holes just small enough for little fingers to cover? The recorder: my first and only wind instrument. Our teacher showed us how to stretch our fingers over the holes and lift them in different combinations to make that little plastic tube whistle every note on the scales. I never did learn how to read music, but I could toot-toot my way through the likes of "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" and "Hot Cross Buns." Even though I had taught myself the entire *Sound of Music* version of "Do-Re-Mi" by ear, I was no match for my friend, Michelle; she was truly talented.

A year older than me, Michelle lived around the corner. I looked upon her as Beethoven's childhood friends must have looked upon him—with awe and wonder. As a 5-year old, Michelle composed her first work, a joyful little melody she called, "The Ladybug Waltz." By the time Michelle and I became friends, she was astounding the judges at every recital with her mastery of classical piano's most difficult pieces. Truth be told, she was a bit of a wunderkind. As an adult, Michelle was gifted and skilled enough to command audiences at the best symphony halls; she could have toured. Instead she chose the conservatory where she is a teacher and an accomplished accompanist.

In reflecting on "meaning making in student affairs" and what I might offer through this essay, my mind returned again and again to my childhood friend and her choice to accompany. In many ways I had always thought of my role as a student affairs professional as one who accompanies, that is, as one who is present to, or walks with, students. To accompany someone on his, her, or hir journey in this way is a privilege, and certainly this is an important understanding of the role. But in remembering Michelle, the power of her example suggested a few other interpretations of what it means to accompany. I share these thoughts with you.

After completing her doctorate in Education Policy and Leadership at the University of Maryland, Michele joined Seattle University as Assistant Vice President for Student Development. Prior to this transition Michele worked for 10 years at Loyola College in Maryland, the institution she joined immediately following her graduation from HESA in 1996.

Developing Another's Talent

Michelle would tell you that one of the greatest joys of being an accompanist is found in supporting another artist, whether a vocalist or another musician, to reach the heights of his, her, or hir talent. As an accompanist, Michelle uses her gifts to help others shine. As a kid, I benefitted from Michelle's accompaniment: I wailed on the recorder (whether or not that was a painful wail depends on whom you ask and how good that person's memory is) while Michelle expertly tickled the ivories. She matched my unrhythmic tempo and held chords long enough for me to find the right note. Her playing made me and my recorder sound good, and each time we played together I gained a little more confidence in my fledgling musical abilities. And isn't this akin to what we do with the students we meet and mentor?

When I think of the students I have accompanied over the years, the faces of those who were unsure at first of their own gifts flood my memory. The circumstances surrounding each student were different as were each one's needs for accompaniment. For the ones who were ready to perform in the spotlight but were afraid to walk onstage, perhaps it was the nomination to a leadership development group or the appointment to a committee that first invited them to a greater confidence. For those who had made regrettable choices but sincerely desired well-rounded success, perhaps it was the slow and sure mentoring that helped them level out the shaky tempo of their development into adulthood. Like Michelle at her piano coaxing the natural talent out of budding musicians, it has been my privilege to accompany these students; to mentor them, help them gain a better sense of self, and encourage the development of their gifts and talents.

The college years represent a rite of passage from adolescence and being shaped by the world to adulthood and having the knowledge and skills to shape the world, however large or small that world may be. How students engage life outside the classroom bears upon what type of shapers-of-the-world they become, and this is where accompaniment by student affairs professional becomes crucial. At the core of our profession is the belief in college students' holistic development—intellectually, socially, spiritually, psychologically, physically—and the unique contribution to this development that trained professionals can provide. As accompanists, we use our gifts of compassion, critical thinking, and even humor to help students develop into their adult selves.

Playing from the Same Sheet of Music

Several years ago Michelle mentioned an odd little mishap she once experienced in rehearsal. She was accompanying a vocalist who was preparing for an im-

portant audition. Michelle and the vocalist were definitely working on the same selection, but try as they might, they could not nail down some of the essential elements. Upon closer inspection, they realized they were working from different arrangements of the same piece. It was an easy-to-correct mistake, and Michelle laughed it off saying, "Talk about the importance of being on the same page!"

The parallels of Michelle's experience to some of my own work with students are obvious. Every now and then—not often, but certainly on occasion—I have found myself slightly out of step with the students I have accompanied. When I might think the next move is a zig, the student insists on a zag. Sometimes these disagreements have happened over program content, expenses, or some other element over which I have had final authority, and these have been relatively simple to resolve. I have found out the hard way, however, that there is no "accompanist's authority" over a student's choices along his, her, or hir journey.

It may seem ridiculously elementary, but sometimes it is difficult to remember that the one who accompanies is not actually on the journey, especially when the one who is on the journey is diving headlong into a quagmire. From the mundane—choosing an ill-fitting major—to the serious—flirting addiction and other self-destructive behaviors—some students have made choices I have neither understood nor supported. Playing from the same sheet of music during these more thorny personal trials does not necessarily mean defaulting to the student's choice. In these moments, to accompany is to strike a delicate balance between offering guidance and respecting each student's personal freedom to make choices regardless of the consequences.

In the case of Michelle's vocalist, Michelle gave her best professional advice about which arrangement would showcase the artist's talents best. The vocalist chose her own piece against Michelle's opinion. Although Michelle prepared her the best she could, the vocalist did not audition well. As her accompanist, Michelle was there to help the vocalist pick up the pieces, smooth out the rough areas, and begin again. And so it is with so many students.

Interpreting the Music

In the absence of a conductor, the accompanist helps the primary musicians interpret the music. When Michelle works with artists to interpret a piece—which notes they want to emphasize, which emotions they want to convey—she is helping them make and express meaning. I can think of no purpose of accompaniment that is more significant than this: to facilitate another's process of making and expressing meaning.

In Michelle's work, interpretation and meaning making provides a platform for

the artist to communicate something personal to the listener. In the work of student affairs, interpretation and meaning making involves coaching the student to communicate something personal to him, her, or hirself. I can only assume that interpretation is one of the most rewarding aspects of Michelle's work because helping another make sense of an experience or begin to answer some of life's most vexing questions is certainly the most rewarding aspect of mine.

As much as the college years are a rite of passage for most, they are also filled with life-changing moments of doubt, surprise, and discovery. Oftentimes student affairs professionals are in the best position to help students interpret the music of their lives. We accompany the student who is bewildered by being far away from home while his parent is suffering from terminal cancer; we comfort the student who experiences rejection from a relationship, a job, or graduate school; we counsel the student who seriously wonders about her life's purpose. These are some of my most treasured interactions with students, and I am willing to bet that my colleagues around the nation would agree.

To accompany another is a great privilege, and to be accompanied is a great blessing. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the mentors who have accompanied me along my journey. Their wise and caring counsel has guided my own meaning making, and it is because of them that I have these words to share with you.

Out West

Matthew R. Caires

I am a Westerner. I was born and raised in western states, earned an undergraduate degree from a public land-grant research university in the West, and for the last eight years I have lived and worked in the state of Wyoming. In the West, our landscapes and our culture have been shaped by vast open space, wind and water, violent upheavals, and a glacial pace. Those of us from the West work hard, espouse traditional western values, and pull ourselves up by our proverbial bootstraps. We like to use words like "libertarian" and "conservationist" to describe who we are and what we stand for. We are independent thinkers and writers—we have to be. Throughout the Rocky Mountain region, values and lifestyles are rooted in surviving long winters, long distances, and awe-inspiring open space.

Yet, when one digs a bit deeper into the history and culture of the North American West, one can find a richer, more complicated truth. While Westerners might espouse fiery independent rhetoric, those of us from the West have always relied on others to make our lifestyle a reality. For over 200 years, the people who live beyond the Mississippi River have received assistance and subsidies from those who reside out east. There is a long and mired history of the U.S. federal government, funded in large part on the backs of East Coast citizens and businesses, providing financial support for the West. From federal land subsidies for the railroads during the Gold Rush and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) water and dam projects in the early twentieth century, to livestock grazing on public lands and tax-breaks for the energy industry that followed, there is no question that the East has supported western development and lifestyle since the inception of western exploration.

We don't like to admit it. Frankly, we don't even like to talk about it. But, there is very little debate today that those of us out west depend upon those of you who live out east. This juxtaposition, seeing ourselves as self-reliant with a sovereign independent spirit on the one hand, with the reality of depending on the federal government for our livelihood and lifestyle on the other, continues to haunt Westerners and western culture today. Western (2002) has gone so far as to call this western independent spirit a myth. This myth includes our legends of austere cowboys on horseback, the romantic Great Plains homesteader in a

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quaint sod house on the prairie, and our deadly outlaws in comical western hats. The struggle for true western independence is as elusive and nonexistent today as those iconic images from over a century ago.

I grew up and was socialized in the West with these images as the backdrop. At 22 years old, I had the ardent and impetuous spirit commonly found in Westerners who eschew any type of help from others. Upon finishing an undergraduate degree in history and political science and after a good deal of success in student government, I made the decision to pursue a Master's degree in higher education and student affairs. After applying to programs all over the country, making the decision to pursue this degree in the HESA program at the University of Vermont was not made lightly. UVM? In New England? Next to the Green Mountains??? OUT EAST?!? Not to be diminished by any type of challenge, I made the decision to move to the Eastern Time zone and to test my mettle against the East Coast coterie.

How would my western upbringing and education fit into this new and unfamiliar eastern culture? How would my academic credentials from a western state school stack up against the students who attended elite private institutions out east? Would the students from schools like Tufts, Harvard, and Dartmouth accept me as a peer? Or, would my public education relegate me to a second-class student in the classroom? How would I establish myself as an academic equal to those from the East while also convincing them that they were missing the enlightenment I had received from a childhood out west?

After moving to Vermont and starting the HESA program, it took me a while to understand that I really had nothing to prove to either the students in the program or the faculty and staff at the institution. Most of them were not from the West, and yet, they all seemed well-adjusted, successful, and satisfied with their East Coast upbringings. While initially I thought these "Easterners" would be filled with judgment and contempt for anyone or anything beyond the confines of New England or New York, I found the HESA community to be one of inclusion and acceptance. Further than the expected acceptance of difference such as gender, race, and sexual orientation, the HESA community invited me, a loud, young, arrogant, White American male (from the WEST!) to join their academic community. It was the members of this community who shaped me, both professionally as well as personally, that I remember vividly today.

Names like Nash and Nestor. Manning, Hunter, and Gribbons. Hewitt-Main and Schulman. Pat Brown. Students like Speidel, Monahan, Mossler, and Kennedy. All of these faculty, staff, and students, in their own unique and special way, contributed to create a culture that was distinctively known to the HESA community at UVM. And, while many of these names have changed during the last 10 years,

I suspect others have brought their special gifts and insights to make the HESA community what it is today. It is a community that is open-minded, accepting of difference, and a proponent of social justice. Nonetheless, I do not mean to say that this culture and community is always accepting in a "Pollyanna" or morally relativistic way. Nor do I mean to say that my time during the HESA program was always successful or that it continually felt good. There was very little that felt "good" about earning a Master's degree in the HESA program. It was hard work. I use words like demanding, never-ending, arduous, and *laborious* to describe my HESA experience. (Don't tell David Nestor, but I remember more than once sleeping on the third floor of the Nicholson House after rewriting yet another paper for one of my HESA classes).

Yet, for those who persist, who complete all the required reading and submit all the required writing, who make it through "comps," who find a way to survive a part-time assistantship that is more like a full-time job and three practica (each of which are like full-time jobs—thanks Jackie), and an academic load on par with those in the sciences or engineering, the HESA program adequately prepares any graduate student for a career as a student affairs practitioner like no other program in the country. Students in HESA learn how to multitask, successfully complete their work regardless of the lateness of the hour, support others in crisis, and consult and ask for help in times of need. Learning the ability to provide stability during times of overload or emergencies, rise above the noise of our incredibly busy lives, and offer sound counsel and perspective for the students and faculty on our campuses is the true heart and soul of our work in student affairs. HESA students learn these, and many other important lessons, from their immersion in the UVM program. Theory to practice is more than just an idea espoused by those in HESA; it is the foundation for all the demanding experiences that are required in those 2 short years. That foundation allows students to gain a valuable skill set that helps ensure their future success as student affairs administrators.

For me, preparing for a career in student affairs by only reading books is analogous to learning how to ride a bike by reading a how-to guide: it is helpful, but there is no better way to learn than getting out there and crashing a few times. I cannot think of any other program that allows students to try on a variety of new ideas and experiences while consistently welcoming them back into their community, regardless of the magnitude of their blunders. The supportive faculty, staff, and students in the program allowed me to crash on more than one occasion. They also helped pick me up, dust me off, and put me back into the game, time and time again.

Ten years after my HESA experience, there is no question that the lessons and skills I gained at UVM continue to guide my personal and professional practice

today. I still consider my memories in Burlington to be among the most satisfying and fun that I have had in nearly four decades. Since then, I have found a great personal and professional fit living in Laramie, Wyoming, working for the state land-grant institution in that town. It is a western school in a western state that espouses traditional western values. And yet, I have come to realize that the values in student affairs endure, regardless of location.

I could probably find a similar job at a higher education institution in almost any region of the country. Working in student affairs is, in part, a lifestyle choice. These jobs are overwhelming at various times during the academic year. And while these positions are serious, it is just as important to not take ourselves so seriously. We all need to find other passions outside of our work; otherwise we do a disservice to our students and other professionals on campus. When I face the overwhelming moments of a mid-level student affairs professional, I rely on the myriad lessons and work-ethic that I learned during HESA. And, when the down times come to campus, I find time to hike, climb, bike, and ski as much as possible. The activities offered from a lifestyle in the western mountains helps to ground me in a way that brings stability and clarity to my role on campus.

I am at home out west—it is where I am from and where my family lives. Still, I cannot help but recognize the members of the HESA community whom I have leaned on throughout the past decade. Without the support that I received from UVM and all of those individuals out east, I would not be able to contribute at the level I do at my institution today. I wish all of the HESA alumni/ae and those currently in the program my best, regardless of where you call home.

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Listening to Your Professional Compass

Jacob L. Diaz, Ed.D.

It is a true honor to have been invited to submit this piece for publication in this celebratory 30th volume of *The Vermont Connection*. As an alum of the Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration (HESA) program in 2001, I am grateful for my continued reflection on my experience in the program and, furthermore, on my professional experiences since.

When invited to submit this reflective essay, I asked the editor of this year's journal, Ms. Colleen Toomey, "What do you have in mind? Can you help me understand what it is that you and the Board of TVC are hoping for in this reflection?" In true professional and educative form, Ms. Toomey shared:

> We would like you to reflect on how you make meaning of your career. This piece is pretty wide open for interpretation. As a board, we are curious about the following questions: How do you incorporate reflection into your work? How do you find ways to reflect? How do you make meaning of challenging experiences? How do you make time to reflect within a busy schedule? (personal communication, November 26, 2008)

It is in response to these questions that I share the following memories and reflections. Doing so has served as a way for me to remain connected to my purpose and mission for being in the field of student affairs.

The field of student affairs has provided me the privilege to keep learning, both professionally and personally. Most importantly, it is the people with whom I have developed relationships that serve as my most powerful educators. Whether faced with a critical incident, an issue of bias, or a decision to be made regarding resources, I have found colleagues whom I trusted and could rely upon for sage counsel. A continuous theme emerges in my professional life that sustains me: the concept of place. I often think that it is a privilege to be a part of the lives of students. They did not ask for us to be in their lives and last I checked, we didn't ask for their permission. We are stewards of a responsibility to challenge and nurture the human spirit and to ask students to reflect upon what Parker Palmer (2000) offered us for consideration:

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Before you tell your life what you intend to do with it, listen for what it intends to do with you. Before you tell your life what truths and values you have decided to live up to, let your life tell you what truths you embody, what values you represent. (p. 25)

Oftentimes, we pour our minds and hearts into the situations we are called to be involved with on our campuses. On a daily basis we are busy coordinating, advising, supervising, supporting, and even serving as chaperones. Our calendars are filled with multicolor schemes and our email inboxes are flooded with information eagerly waiting for our responses. I believe we do what we do out of a deep sense of commitment to something much larger than ourselves. In life, my experiences have shaped who I am and what I believe. They have also provided me a tool by which to sustain a strong connection to my professional/personal compass. I have found that when I do not reflect upon why I am in this field and what drew me to this work, I become frustrated and lost in the milieu of day-to-day tasks that help my institution function. When frustrated, I begin to wonder if I am simply an administrative tool to carry out tasks. When I am attentive to my spirit and take time to draw upon the memories, however, I find they contain a treasure chest of knowledge that explains and reminds me why I am here. It is this reflective practice that makes the challenging moments less consuming and my heart and mind much more open to learning from each decision I make. And while I cannot claim to have the magic formula for sustaining oneself in this field, I do agree with Parker Palmer that the source for the answer lies within the life that intends to live within us.

In 2004, I defended my dissertation entitled, "Marginalized Narratives in the Academy: One Chicano's Story of his Journey in Higher Education." In my defense, Dr. Bridget Kelly, a HESA faculty member and close friend asked me, "Jake, what motivates you?" to which I did not have an immediate answer. Truth be told, the question caught me by surprise and I am not certain I had ever been asked this before, at least not in the same way. Examining my motivations took me to a scary place I was not sure I was ready to explore. This meant asking myself about the origin of my motivation. This query proved to be a much steeper climb. Upon reflection, I discovered my spirit would not allow me to rely upon external legitimization that I was "okay." My source of motivation needed something; I needed to believe that my legitimacy did not require a source from without but a source from within. As Palmer (2000) highlighted: "We must withdraw the negative projections we make on people and situations—projections that serve mainly to mask our fears about ourselves—and acknowledge and embrace our own liabilities and strengths" (p. 29).

In my career, the moments when I feel I am at my best are when I trust myself to carry out my day-to-day responsibilities with care and community at the fore-

front. We exist in social systems that marginalize and where oppression continues to batter away at the self-efficacy and well-being of many in society. As a professional, I wrestle with privilege that comes from credentials, positional power, and academic status, yet reflect deeply upon what I will choose to do with my privilege on a daily basis. It is this tension that fuels my spirit; in return, my spirit reminds me when I may not be behaving in congruence with what I say I believe. "Vocation at its deepest level is, 'This is something I can't not do, for reasons I'm unable to explain to anyone else and don't fully understand myself but that are nonetheless compelling'" (Palmer, 2000, p. 25).

As a professional I cannot say I reach, each day, the lofty aspirations I set out for myself. In fact, I must work to be clear about the difference between external expectations and those that reside rooted within my calling. I am Chicano, the son of parents who are of Mexican ancestry. I came from a middle-class household where working hard and doing what you can with what you have was an important family value. Education was also an important value passed on to me by my family. I was raised in San Diego, California, a proud product of the community college system. I always enjoyed school but somewhere along the way in high school my academics slipped and I came to face the reality that my grade point average would not even be close to meeting the requirements to attend college. When I graduated, I recall thinking that college was intended for "smart people" which, of course, didn't mean me. I had internalized the thought that one's grades were an indicator of one's intellect. While I understand now that this is not the case, at the time it was a very salient feeling for me. Thankfully, Southwestern Community College in San Diego provided a second chance for me to pursue college life.

I did not know my purpose for attending college, yet I attended because my parents thought it was important. It would be 2 full years before my purpose would present itself in a random way. It happened one day while walking across campus: it had just rained and the ground was still wet from the night before. As I ambled along, I looked down and saw a droopy flier taped to the ground. Its bold letters stated, "TRANSFER TO A UNIVERSITY." I was simultaneously surprised and curious. I picked up the flier from the ground and, fortuitously, as I looked up, I realized I was standing right in front of the Transfer Center. I walked into the office, flier in hand, and asked a staff member, "Is this true?" to which she replied, "Is what true?" I pointed to the flier and she looked at it with a smile and said, "Yes, you can attend any college you'd like as long as you meet the requirements and are able to pay for the costs of attending."

I recall that moment like it was yesterday because for the first time since I had been a student there I finally felt like I had a purpose; a reason for showing up, a second chance to pursue a college degree. With this new-found energy I im-

mersed myself in my studies and spent the next 2 years building an academic record that would hopefully allow me to transfer to a university. I did not know it then, but this moment provided me an opportunity to begin to trust myself again. I had been afraid to believe that I in fact was intelligent and had something to contribute. This opportunity was like salve to a wound. It gave me hope and a goal I could now call my own. This feeling of empowerment to own a commitment to myself is one of the many wishes I have for students I work with. I hope that all students embrace their own brilliance and feel empowered to be who they are even in the face of forces that may wish them to conform or go along with the currents of the tide.

Two years passed and I did transfer to a four year university where I was introduced to the field of student affairs. Immediately after setting foot on campus, I went to El Centro, a place that served Chicano/a and Latino/a students. I was eager to learn about the support services and even more intrigued by what it meant to be Chicano on campus. As I walked to the front desk, I was greeted warmly by a staff member who told me that there were counselors present each day and that I could make an appointment with them anytime I wanted. They would see me for academic as well as personal reasons. "Personal?" I asked her, somewhat surprised. "Yes," she answered. "They are here for you." I must have been smiling because she smiled back at me somewhat quizzically. She did not know that what she shared was music to my ears. I never knew there were people in college that actually cared about students' lives.

I believe the professional life that I am intended to live continues to reveal itself. I am happy that student affairs is the vehicle with which I carry out my calling each day. In my daily work, I periodically think about El Centro and what it provided for me: a sense of place on campus and a community I could make my own. This sense of place buoyed me while I explored what campus had to offer. I did not know it then, but I was becoming acquainted with the field of student affairs and would eventually decide that this is the way I wanted to give back for all I had received. Reflecting upon critical moments in my life as a student and professional consistently calibrate my life's compass so that I maintain a clear direction aimed at creating a sense of place where the lives of students (and my own) may thrive.

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There and Then

Kristi Lonardo Clemens

In December, I thought I had decided my future path—to leave student affairs and open a restaurant. In retrospect, this massive change in direction was fueled by a particularly difficult semester filled with politics and changes in responsibility, coupled with the 8 months that I had spent moonlighting as a waitress in a French wine bar here in New York City. In my time in New York, I've become very focused on the restaurant scene, tracking new openings and menu changes with the same voracity that I once held for reading books on postmodernism (no, seriously!). Coupled with my management experience from working in residence life for the past 8 years, I thought this was a smashing idea.

Except for a few lingering issues.

Reflecting on my time at the wine bar, I thought about the people I had met. There was the busboy, an immigrant from Ecuador, who had moved to the United States 10 years ago. He arrived in a cargo plane, stowed away in a storage area. When I asked about his family back in Ecuador, he would change the subject and go back to watching movies on his iPhone.

There was a fellow server, a current college junior, who would talk to me about his travels in Europe while still in high school. He would also ask me for relationship advice, which somehow by the virtue of being married, younger people seem to think I am an expert in dispensing. I will say, my interactions with him were a lot more familiar—a privileged young man who was learning the complicated world of dating in New York City. Sounds like many RA one-on-ones I've had in my life.

There is the owner, 6 years my junior and partial owner of three bars in lower Manhattan. Like me, she had gone to New York University (NYU) for her Bachelor's degree, but obviously headed down a different path. She was at the bar every night until closing. Her day began at 4 p.m., when she would wake up and head into work. In my observation, she didn't have many friends outside of the

Kristi Lonardo Clemens is an Assistant Director of Residential Education at New York University. She received her Master of Education in Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration (HESA) from The University of Vermont in 2003, and her Bachelor of Science in Speech and Interpersonal Communication from New York University in 2000. Kristi serves as the Chair of ACPA's Commission for Social Justice Educators, and has presented and trained on social justice and diversity throughout the country, specifically relating to race.

bar. Really, how could she? With no time for herself and a schedule likely oppo-site of her college and high school friends, how could she maintain relationships?

I don't want to mischaracterize any of these individuals as isolated or unhappy. Who am I to make such judgments? However, when I think about their daily lives in contrast with mine, there are significant differences. Though I might leave a job, chances are I will still keep in contact with my former coworkers, or at least grab a drink with them at ACPA. Though my HESA cohort has spread across the country, and while we did not always get along during those 2 years in Vermont, when I got engaged they were among the first to be included in my excited announcement email. I celebrated my wedding in October with former RAs, coworkers, and supervisors from my time in residence life.

So why was I trying to leave?

Let's be frank. The work that I do in residence life is not rocket science, but at the same time can be very challenging. We provide a place for students to live, learn, and make connections. We guide them when they are struggling and celebrate them when they have successes. My time at NYU has taught me more than I would have ever thought I would learn about mental health. In my first profes-sional year, we had a spate of student suicides on campus which dramatically altered the trajectory of our work. Six years later, we are still nervous when our cell phones ring on the weekend. Our partnerships with academic deans changed from that of bridging academic and social experiences to receiving updates on a student's psychological status. Instead of hearing about what great experiences students had going to a dance performance in Harlem over the weekend, my Monday mornings are frequently spent learning about a first-year student who thinks that rats are coming into his apartment and using up all the toilet paper. This is not the job I signed up for.

However, there is something about the work that we do that keeps us together. Through the budget cuts, difficult parents, and sometimes unrealistic expecta-tions, we know that we are here for a reason. I was recently talking with a friend who works in the field, and we were complaining about various aspects of our jobs. I think I may still have been under the delusion that I was opening a res-taurant, which my friend supported. I said that she should come and work with me, since she was frustrated with her department. She said, "I can't. This is my job." Now, you may think that sounds defeatist. After all, don't studies now show that most Americans will have several careers during their lifetime? I understood what she meant, in a much broader sense than just staying in any given position.

For me, working in student affairs is the culmination of a journey which started when I was a college student. I never had any intention of working with students,

and if you told me 10 years ago that this is where I would be now, I would not have believed you. Too "touchy-feely," not enough notoriety. I moved to New York City at 18 to work on Broadway, if not as an actress then as a public rela-tions agent. I held various internships in the field and enjoyed the work, even if I did feel it was somewhat boring and repetitive. I had work-study, so I took a job with the admissions office, which led to a tour guide position after my first year. When I needed more financial aid, I set my sights on becoming an RA. I told people I loved being an RA because I grew up broke and could never go to summer camp—this may have been partially true. However, the connections I made in a place as spread out and disjointed as NYU were important. My fellow tour guides and I supported each other through 7 a.m. open houses and stress-ful finals. My RA staff had my back when a drunken resident became aggressive with me in the hallway.

When it was time to graduate, I was *not* ready to graduate at all. I finished in 3 years and felt unprepared for the post-college Brooklyn experience that my friends were headed toward. My supervisor at admissions offered me a graduate assistantship supervising the tour guides, if I were to enroll in graduate school. It seemed like a great plan, except that I had no intention of going to graduate school. I discovered that NYU had a program in Performing Arts Administra-tion, so I applied and enrolled. And, I hated it. I realized I liked being an RA more than anything else I was doing, so after a year in grad school at NYU, I left and headed to Vermont.

What has happened since then certainly hasn't been a blissful journey as a pro-fessional RA. As I've learned, in both HESA and beyond, there are many more layers to being an educator than one would initially assume. For me, the biggest hurdle was seeing myself primarily as an educator. It is easy to get hung up on excelling at administrative tasks, but the moment you shift your focus away from the bean counting of how many judicial cases you've processed or how many programs your hall has done, it is liberating and gives you a sense of purpose in the work that you are doing. Even though I have been doing the somewhat generalist work of residence life for 8 years, I've found that I best connect with students through my true passion of social justice education. Once again, this is not something that I would have predicted! I truly have the HESA program to thank (or blame!) for igniting this dedication in me. I think back to my HESA in-terview in March of 2001. In several of my interviews that day I was asked about diversity and social justice. I thought I had this question nailed—after all, I live in New York City! I *totally* get diversity. We have theme months and *everything*. In time, of course, I realized my privilege was getting in the way, and continued to work on myself while educating others from a liberation perspective.

This lens that I bring has both helped and hindered me in my career. On the

positive side, I am the chair of ACPA's Commission for Social Justice Educators. I have started a monograph, and have trained and presented throughout the country. Locally, I helped create several experiences for NYU students and have been active in changing the perspective of my department. I have been able to have meaningful conversations with students about aspects of identity and the struggles they have faced. On the flip side, I have often been told that my challenging nature is off-putting to colleagues. I, of course, don't see it as challenging, but moving us to a process of dialogue and growth. Agree to disagree?

In the first month of working at the wine bar, I found myself in an awkward position. The doorman, a straight White male, decided that I would be his confidant one night as he gave a running commentary on our customers. It ranged from the relative "hotness" of the women at table four to the perceived "gayness" of the dudes at table 11. He also asked many questions about how the "Chinese" women in the window were acting, since they weren't drinking. He also said they probably wouldn't leave me a tip, so I shouldn't try as hard. If all this had happened while I was at my day job, my response probably would have been developmental and probing: "Why is the sexuality of those men so important to you? Why are you assuming that those women are Chinese, and what would that have to do with how much they tip?" If that didn't work, I would likely go on the attack, and tell him why he was wrong, racist, sexist, homophobic, etc. However, this was not that kind of environment. It was a busy night and I didn't have time to review with him the messages he had received about gender and race as a child. We didn't have a friendship, so I couldn't tell him why the things he said were hurtful to me. I didn't have the opportunity to learn about his background, and what experiences he may have had that led him to say these things. I was also scared. I needed this job, and knowing that the doorman was friends with the owner made me reluctant to jeopardize my position. It had been a long time since I felt silenced like this. I know that in my position in residence life, I can ask questions of my colleagues and challenge them appropriately. I know that if I am triggered by them and become upset, they will understand and we can talk through it. It's the time and the relationships that we form that make the difference.

So, when people ask me why I remain in my unusual job, I can tell them that it's because it is a great opportunity to mold young minds, to network and to stay current in a field with so much active research, or because it is never boring. You have a voicemail on your phone; is it a student in crisis, or just someone running a little late this morning? After so much reflection in the course of writing this piece, I think the reason I stay is because there isn't enough social justice in the restaurant world. Too simplistic? All right, try this instead:

It's because there is something unique and important about working in a field where discourse, disagreement, and diversity are embraced and encouraged.

Genuine connection and caring are a priority, and you can maintain relationships both professionally and personally for as long as you'd like. We do not let opportunities for education pass us by, and we try to think as intentionally and progressively as we are allowed. Sometimes it takes a little bit of a panicked career crisis to remind us of all this, but in the end, it's always better than opening a restaurant.

THE KENNETH P. SAURMAN AWARD

This award honors Kenneth P. Saurman, who will long be remembered for his dedication to the field of student affairs and to the graduate program at The University of Vermont. After his death in 1980, a memorial fund was established for a prize recognizing the outstanding graduate in the program. This award is a reminder of the professional excellence and commitment Kenneth P. Saurman inspired in his students and colleagues.

Each spring, a committee of faculty members in the College of Education and Social Services selects a student, or students, who best display(s) the established award criteria. Those recognized: (a) show a record of outstanding achievement; (b) demonstrate ability to make outstanding future professional contributions at both local and national levels; (c) demonstrate future ability to make outstanding intellectual contribution to the field in the areas of research and scholarship; (d) show evidence of having fostered a sense of community and cooperation among peers, staff, and faculty; and (e) show evidence of outstanding contribution to the University through internship and practical experience.

In April 2008, the Kenneth P. Saurman Award was proudly presented to:

David Laxamana

In Between There and Then, and Here and Now

David Laxamana
2008 Saurman Award Recipient

I had a lot of trouble getting started on this reflection. I had expected to be writing from the perspective of a new professional, incorporating all that I'd learned from the Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration (HESA) program at the University of Vermont (UVM) into my work with students. Since I am still in the process of job searching, however, I have to write from a different perspective. Fortunately, the theme for the moral conversation section of this year's journal, "There and Then, Here and Now: Reflection and Meaning Making in Student Affairs," inspired me to share what I have learned about personal meaning making.

There and Then

The "There" was Santa Barbara, CA. The "Then" was 2005. Before coming to HESA, I was in a comfortable place in my life. I was working as a college counselor for an educational consultant. I helped high school juniors and seniors navigate the college application process. I helped students develop their college choices, complete their applications, and edit their personal statements and resumes. I loved working with students! It was different and far more rewarding than my previous job of working with computers. I was well-paid and there was even discussion about me taking an even larger role, as the owner moved closer to retirement.

I lived in an affordable, nice three bedroom house with two roommates who were also longtime friends. We shared interests and hobbies and had a well-established network of friends who we saw on a regular basis. I had lived in Santa Barbara for some time at that point, and even knew enough about the town to consider myself a local in some respects. All in all, life was good. But there was something missing, and it was a personal friend and HESA alum who thought the HESA program might be what I was looking for.

Dave Laxamana earned his Associate of Arts in Psychology from San Diego Mesa College and his Bachelor of Arts in History from the University of California San Diego. In 2008, he graduated from the University of Vermont with a Master of Education in Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration (HESA). He served as one of the Content Editors for the 29th Edition of The Vermont Connection. Dave is currently job searching in Southern California.

Here and Now

The "Here" is my parents' house in my hometown of San Diego, CA. The "Now" is 2009. I graduated this past May and drove back across the country to Southern California with my partner (also HESA '08). I expected to find a student affairs position somewhere in the area. Before my search began in earnest, however, I suffered the worst attack of gout I had ever experienced. Without going into exhaustive detail, gout is an extremely painful, inflammatory form of arthritis that affects the joints, most commonly the big toe. I was essentially immobile, unable to move my foot for almost two months. Of course this would happen after my student health insurance expired.

I share this personal health issue because it was the most significant event of my post-HESA experience. It was an unexpected barrier to the career I had hoped to start shortly after graduation. The ailment drove home the concept of being "temporarily able-bodied" in a scary way. It not only caused me to reassess my immediate plans, but also compelled me to make meaning of this difficult circumstance. Before moving back to the West Coast, I knew that my job search would be difficult for a few reasons. Searching in a very specific region limited my choices. The economy was not only bad nationwide, but especially in California. The colleges and universities were particularly hard hit financially. I was also searching with my partner, which increased the complexity of the search. We had to consider the timing of our applications, as well as locations, and we had to discuss how we would handle the possibility of competing for the same position. This unforeseen health issue delayed my search considerably and made an already difficult process that much harder.

With forced bed-rest came lots of time to just think. I was forced to ask myself questions larger than the scope of a job search. I became preoccupied with my vulnerabilities. I examined my various responses to my predicament: fear, uncertainty, frustration, impatience, and depression. After focusing on the negatives that I characterized as ranging from natural response to self-indulgent exaggeration, I was able to rediscover my confidence in my abilities. Through honest self-assessment I reinforced my commitment to my chosen career path, despite obstacles expected or unexpected. How did I make meaning of this specific period of transition? I imagined a friend or student in my position asking me about this situation, if the roles were reversed. I thought about what I would say, and then I said it to myself. Where did I really learn to do this in a meaningful way? HESA.

Reflection and Meaning Making

So what happened between "There and Then" and "Here and Now," between the past and the present? I basically went from a financially stable, socially enjoy-

able, and independent place in my life to being unemployed and living at home. What happened in between was HESA. And those 2 years were essential for my growth as a person and as a student affairs practitioner. Not only did I leave UVM with my Master's degree and new friends and colleagues, but also a wonderful partner.

When I think of meaning making I think of Robert J. Nash's class Philosophy of Education: The Search for Meaning. This class made me focus intentionally on the topic of meaning making. Reading Christopher Phillips' *Socrates Café: A Fresh Taste of Philosophy* (2004) and Julian Baggini's *What's It All About?: Philosophy & the Meaning of Life* (2001) provided me numerous questions on which to reflect. Reflecting on these questions and applying them to my life and my experiences helped me find a way to actively make meaning of my experiences. One writing assignment in particular, writing a personal letter to someone about my search for meaning, was a way for me to articulate the meaning I had been able to make of my HESA experience. I found that one way I made meaning of my HESA experience was to become involved, even over-involved. It was a sharp contrast from my undergraduate experience, which was characterized by a lack of participation.

A high level of involvement, and borderline over-involvement, seems to be characteristic of our field. It felt as though everyone around me was involved, or over-involved, in various committees, commissions, organizations, and programs. Often I was told, "Take care of yourself." In turn I would share this same phrase with classmates, advisees, and students. It was easy to say, but hard to do. I found myself being stretched to the limit by accepting these responsibilities, which fed my own internal interests and passions. These were things I wanted to do. One practicum supervisor once told me, "Be careful. Just because it doesn't feel like work, doesn't mean you're not doing work." I took on many things I wanted to do, and also many things I felt I had to do. Whether real or imagined, I thought there were external expectations. At times I felt almost obligated to say yes. Don't get me wrong, though. While balance may have been difficult for me to achieve, I am both proud of the work I did and grateful for the many opportunities I was given. I found meaning and connection in that invaluable, experiential learning.

For some students, HESA became easier with each passing semester. For me it became more difficult. I struggled with various aspects of the program the entire time I was there. I questioned whether I belonged and whether or not I should stay. Each semester got progressively harder, but I had to acknowledge that much of that was my own doing. While I felt that I said no a lot, I think I said yes even more often. My mindset was that I came to this program to participate, be involved, and make a difference. How do you decide what to do and who to help when there are so many individuals, groups, and causes that need and want

your help? And how do you balance your own well-being with helping others? These are the questions with which I struggled. Ironically, though, while these commitments were stressful to me, they were also deeply meaningful. My previous comfortable life had a lack of meaning and participation. I was happy and productive, but not fulfilled. My participation and involvement gave me meaning by establishing a connection to the community and creating a sense of belonging.

There and Then, Here and Now

In keeping with the "There and Then" aspect of the theme, I went back to the beginning of my graduate school career. I re-read the personal statement I wrote when I applied to HESA. I wanted to "challenge myself and my beliefs" and "leave my comfort zone." I think I certainly accomplished that. Nothing exemplifies this more for me than my introduction to, and passion for, social justice issues. In the "Here and Now" I find hope in the election of the country's first African American president. My enthusiasm is tempered, however, by the passage of the same-sex marriage ban in California. There is still a long road ahead, and the first steps are dialogue and understanding. HESA has taught me how to have difficult conversations about issues of social justice, not only with students, but with friends and family. I have learned about privilege, and I try to recognize and acknowledge my privileged identities and work for an equitable world. This particular change in my belief system and outlook is especially meaningful to me, and just one of the ways that HESA was life-changing for me. I was worried that this reflection might be a debacle, too personal, and maybe not universalizable enough. But personal is what characterized my HESA experience. Making my HESA experience personal was yet another way in which I made meaning during graduate school. Meaning making for me is personal.

What drew me to the HESA program? The people. What kept me in the program? The people. What do I miss most about HESA and UVM? The people. Although my narrative has been about my individual journey, meaning making was not an isolated process for me. Intentional personal relationship-building with classmates, colleagues, mentors, and students provided a support network that helped me survive and thrive. Learning and growing with a cohort gave my life meaning, and now those people are my friends and family. From student development theories to social justice activism, my two years in HESA were challenging, educational, and meaningful. I am honored to be a part of *The Vermont Connection*. It is not simply a journal, but a living, growing community. HESA Love!

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Each year, we invite a member of our community to write The Final Word. This contributor is the consummate student affairs educator and serves as a role model to us all through dedication, wisdom, and compassion.

This year, we are fortunate to conclude with *Stacey A. Miller*, Director of Residential Life at The University of Vermont.

The Final Word:
HESA, Pathway to an Authentic Life

Stacey A. Miller

Now I become myself. It's taken time, many years and places. I have been dissolved and shaken. I have worn other people's faces. - May Sarton (as cited in Nash, 2004, p. 99)

As a Black woman in the academy I have too often found myself in disguise. Hiding behind a mask constructed around what I believed people wanted me to be, afraid to show my own face. I was afraid because when I looked around through the eyeholes of the mask, I did not see many women like me, and I still don't. I'm brown, loud, big, and beautiful, at times a stark contrast to what is reflected back at me. How could I be myself when covertly and sometimes even overtly, intentional or not, the academy tells me to conform, to fit in?

Yet as time goes by, little by little, I have found myself, my voice, and continue to figure out who I am. Poetically enough, it has been through my engagement with HESA students that I have found my most authentic voice, the Stacey that I've always hoped and wanted to be.

HESA students are a marvel to me. Regardless of their age or what level of experience they bring to the program, they are like a breath of fresh air to a weary professional who constantly teeters between order and chaos, exhilaration and burn out. The naïveté of the first year and the obvious growth in the second makes me proud to be a student affairs professional. Unlike older professionals who seem to be cast in stone, HESA students are like clay: a little dried out from life's experiences, but still moldable; open to knowing and growing. They are smart, bright, curious, scared, and nervous, but above all else, positive. They believe in what they are learning and that they can make a difference in a profession that demands so much, for what at times seems like so little. They are eager to confront injustice and demand equality for all. They are open to all students, and share their life experiences with reckless abandon and truth.

Stacey A. Miller is the Director of Residential Life at the University of Vermont and has worked at the institution since 2003. She began her professional career at Stony Brook University, New York, in 1993, where she also received both her Bachelor in Arts, and Master in Liberal Studies degrees. She is currently enrolled as a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program at the University of Vermont, and serves as co-instructor for the "Cultural Pluralism" course that is taught out of the Higher Education and Student Affairs Administrative program. Over her career, she has presented at both NASPA and ACPA national conferences.

As a veteran professional of over 15 years, I play an unspoken and obligatory role in their growth and development as young professionals. More often, however, it is they who serve as role models for me. They say what's on their minds, because they have not yet learned to be professionally silent; they question our authority, because they have not yet learned that there might be a consequence to their inquiry; they question policy, because they have not been beaten down by bureaucracy and old hats who say no without thinking. Often, without even knowing it, they are the epitome of authentic, of authenticity. They are genuine in thought, deed, and action. Wrong or right, they are always striving to be better than they were yesterday, and better for tomorrow.

HESA students have made me think and feel deeply about things long forgotten. They keep me in touch with "today's" students and help me understand the language they speak. HESA students have made me laugh and, embarrassingly enough, cry. No doubt I have erupted into fits of anger as a result of something they have done or said. I have even broken what some believe is a cardinal sin, I often curse in their presence. Through it all they listen, respect, challenge, laugh, and encourage the real me, my authentic self. With and without words, they have flatly demanded the real Stacey Miller, uncensored, imperfect, honest, and true. Through their smiles, laughter, and tears, they have asked me to be me, not only because it is right, but because it gives them license to be who they are too. In their quest for meaning, they want to be guided by the faith that living an authentic life is the best life to live, the only life to live.

I would like to thank the Class of 2009 and every class, before and after, for putting me on, and keeping me on, the path to what I hope continues to be a more open and principled life, full of honesty and truth. Thank you for allowing an outsider into the HESA family, and for allowing my voice to have meaning. Thank you for reminding me that in a world of posers, being one's self is always enough. It has been a privilege to know each and every one of you, but most of all it has been an honor to have the FINAL WORD!

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NEW CONNECTIONS

Each year, members of the graduating HESA class write original papers in the form of a comprehensive exam in order to meet graduation requirements. These papers take the form of original research, scholarly personal narratives, literature reviews, and argumentative essays. The Full Board of *The Vermont Connection* is pleased to share topics from the Class of 2008, along with the "New Connections" they have made following their graduation. What follows is the current placement of members of the Class of 2008, followed by the title of their comprehensive exam and an abstract. Please feel free to contact the authors if you would like more information about their topic.

Sarah Maria Childs

Program Advisor, Department of Multicultural Services
Texas A&M University

Other: The Invisible People Giving Voice and Meaning to Multi- racial Individuals in Student Affairs and Higher Education

In this scholarly personal narrative (SPN) paper, I will be examining my experiences and struggles as an individual that identifies as multiracial. Race is a difficult subject to write about, much less discuss; so I will be writing from a personal point of view to illustrate what race has meant in my life. I will offer the reader an insight into what being multiracial means for me, why I identify this way, and how I navigate through it all. Furthermore, I will share personal experiences and key people that have played a significant role in my development as a multiracial person.

Throughout my SPN, I will cite work from a variety of authors, including Professor Robert J. Nash. Furthermore, I will offer a narrative that will be useful in helping others to understand how people come to self-identify, behaviors that inhibit others from living authentically, and ways in which we can all learn to listen to others so that we may promote individual strength.

Rachel de Simone

Senior Assistant Director of Admissions
Bryn Mawr College

Women's Leadership and the World Café Model: A Reflective Qualitative Research Project and Comprehensive Exam

Although women have made great strides, we still do not have gender equity. With few women represented in positions of power, how will young women see themselves as leaders? In this qualitative research paper, I will explore undergraduate women's experiences as leaders at a male-led institution and the World Café (a method of dialogue intended to generate knowledge through conversation) as a tool for exploring women's leadership. By understanding women's leadership and women's experiences as leaders, student affairs professionals can better facilitate women's leadership development; foster opportunities for women to connect with other leaders who share their gender identity; and legitimize alternative forms of leadership to the traditional "podium-style," hierarchical leadership.

Elizabeth Guevara

Identity Theft: How Higher Education both Stripped and Restored My Languages, Cultures and Ethnicities

How would it feel to have all of your traditions, language and culture taken away from you by just one phenotype, one characteristic that you have no control over; your skin color? Complexion, skin tones and features are characteristics that present themselves at first glance and can determine how a person will be treated and can affect how you walk in this world and environment. Can a multiracial or multiethnic student at a predominantly white institution be affected by the way that they look or don't look? Can the environment that they are in affect the way they see themselves? Through this scholarly personal narrative I will share my experiences in three different environments that have affected the way that I perceived myself and my multiple identities. I will share stories that will focus directly on my Portuguese and Peruvian identities and how I perceived them through my identity development. I will first focus on a story that provoked feelings about my current environment and that lead to theme of this comprehensive exam.

Sarah E. Hoffert

Health Educator - Sexual Health, Programming, and Advocacy
The University of Vermont

Acknowledging and Developing Identity: Four Twins' Journey Attending College Separately From Their Twin Sibling

The identity developments of various populations have been extensively researched in higher education and student affairs yet twin and multiple identity development in this field remains unexplored. In this study, I summarize the experiences of four college students who identify as twins and attend, or attended, college without their twin sibling. Included among the findings are the challenges, benefits, experiences, and revelations that come from attending college "alone." This study provides essential information useful for educators and practitioners as they acknowledge and understand twin identity development, individuation, and the future of the twin population in higher education. This study is particularly relevant at a time when twin and multiple births are rapidly increasing.

David Laxamana

From Dismissed to Distinguished in the Academy: One Non-Traditional Student's Candid Account of Making Sense of His Multiple Identities

This Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN) will examine my non-linear path to and through higher education. At various times throughout my educational journey, I have been a: first generation college student, college dropout, community college student, transfer student, older student, returning student, and now graduate student. This paper will focus primarily on my experiences both as a community college student and an older student, and how I have rediscovered and redefined the value of education to help me overcome the challenges those identities have posed in my graduate school experience. I will make connections to existing scholarship, especially as it relates to meaning-making and personal philosophy, and provide recommendations for supporting non-traditional and traditional students alike.

Benjamin C. Meóz
Residence Director
The University of Vermont

From ADDolescence to ADDulthood: Surviving Higher Education and the Real World with AD/HD

ADDolescence to ADDulthood is a narrative tying the experience of growing up with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) to transitioning through different educational and professional environments. The narrative of this experience is complimented by the story and quotations from Ayn Rand's novel *The Fountainhead.* The main character of Rand's novel, *Howard Roark,* is an architect who is challenged by society because his unique style does not conform to the traditional and accepted methods of design. His experience mirrors my own experience of finding my academic and professional work styles challenged in the traditionally modeled and structured settings of academia and the office. This comparison finds additional support in literature and studies from various sources on AD/HD and related fields of study, such as brain development, and is followed by my thoughts on working with students and staff with AD/HD.

Stephanie "Mo" Moreira
Residence Director
Colorado State University

Pledging Puerto Rico: The Experiences of a Woman of Color in a Historically White Sorority

Patricia Châu Nguyên
Assistant Dean of Students / Director of Asian and Asian American Student Center
Cornell University

"Letters to An Un-Published Scholar:" A Soulful Journey of a Student Affairs Practitioner to Self-Empowerment Through Student Empowerment

The modern American world has gradually phased out the metaphysical nature from our lives. Focused on rationalization and void of emotional intelligence, I find it more difficult to find meaning in the work I do. This comprehensive exam utilizes the methodology of the Scholarly Personal Narrative to explore my journey as a practitioner in finding a soulful purpose in the field of student affairs and higher education. The soul of this field has always been the student, and returning to this basic premise has brought me to the realization that this work is no longer a career for me, but rather a vocation. Utilizing Alan Briskin's ancient hypotheses of soul as a framework, my epistolary reflection of three empowered students led to my own empowerment.

AJ Place
Residence Director
Chapman University

Helping Student Affairs Professionals Understand a Gender Queer Identity: Being Purple - Living between the Pink and Blue

Student affairs professionals consistently work with students from varying backgrounds, and within that work they must find a way to support students in all aspects of their identities. In today's society, gender affects us all. From the moment we are born we are prescribed specific genders and gender roles. For some people, this prescribed gender identity does not match. Transgender and gender queer students are starting to voice their identities and are challenging society's rules on gender. This Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN) will explore gender

identity and the development of one person's gender queer identity with the hopes of creating dialogue and inclusive practices for student affairs professionals.

Sarah Reid
Program Coordinator, Global Village Learning Communities
The University of Vermont

Strengthening the Senior Year: Senior Capstone Priorities and the Transition from College to Life-After-College

"The senior year has had a mixed record in higher education. But re-thinking the senior year to meet the needs of current students could be very useful" (Levine, 1998, p. 59). This paper aims to address the importance of the senior year capstone as it relates to preparing students for life-after-college. Sections explore priorities of senior year capstones, current developmental psychology of students who faced a difficult transition to life-after-college, and student responses from an online, open-ended qualitative survey on a new capstone course offered in the Fall of 2007 through the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources (RSENR) that aimed to better prepare students for life-after-college at the University of Vermont (UVM). Recommendations for ways to aid in successfully navigating students from college to life-after college are given for the RSENR department and UVM in hopes of further strengthening the senior year.

Hannah M. Roberts
Community Director
The University of Arizona

A Return to Resilience: Stress-Reduction Implications for Student Affairs Graduate Programs

Student affairs is a field with a notoriously high burnout rate, and our graduate programs should be the place where students are taught balance. However, too often we leave this task up to the student because there is too much else to do; in a profession with such high emotional and personal involvement, this lack of structured guidance is a recipe for burnout and defeat. This Scholarly Personal Narrative examines my experience in a student affairs graduate preparation program, and my own struggles with stress and anxiety during these two years. Weaving together my personal stories with literature on stress, anxiety, perfec-

tionism, and burnout, I hope others can garner a better understanding of what we students truly face on a day-to-day basis. I will close by sharing concrete examples from the literature on how individuals can change a stressful lifestyle, exploring the ideas of resiliency, mindful living, support networks, and therapy, and suggest best practices for those faculty and administrators working to support student affairs graduate students.

Laura Brina Semenow
Study Abroad Coordinator
University of Tulsa

The Debate over Affirmative Action in Brazilian Universities

Affirmative action in admissions to higher education as a mean for reducing inequalities has existed in U.S. institutions since the 1960s. But, this topic has only recently been introduced in Brazil. This paper describes ways that race is perceived in Brazil and how the introduction of racial affirmative action policies for higher education admissions is generating controversy there. A review of literature and popular media will show how a racial quota system is being implemented in Brazilian institutions. The criticisms this system is receiving are also discussed.

Ian T. Stroud
Coordinator for Residential Life
University of Carolina at Greensboro

Indian Higher Education: The Indigenous Presence on College Campuses

The American Indian is one of the most underrepresented students on college campuses across the country. This paper examines the historical analysis of Indian education through three significant periods in U.S. education, provides an analysis of current issues and concerns of American Indian students, presents the Indigenous approach to solving recruitment and retention of our native students, and argues for increasing the supportive networks for Indian students in hopes of creating an environment that extends beyond survival but allows Native/Indigenous students to thrive in higher education settings.

V

Andrew M. Wells
Conduct Coorinator
University of California, Davis

*Queer Role Models: How Mentoring Relationships with Student
Affairs Practitioners Counter College Students' Internalization of Homophobia*

With every new class of first-year students, student affairs profession-
als encounter new challenges. From students who challenge authority
to those that struggle with substance abuse, from academic challenges
to social challenges, today's college students know the meaning of the
word "challenge". Of all these students, however, those that identify
as Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual (LGB) are most isolated and disconnected
from potential support systems. As student affairs practitioners, we
are in a unique position to connect with these students and develop
mentoring relationships, supporting these students and improving their
chances to succeed in college. In this article, I will discuss the impor-
tance of mentoring relationships between Student Affairs profession-
als and undergraduate college students in overcoming the homophobic
messages that persist in college campuses. I will draw upon my own
personal experiences and widely accepted identity development models,
sharing my personal narrative in the process.

V

Thomas Whitcher
Coordinator for Fraternity and Sorority Life
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

The Influence of Film Media as it Relates to the College Male Greek Experience

In this study I explore the influence of film media on college males
and their experience as members of social Greek-letter fraternities.
This study shines light on the experiences of four students located in
Northern New England. Interviews were conducted to reveal the im-
pact of media on individual perception and expectations of fraternity
life once arriving on a college or university campuses. Throughout this
study, themes emerged to articulate this impact. Additionally, this study
provides direction for campuses professionals in supporting male fra-
ternities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Welcome to the 30th Volume of *The Vermont Connection*! The journal you hold is a clear testament to the longevity and quality of the University of Vermont's (UVM) Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration (HESA) graduate program. On behalf of the 2008-2009 TVC Editorial Board, we wish to acknowledge the critical contributions you make as students, faculty, alumni/ae, assistantship and practicum providers, and friends supporting and participating in the ever-growing HESA community.

As TVC advisors and alumnae ourselves (albeit from different eras!), we have witnessed the journal come together through the dynamic and purposeful leader-ship that characterizes this year's graduating HESA cohort. We are grateful for the opportunity to learn and serve with the Editorial Board to produce a physical manifestation of the connection we all share, one that reaches beyond the UVM campus or these pages and is greater than any of us individually. The scholarship, professionalism, reflection, and research articulated in these printed pages dem-onstrate the diverse perspectives and talent throughout the HESA community.

A primary goal of this year's Editorial Board is to further foster the HESA con-nection through innovative uses of technology (i.e. social networking), increased accessibility to TVC resources, enhanced communications, and seeking feedback in order to empower the alumni/ae base to impact TVC and HESA. In a variety of arenas this year, we have witnessed the profound impact and influence of a large group of empowered people on the course of history. As TVC strives to provide a lifeline to all HESA alumni/ae, we sincerely appreciate the effort you put forth to stay connected and informed, recognizing that our collaborative ef-forts strengthen not only the journal, the academic program, or higher education, but also our global community and citizenry.

In authoring this letter together, we found ourselves celebrating how HESA de-veloped in us a way of thinking that invites multiple and even divergent perspec-tives, a tremendous gift as we advance professionally and personally in higher education and beyond. We invite you to take some time to read this journal and

reflect on your path since completing the program or, if a friend of the program, since being introduced to HESA.

We thank you personally for the vital role you play in keeping "the connection" alive and are sincerely grateful for your continued support as these engaged, thoughtful professionals venture into higher education and beyond. In this difficult economic period in higher education, your support of these newly minted HESA graduates would be greatly appreciated. Your commitment to HESA ensures the future of this program and our profession are in capable hands.

As we reflect on and celebrate the production of 30 TVC volumes by our respected (soon-to-be) colleagues, let us honor and renew a commitment to the wisdom of E.M. Forster: "Only connect."

Warm Regards,

Corin Blanchard (HESA '04) and Patty Eldred (HESA '80)
The University of Vermont

This year's Editorial and Full Boards would like to thank the following individuals who contributed to our successful fundraising over the past calendar year. Our alumni and friends are responsible for the continued vitality and success of our efforts.

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Style Guidelines

Manuscripts must be clear, concise, and interesting with a well-organized development of ideas. The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Fifth Edition* (2001) should be followed for reference style and general guidelines.

- Double space all material, including references, quotations, tables, and figures. Leave extra space above and below subheadings and allow generous margins (at least one-inch margins).
- Because manuscripts are processed through an anonymous review system, they should contain no clues to the author's identity or institutional affiliation (with the exception of a separate title page as outlined in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Fifth Edition*). Where appropriate, institutional identification will be inserted after acceptance of the manuscript.
- Research manuscripts should total no more than fifteen (15) double-spaced, typewritten pages (approximately 3,000 words) including references, figures, and tables. Shorter articles are accepted and encouraged.
- Original research (literary, qualitative, quantitative, or scholarly personal narrative) is encouraged. All such work should be applicable to the higher education and student affairs professions.

- Field reports should not exceed three (3) pages (approximately 600 words in length). They should briefly report on or describe new practices, programs, or techniques. Authors should supply additional background information for interested parties who may request it.
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- Book reviews should not exceed five (5) pages in length (approximately 1,000 words). Proposed titles to be reviewed should be approved by the Full Board. Authors are fully responsible for obtaining such texts. Additionally, it is the author's responsibility to secure permission to quote or adapt text content. A copy of the publisher's written permission must be provided to the Full Board before any manuscript can be published.
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Submission Instructions

- Form and content of manuscripts should comply with the above style guidelines and the general guidelines of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Fifth Edition*. Manuscripts that do not conform to these guidelines cannot be considered.
- Never submit manuscripts that have been previously published or are currently under consideration for publication.
- Material should be submitted electronically only; visit *The Vermont Connection* website for more information.
- It is imperative for authors to adhere to all dates outlined in the Call for Articles.

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