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 2010, along with the “New Connections” they have made following their graduation. What follows is the current placement of members of the Class of 2010, 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.

Please note that submission of an abstract is not required for Scholarly Personal Narratives (SPN) and therefore may not be included for some author’s comprehensive exams.
Lorriz Anne Alvarado  
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American University

Defining and Finding Meaning in Success: A Reflection on the American Dream and Recommendation for Student Affairs Educators

“Just work hard and you will succeed.” This phrase and others like it represent the belief in meritocracy, which is repeated and perpetuated in our society by role models, friends, government, media, and ourselves. The myth of meritocracy is a part of the utopian belief in the American Dream, which continues to be an active narrative in Americans’ lives that many do not realize is simply a dream and not based on reality. As educators, how do we confront the meritocracy narrative and better understand how it affects our work and our impact on students? Through Scholarly Personal Narrative, the author explores a definition of success through literature supported by personal experiences. Recommendations on how to challenge and change our views on success are offered for higher education and student affairs educators.

Stacey Banfield-Hardaway  
Residential Coordinator 
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Charting Your Path From Within: An Aspiring Educator’s Journey of Self-Authorship

Kailee Brickner-McDonald  
VISTA  
The University of Vermont

Exploring the Dance: Journey, Community, and Voice in Social Justice Education

This author uses contra dancing to explore themes central to enriching and accessible social justice education: social justice as a journey; appreciating and fostering community; and finding individual voice. Combining narrative from the author’s life experiences and research on effective educational practices, this paper demonstrates how student affairs social justice educators can apply lessons from dancing to their pedagogy to better reach diverse students.
Erin Craw

On Our Way: Discovering Children of Alcoholics in Student Affairs

Kirsten Fricke
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Exploring the Experiences of Students of Color in the Field of Natural Resources through Counter-storytelling

This study utilizes Critical Race Theory, specifically counter-storytelling, to examine students of color experiences in the Rubenstein School for the Environment and Natural Resources (RSEN) at the University of Vermont (UVM), an extreme predominantly White institution. Utilizing qualitative inquiry, participants were invited to share their experiences transitioning to UVM and navigating residential and academic environments. The resulting counter-stories highlight the impact of racial micro-aggressions on students’ ability to find community and succeed. Challenging the dominant narrative, the participants’ experiences highlighted intentional and unintentional ways people of color are excluded from the environmental field.

Valerie Garcia
Assistant Director of New Student Programs
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Developing an Understanding of Sorority Membership On First-Generation College Student Success

First-generation college students are students whose parents do not have any postsecondary education (Choy, 2001). First-generation students face greater challenges in the area of access to college, persistence throughout college, and attainment of a degree. Alexander Astin’s (1984) research indicates there is a positive correlation between students’ co-curricular involvement and their college success. Using Astin’s previous research along with more current research, this qualitative study explored the experiences of five sorority women who are first-generation college students. The findings indicate that the presence of role models, social and emotional support systems, academic resources and support, prospects for further involvement and leadership, and the opportunity for personal development were key factors in the participants’ sorority experience that contributed to their college success.
Payne Hiraldo
Resident Director
University of Massachusetts - Lowell

The Role of Positive Self Image and Internalized Racial Oppression: A Reflection of an Aspiring Student Affairs Practitioner

Jacqueline Hyman
Hall Director
Georgetown University

Goldilocks Syndrome: A Biracial Students’ Journey to Find a Community That’s Just Right

Jason Johnson
Residential Learning Coordinator
Virginia Tech

Sustainability Through Meaning: One Part-Time Graduate Student’s Journey Through A Cohort-Based Master’s Program

Part-time students in cohort-based graduate programs face a unique set of challenges in finding meaning with the program outside of academic work. Cohort-based programs cater to full-time student and not the non-traditional, part-time learner. This paper explores the journey of one part-time student through a cohort-based graduate program in higher education and student affairs. Through the use of Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN), five themes are identified and elucidated through personal stories recommendations for institutional improvement are also identified and included.

Laura Megivern
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Views from the Field: Faculty and Student Affairs Professionals’ Experiences in Politics and Service-Learning
In service-learning experiences, students work to serve community needs while learning about the social issues that exist in those communities. Students involved in service-learning often examine social structures and economic systems from a complex perspective, leading to a re-examination of previously held beliefs and political opinions, and this sometimes causes political conflict within groups of students. This qualitative study explores how service-learning practitioners navigate the political content and process of service-learning, and especially how they approach conflict in groups and encourage students to explore these issues without advocating for their own beliefs. The seven participants included faculty and student affairs professionals working at institutions of higher education in New England who have used service-learning. Inductive data analysis was employed to identify emergent themes from the semi-structured interviews conducted in Fall 2009. Three themes surrounding service-learning practice were identified, in addition to three political themes and three areas for further study.

Adam Ortiz
House Director
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And We Will Risk the Ship: Student Spiritual Exploration in Higher Education

The intentional pursuit of a meaningful and pluralistic religio-spiritual identity is largely absent from institutions of higher education, particularly in public colleges and universities. Given the potentially volatile and extremely personal nature of religious and spiritual exploration, student affairs professionals at many schools allow students to develop spiritually without institutional assistance or support. However, the growing diversity of religion in the United States is creating conditions where global citizens must be equipped with an understanding of religious pluralism as well as faculties for critically examining their own beliefs. In this paper, I share my own spiritual narrative and articulate how it has lead me to becoming a student affairs professional invested in supporting students through their religio-spiritual journeys. In addition, I offer suggestions for how best to help students explore their religio-spiritual identities while actively validating others’.
Nathan Divino Panelo  
Residence Hall Director  
Seattle University

*Asian American Male Students and their Identity Development at an Extreme Predominately White Institution: Reexamining Kim’s Asian American Identity Development Model*

Student affairs practitioners encounter significant opportunity to assist students and colleagues with making meaning of their lives. In particular, exploring the meaning of suffering and identity in social justice are particularly promising venues to explore when our aims are directed at fostering a healthy and educational experience. In order to accurately facilitate the process of engaging the meaning and its making for students, faculty, and staff, student affairs practitioners need to be familiar with and utilize the frameworks of Moral Conversation, Logotherapy, Narrative Self-therapy, and confiding in others as tools for sustaining this process. Written with an Epistolary Scholarly Personal Narrative methodology, I will explore and examine pieces of my own narrative containing suffering and social justice, to advocate for the practice of meaning making to be incorporated in social justice pedagogy.

Finn J. Schneider  
Residence Director  
Macalester College

*Beyond the Binary: An Inclusive Model of Gender Identity Development*

Student development is recognized as an important component of student affairs professionals’ knowledge and work. Numerous models exist which outline the developmental processes for a variety of identities; however, the current literature does not include a model of gender identity development that is representative of the diversity of experiences among transgender people. Drawing from racial identity development theory as well as gender theory, a new model is proposed that emphasized fluidity and moves beyond the scope of the gender binary.
Matthew Van Jura
Program Advisor
The University of Michigan

Better Men on Campus (B.M.O.C.): Supporting the Gender Identity Development of College Men, and How Involvement Can Promote Positive Expressions of Masculinity

Men are a historically privileged population within higher education. However, a growing body of literature indicates that male identified students are struggling to succeed academically and socially while in college. Within the United States, society’s narrow interpretation of masculinity limits the expression of these students, and often leads to the perpetuation of hypermasculine behaviors. These actions not only negatively affect the individual performing them, but also harm the campus community as a whole. By examining male gender identity development within the context of student involvement theories, this article explores ways in which student affairs educators can better serve male identified students by encouraging a positive and healthy gender identity.

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Charting Your Path From Within: An Aspiring Educator’s Journey of Self-Authorship