

JCC Connexions

Quarterly Newsletter About the *Journal of College and Character*

Vol. 4, No. 2, May 2018

Journal of College & Character

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Focus Authors Publish Article on Model of Engagement in Faith and Learning

JCC [Focus Authors](#) for May 2018 are **Douglas (Jake)** and **Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen**, whose [article](#), “Faith and Learning in a Post-Truth World,” is featured in the May 2018 issue of the journal. In the article, Jake and Rhonda propose a model that aims to aid colleges and universities to respond to the influences of a “post-truth era,” which requires a more far-reaching engagement with religion and its complex perception of truth.

The model for engagement focuses on five educational functions of religion: proclamation, rationality, compassion, transformation, and wonder/mystery. They argue that using this model can improve learning for students across the range of religious worldviews and involvement, including those who are spiritual and non-religious in addition to those traditionally religious while maintaining the norms of academic and religious freedom.

In their [blog post](#) the Jacobsens reply to these questions posed by **Jon Dalton**, JCC co-editor:

1. You use the term *pluriform* to describe the various forms of religious expression today. How does this term differ from religious pluralism?



2. Why do you think the number of college students who identify as having “no religious affiliation” is on the increase today?

3. Is it really necessary for colleges and universities to address issues related to faith? Isn't this a private matter that students should deal with on their own?

4. What are some of the ways in which student life professionals can help college students to connect learning and faith?

Both Jake and Rhonda bring a rich background in religious engagement in the higher education setting to the journal community. Jake, an historian of American

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religion, and Rhonda, a scholar of American higher education, are co-directors of the Religion in the Academy Project, a long-running research [initiative](#) about the impact of religion and religious diversity across all the structures of American higher education. They also serve on the advisory board for the IDEALS project (Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey), which is associated with the Interfaith Youth Core.

At Messiah College (Mechanicsburg, PA), Jake is distinguished professor of church history and theology, and Rhonda is professor of psychology and director of faculty development. In addition to publishing articles and essays, they have also published three books with Oxford University Press: *Scholarship and Christian Faith: Enlarging the Conversation* (2004); *The American University in a Postsecular Age* (2008), winner of the Lilly Fellows Book Award; and *No Longer Invisible: Religion in University Education* (2012), winner of a Critics Choice Award from the American Educational Studies Association.

Jake's award-winning book, *Thinking in the Spirit*, (2003) catalogues the emergence of Pentecostalism as a theological movement that has transformed the practices of Christianity not just in America but around the world. He is also the author of two widely-used texts on

global Christianity, *The World's Christians* (2011), and *Global Gospel: An Introduction to Christianity on Five Continents* (2015).

A former public school counselor, Rhonda has been recognized with both national and campus teaching awards and has received grants in support of course development for bringing science and religion into dialogue. She champions a vision of faculty development that combines a strong commitment to holistic education (including cooperation between faculty and student life professionals) with an equally strong emphasis on faculty research. Her assumption is that students acquire habits of life-long learning best when they see those habits embodied in their teachers.

Jake completed a Ph.D in American religious history at the University of Chicago, with a dissertation describing the beginnings of religious pluralism in colonial America. Rhonda's (Ed. D., Temple University) dissertation research focused on how to reward good teaching at the university level and stressed the importance of intrinsic motivation in contrast to extrinsic.

With their varied backgrounds and expertise, together with their common interests, the two scholars have presented their work through lectures and workshops on various campuses and at gatherings of academic and professional societies, divisions of student life, chaplains, and college presidents.

"Promising Trends" in Law, Policy, & Interfaith Dialogue Discussed at SRHE Pre-Conference

By Zachary Cole

In honor of NASPA's 100th anniversary, the Spirituality and Religion in Higher Education Knowledge Community (SRHE) sponsored a special half-day pre-conference session, "Spirituality, Secularism, and Religion in Higher Education: Where We've Been, Where We Are, and Where We're Going," at the 2018 NASPA National Conference.

To explore the topic, "Where We've Been," all conference attendees shared highlights of the religious, secular, and spiritual histories of their institutions. This activity introduced participants to each other while underscoring the historical impact of religion on their institutions.

To further develop the topic of "Where We've Been," **Amy L. Fisher**, university chaplain at Suffolk University, and **Sable Manson**, assistant director for student leadership and development at University of Southern California's Joint Educational Project provided a brief historical context of religious movements in the United States over the last 100 years and the ways that context has impacted higher education. Issues covered included the G.I. Bill,

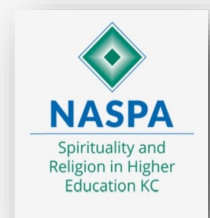
shifts in immigration, and the rise of Islamophobia.

The session then welcomed **Shafiqah Ahmadi**, from the University of Southern California Center for Education, Identity, and Social Justice and **Janett I. Cordovés** and **JT Snipes** from the Interfaith Youth Core to join Amy Fisher as panelists to discuss "Where We Are" and "Where We're Going."

The panelists reflected on the current "moment" in regards to religion and spirituality in higher education, the role of research and scholarship in preparing student affairs professionals, and promising trends in law, policy, and interfaith dialogue.

The session concluded with sharing of resources and small group discussion.

For more information about this session, please contact SRHE KC co-chairs, **Zachary Cole** at zachary.cole@tufts.edu and **Ross Wantland** at wantland@illinois.edu.



Supporting First-Year Students around Career Development

By Michael J. Stebleton

Over 30 years ago, I enrolled at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities as an ambitious, yet extremely undecided undergraduate student. As I tell my own students now, “I was paradoxically interested in everything—but nothing.” I joined the College of Liberal Arts, home to over 60 different majors, and I was simultaneously excited and overwhelmed by the options.

Much to the credit of a supportive and persistent academic adviser, I finally decided on a major at the beginning of my junior year. Like many decisions that college students make, my major decision-making process occurred largely by chance, or what **Krumboltz** and **Levin** (2004) call *planned happenstance*. I was lucky to have the support from caring advisers and professors in my eventual home, the Institute of Child Development, where I majored in child psychology.

Although I have little regrets about my decision, I could have been intentional and engaged in my decision-making process. For example, I did not enroll in a career-decision making course or planning workshop, even though these options existed. I did not seek out consultations with a career counselor, despite the availability of this resource. In addition, I did not participate in internships or research projects until later in my undergraduate experience. While all of these opportunities likely existed during my first-year of college, I did not avail of them, unfortunately. My experience likely reflects many current students’ interactions.

Luckily, *planned happenstance* frequently results in positive endings. Currently, I spend much of my time as a faculty member in the College of Education and Human Development, supporting undergraduates who are making similar life-career decisions, often during the critical first year of college. Career development expert **Mark Savickas** says that we spend much of our lives figuring out how to *turn our preoccupations into occupations*.

We are always working on preoccupations (i.e., figuring out what we want in life and how to get there). My own struggles as an undergraduate student with life-career decisions continues to inform how I interact and support my students. Furthermore, my own experiences shaped the philosophy underlying [our article](#) in the May 2018 issue of *Journal of College and Character*.

In this article, my colleague **Kate Diamond** and I argue that career development opportunities should be considered a high-impact practice and that institutional leaders should be doing more to provide these types of opportunities for students at two- and four-year institutions—especially during the first year. Inquiries and rigorous debate focused on high-impact practices and student engagement persist in the higher education and student affairs literatures (**Groccia**, 2018; **Kuh**, 2016).

According to **Wolf-Wendel**, **Ward**, and **Kinzie** (2009), *engagement* includes two main components: what the student does and what the institution does. Engagement is essentially an agreement about the educational experience between the two parties. However, the emphasis on *student effort* tends to get over-emphasized; the contract is often unequal. As educators, we often place the blame on students for their perceived lack of engagement, both academically and socially.

J. Luke Wood (2018), higher education scholar, argues that student development theories are often limited and harmful, especially to historically underserved students. He offers critiques and concerns about engagement models in that there is often excessive focus on student effort and not enough responsibility placed on the institution.

Moving forward, institutional leaders need to focus on context, actions, and outcomes around various domains such as programs (high-impact, inclusive), practices (culturally relevant, equitable), resources (sustainable and meaningful), and inquiry (outcome-focused), among others (Wood).

Applying this re-envisioned understanding of engagement re-considered argument to our article, we contend that career development should become the job of student affairs practitioners and faculty across campus. Key institutional leaders need to invest

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more effort into building and fostering effective partnerships, practices, and policies that allow all students, but especially first-year students, to take advantage of career planning experiential opportunities (Fox, 2018).

The need for more career development and planning is timely and relevant. A recent *NACE Job Outlook* survey (2017) reported that there are significant gaps between the perceived career readiness skills of recent undergraduates and the perceptions of the employers who are hiring them (Bauer-Wolf, 2018). For example, let us examine *oral and written communications* competencies. Approximately 80% of students considered themselves proficient; however, only 42% of employers rated recent graduates proficient in oral and written communications.

Significant gaps exist in other core competencies including professionalism/work ethic; critical thinking/problem solving; leadership; intercultural fluency, and career management. Furthermore, students who do possess these skills are often unable to talk effectively about how to apply them in an interview (DuRose & Stebleton, 2016). Clearly, opportunities exist to narrow this gap. We believe that more career development opportunities in the form of internships, service learning, and career planning classes and embedded workshops—especially offered in the first year—would foster student skill development in the core competencies and support students to become more prepared for the workplace.

Okay, I admit it. I did not use career services on my campus during my undergraduate years. Fortunately, I made strong connections with faculty members who challenged and guided me (despite my negligence of the diligent career staff). A recent *Atlantic Monthly* article implored, “Why Aren’t College Students Using Career Services?” (Fadulu, 2018). Let’s be honest. This problem is *not* new. Approximately 50% of students do not use career services, and many who do have mixed reactions about their satisfaction with these interactions. But change can occur with intentional effort, commitment, and shifts in institutional mission around career development delivery models (Cruzvergara, Testani, & Smith, 2018). Career development efforts must become an institutional priority.

We contend in the article that career development centers need to become even more innovative and strategic in terms of reaching our students; this is especially true for underserved student populations (including immigrant students, first-generation, and/or students of color). Most importantly, career development professionals need the resources to support and sustain these efforts. Sup-

porting students around high-impact practices and career development in the first year must become a priority for all educators, including student affairs administrators and practitioners. The time is now, and extensive opportunities exist to make significant changes at an institutional level.

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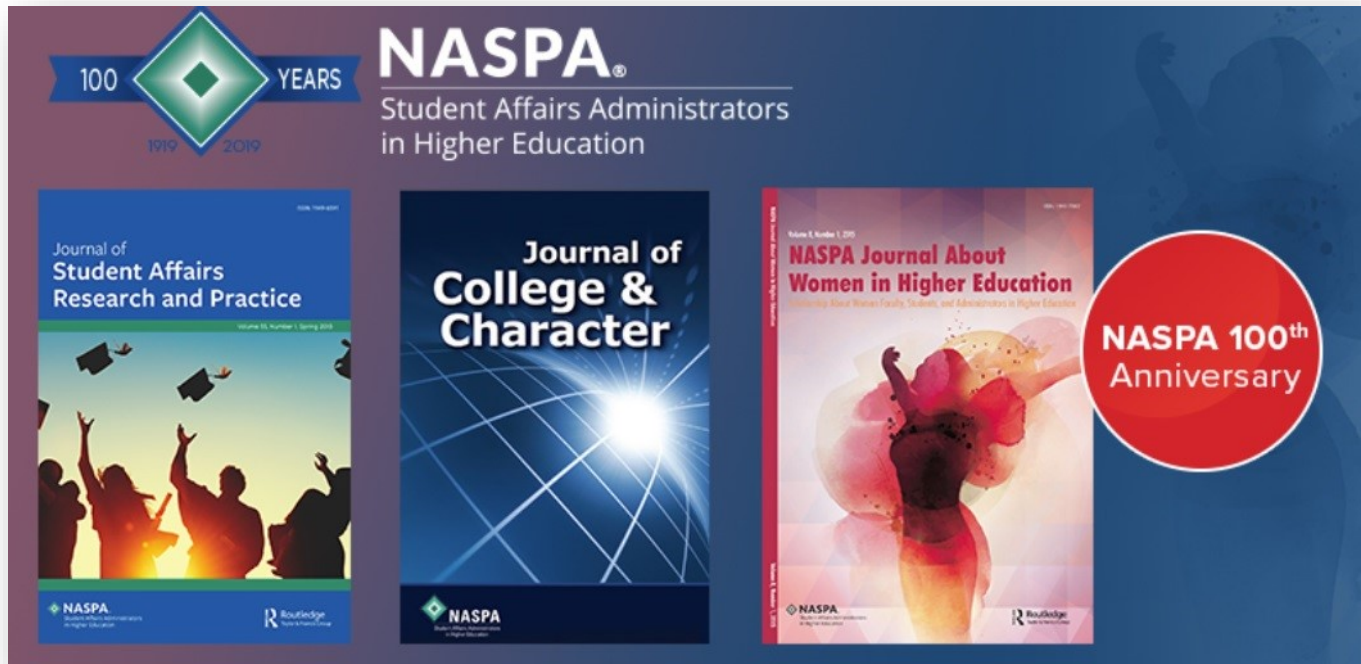
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Michael J. Stebleton is associate professor of higher education in the Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development (OLPD) Department at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. His research and teaching interests include career development, student development, student success, and persistence. His current work explores the experiences of marginalized college student populations.

NASPA 100th Anniversary Collection

Access it [here](#).

The articles in this special anniversary collection from NASPA's signature journals represent a wide spectrum of research and reflect the evolution of higher education and student affairs. This collection of influential



Journal of College & Character,

Volume 19, Number 2, 2018, Access it [here](#).

- **Faith and Learning in a Post-Truth World** , Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen
- **Encouraging the Spirit: The Role of Student-Faculty Interactions in College Students' Meaning-Making and Spiritual Quest**, Tiffani Riggers-Piehl and Linda Sax
- **Religious Student Organizations as Agents of Spiritual and Moral Development Among South African Undergraduates**, Nathaniel Cradit and Matthew Wawrzynski
- **Sense of Purpose Among Female Students Belonging to Minority Ethnic and Buddhist Backgrounds**, Gitima Sharma and Eva De Alba
- **Bridging Political Divides on Campus: Insights from the Study of Worldview Diversity**, Shauna Morin, Rebecca Crandall, Alyssa N. Rockenbach, and Matthew Mayhew
- **Advocating for Career Development and Exploration as a High-Impact Practice for First-Year Students**, Michael Stebleton and Kate Diamond
- **The Implementation of P.O.W.E.R. (Pushing Our Will to Experience Resilience): An Intervention to Address Retention and Graduation Rates Among Men of Color**, Delmar Dualeh, Virginia Diaz-Mendoza, Monika Son, and Christian Luperon
- **Academic and Student Affairs in Collaboration: Creating a Culture of Student Success** , Reviewed by David Eberhardt

Those Who Live, Die, and Tell Our Stories

By Alan Acosta

This week I am helping to support an event on our campus honoring the lives of students who have passed away in the last year. This type of event happens on college and university campuses across the country. As part of the planning for the ceremony, I have had the



privilege of talking to several family members of the students who have passed away about their attendance and involvement in the ceremony. As part of my conversation, during these times of unimaginable sadness, sorrow, or grief, I have felt it important to share with families and loved ones an important truth: their stu-

dents have had a lasting impact on our community, regardless of how long or brief their time on our campus.

While the conversations with families can be hard, I appreciate the opportunity to let families know their student was an irreplaceable member of our university family, one who positively touched the lives of students, faculty, and staff and who is remembered fondly by others. There is a part of me that wishes I could talk to more families of students at the university who are still alive and share a similar sentiment. I think it is valuable to let people know someone they care about, who they have helped shape and mold, is a person who has engaged positively in the world.

This ceremony and the conversations I have had with these families have had me thinking quite a bit about what we as higher education professionals and as people do to support students becoming the types of leaders and humans who strive to be kind, caring, compassionate, thoughtful, energetic, dynamic leaders working towards a better world. These reflections come at a time where my division of student affairs is also finalizing its updated mission, vision, and values. The questions we have been asking ourselves are questions which I think every professional should spend some time pondering. Who are we? What do we do? Why do we do it? What do we believe in? And how do we communicate to others these beliefs and the values that are the core of our work? These are big questions with big ideas that do not always lend themselves to easy answers. How do we as higher education professionals

create, innovate, and articulate the values we bring to our jobs and the principles we hope students discover and eventually use to positively impact our world?

These thoughts remind me of Lin-Manuel Miranda's play *Hamilton*, whose song *Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story?* wrestles with the idea of what someone's legacy is and how that legacy lives on and is told by others, whether through words, deeds, or actions. In the play, it recognizes that many of Alexander Hamilton's contributions have been minimized, understated, or overlooked over the course of time, yet, his contributions to the founding and development of the United States were immense. While most higher education professionals are likely not attempting to found a national bank, we, like Alexander Hamilton, strive to create and implement big, bold, sometimes even radical ideas we feel will inspire and shape our institutions into a better environment for those who inhabit our spaces.

One of the most important principles for me is the importance of the role graduate students and new professionals play in the future of our profession. I am very lucky in my job to be able to interact and work with graduate students and new professionals on a daily basis. Their energy and passion for learning about the profession always makes me more enthusiastic about my job and the work we do supporting students. I also get great energy from teaching them everything I know about the field, how to positively impact students, and how to consistently and congruently grow into the kind of professionals who embody their values by means of their work.

What I have learned so far in my higher education professional journey is that my legacy as a higher education professional, and as a human being, is most readily found in the lives and careers of professionals I help guide and shape. If my accomplishments, struggles, joys, frustrations, and overall lessons can instruct and inform others on how to find their own personal and professional beliefs, then I have succeeded as a higher education professional. Encouraging the nurturing and character building of persons that can be further taught to others ensures my own values live on long after I have

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left that person's story.

I think for higher education professionals, identifying our legacy, our story, and how that story is told is something on which we should regularly reflect and spend time. To do so empowers us to remember why we do the work we do, evaluate how we are doing, make necessary and needed adjustments to improve our practice, and embark on a path to making a difference in others. As I move forward in the next steps of my career, I encourage all higher education professionals to think about these big

concepts and ideas about what their legacy will be. When doing so, consider the lyrics from the Hamilton song that asks if after our life is over, will our story be told?

Alan Acosta is associate dean of students at Florida State University, managing student crises and helping create a welcoming campus community. He believes in the importance of helping college students to become ethical global leaders.

Announcing *Convergence Magazine*

By Jenny L. Small

The Board of Directors and staff of Convergence are pleased to announce the recent launch of *Convergence Magazine*, a new online publication dedicated to promoting harmonious campus communities and the fostering of responsible global citizens by spreading understanding among those who espouse a wide range of identities and worldviews.

These are the two areas of convergence upon which our organization stands: (1) the convergence between religious, secular, and spiritual identities on college campuses and (2) the convergence between administrators and faculty members at all levels of higher education and religious, secular, and spiritual life professionals

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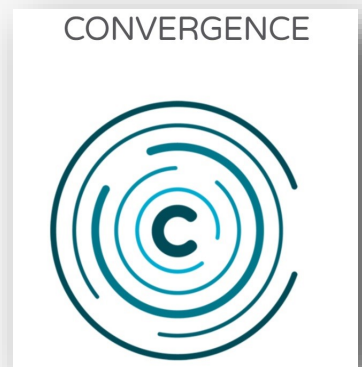
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(including campus ministry). *Convergence Magazine* brings to its readers previously unshared stories that are based upon these themes.

Convergence Magazine is just one of the content platforms offered by Convergence, which also includes weekly blog posts and monthly webinars, as well as on-site trainings for higher education and religious life professionals.

You can read the first issue of *Convergence Magazine* at <https://convergenceoncampus.org/resources/convergence-magazine/>. In response to the lead article, readers were invited to participate in a free webinar April 25, 2018, on the question of the language used when speaking and writing on issues relating to religious, secular, and spiritual diversity.



Join the JCC Ambassador Team

A phenomenal, energetic team who loves reading, researching, and writing about all things connected and interconnected to character and values!

Some basic responsibilities include

- Responding to each blog post published on the *Connexions* (about four annually) after researching the topics and JCC articles relating to the post
- Actively engaging and encouraging engagement in discussion within the JCC site
- Promoting JCC issues on social media articles, blog posts, journal events, and newsletters
- Engaging in other initiatives as determined by the social media team

For more information and/or to apply, please contact Janett I. Cordovés, associate editor for social media/JCC Ambassador, at janetticordoves@gmail.com

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