

JCC Connexions

Quarterly Newsletter About the *Journal of College and Character*

Vol. 5, No. 3, August 2019

Journal of College & Character

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Focus Authors Ching and Agbayani Write on Relevance of Student Affairs

In their [article](#), “Student Affairs’s Voice, Visibility, and Relevance in Higher Education Administration,” published in the August 2019 issue of the *Journal of College and Character*, **Doris Ching** and **Amefil (Amy) Agbayani** write that institutional actions such as eliminating or reassigning student affairs operations to other university departments result from failure of higher ed. leaders to support the fundamental mission of student affairs in colleges and universities.



Amy Agbayani



Doris Ching

Reasons, they argue, that are used to justify these administrative moves are often to reduce costs and/or redistribute funding while streamlining programs and services. In their article, Doris and Amy, our Focus Authors for this quarter, identify some of the critical elements that are lost when student affairs leaders and organizations lose their central role in the administrative structure. The authors provide insights gathered from

(cont. on page 2)



14 CSAOs, current at the time of their writing, who responded to a fall 2018 informal survey on student affairs. Their responses offer guidance in developing policies, procedures, and practices for assuring that institutional decisions and directions benefit students and further their success.

In their *JCC Connexions* [blog post](#), Doris and Amy respond to a question posed by *JCC* co-editor Jon Dalton: “Do you think it is important for the chief student affairs officer (CSAO) to report directly to the chief executive officer (CEO) of colleges and universities?” In their reply, they argue that while there is no single optimal administrative or organizational structure that is appropriate for all institutions, it is crucial that the CSAO serves as a direct link to institutional priorities. The CSAO should be visible at the highest institutional executive level to assure that student services are effectively supported.

Background of Authors

As a result of her experience in many administrative leadership roles in student affairs and academic affairs, Doris’s perspectives reflect multiple faculty and administrative roles, programs, and experiences. She describes herself as committed to social justice, transformative education, and the development of the whole student, as well as being a staunch advocate of student affairs and academic affairs collaboration. She maintains that it is important to integrate research with decision-making and communication in order to solve issues and foster initiatives.

Her current job titles are chief academic officer of the University of Hawai‘i (UH) System Academy for Creative Media (ACM) and UH System emeritus vice president for student affairs.

Doris’s past work includes serving UH as chancellor vice chancellor for academic affairs, ACM director, Teacher Corps project director, associate professor of education, associate dean of education, and assistant to the president. Among her former responsibilities were facilitating partnerships between academic and student affairs programs, developing student equity and success programs, and working to elevate the effectiveness and prominence of student affairs at UH. She also led the design, funding, and construction of

the UH-Mānoa Center for Student Services, whose goal was to enhance students’ campus experiences.

Doris was the first Woman of Color and first Asian American Pacific Islander to be elected president of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and was honored with the establishment of the [Doris Michiko Ching Award for Excellence](#) as a Student Affairs Professional by NASPA, which recognizes a student affairs professional at the mid-level, senior-level, or AVP-level whose outstanding commitment to the profession includes development of programs that address the needs of students, creation of a campus environment that promotes student learning and development, and support of and active engagement in NASPA. The APIKC Doris Michiko Ching [Shattering the Glass Ceiling Award](#), another scholarship named in her honor at NASPA, recognizes an individual who has made an outstanding impact on the Asian/Pacific Islander/Desi American community and the student affairs profession through leadership, service, and scholarship.

Persons in the profession praise Doris as a “tireless advocate of excellence, equal rights, diversity and success for all students” as we see in [this post](#) from *University of Hawai‘i News*.

Amy co-founded Operation Manong, a program initially funded by the University Year in Action service program for college students to tutor Filipino and other immigrant students in the public schools. The University of Hawaii’s Office of Multicultural Student Services (OMSS) traces its [roots to this program](#), which was established at the University of Hawaii in 1971 and organized as a result of coalition of Filipino community leaders, university students and faculty, and community agencies who see the need to assist and encourage the growing population of immigrant Filipino youth in their adjustment to Hawaii and the United States.

Over time, she has broadened her efforts to serve Native Hawaiians, African Americans, Pacific Islanders, women, the LGBT community, students with disabilities, senior citizens, pre-school children, immigrants and other underrepresented groups. These programs were administratively organized as the Office of Student, Equity, Excellence and Diversity. She secured millions of dollars for scholarships, increased resources

(cont. from pg. 2)

for student diversity programs, and helped develop more inclusive policies for underrepresented students.

Amy conducts research on the topic of Filipinos (the second largest ethnic group in Hawai'i) and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in higher education. She was appointed the inaugural chair of the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission, the state agency responsible for enforcing civil rights laws. She has also served as chair of the Hawai'i Judicial Selection Commission and the Filipino Community Center. She was a Hawai'i member of the Electoral College for President Barack Obama, honored as a "[Living Treasure](#)" by the Honpa Hongwanji Mission, and received awards from [NASPA](#), [Patsy T. Mink PAC](#), and ACLU.

Amy is emeritus assistant vice chancellor for student diversity emeritus at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, co-chair of Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights, and a board member of The Legal Clinic for Immigrant Justice.

After receiving her undergraduate degree from the University of the Philippines, she came to Hawai'i as an East West Center scholar. The [East-West Center](#) is an organization whose aim is to promote better relations and understanding among the people and nations of the United States, Asia, and the Pacific through cooperative study, research, and dialogue.

See an interview on [PBS HAWAI'I](#) with Amy about her activism.

Journal of College & Character

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INVITED FEATURED ARTICLE

Student Affairs's Voice, Visibility, and Relevance in Higher Education Administration

Doris Ching and Amefil Agbayani

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Theodore F. Cockle

Interaction and Harmony in Faith Communities: Predicting Life Purpose, Loneliness, and Well-Being Among College Students

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Corey Seemiller and Jason Clayton

WHAT THEY'RE READING

The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting up a Generation for Failure

Reviewed by **Laura M. Harrison**

JCC Welcomes Mary Ellen Giess as Interfaith Cooperation Contributing Editor

“Interfaith Engagement and Student Empowerment Among Latino/a and African American Students” by **Zandra Wagoner** and colleagues at the University of La Verne, is featured in one of the journal’s most prominent and widely read columns, “Interfaith Cooperation.” The article explores interfaith strategies that can best support students with these identities. With the announcement of the publication of this article, JCC editors are very pleased to introduce **Mary Ellen Giess** as the new contributing editor of Interfaith Cooperation, beginning in the August 2019 issue, joining fellow contributing editor, **Eboo Patel**.

Mary Ellen succeeds **Cassie Meyer**, who had been largely responsible for the column’s popularity and wide audience over many years, providing readers with articles that present cutting-edge research and theory relating to interfaith initiatives and ongoing dialogue on the college campus.

Zandra and co-authors describe in their [article](#) five themes that emerged from their study: (a) the significance of family, race, ethnicity; (b) social justice as motivation; (c) interfaith engagement promoting spiritual development; (d) conduits and barriers to interfaith engagement; and (e) evidence of interfaith skills and attributes. Based on the results, researchers offer best practices for cultivating a robust multiracial interfaith campus environment.

Mary Ellen is senior director of [Interfaith Youth Core](#) (IFYC), and like Eboo, who is also IFYC president and founder, as well as her column co-contributing editor, she is no stranger to the White House. For example, she was involved in partnering with White House officials during the Obama administration to create and implement the [President’s Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge](#).

Currently overseeing innovative and strategic partnership opportunities for the organization, she has served in a variety of capacities during her eleven year tenure at IFYC, including serving as the organization’s executive vice president and most recently, managing IFYC’s organizational evaluation efforts as well as its strategic engagement of student affairs professionals.

Mary Ellen plays a pivotal role in managing the Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey ([IDEALS](#)), IFYC’s research partnership with **Alyssa**

Rockenbach (North Carolina State University) and **Matt Mayhew** (The Ohio State University). She has been involved with IDEALS since its inception, including being involved with conceptualizing the project, securing funding, and actualizing this innovative work.

Along with **Kathleen M. Goodman** and Eboo Patel, she edited the [volume](#), *Educating About Religious Diversity and Interfaith Engagement: A Handbook for Student Affairs* (2019). This publication is designed to equip campus educators for proactive, positive engagement around religious identity and diversity on campus. She has published articles for the *Washington Post*, *Inside Higher Ed*, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and has presented in a number of arenas, including the American Association of Colleges & Universities, NASPA, and the White House.



Mary Ellen joined IFYC in 2008 after completing her master’s in religion, government, and constitutional law at Harvard Divinity School. She earned her undergraduate degree at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she subsequently launched her professional career in the Office of New Student and Carolina Parent Programming.

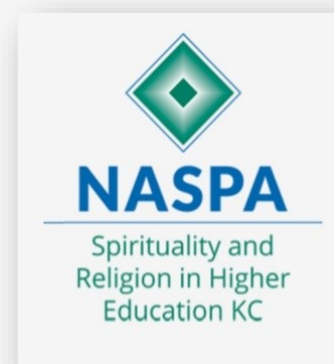
The Spirituality and Religion in Higher Education Knowledge Community works to support and network professionals, students, faculty, and other stakeholders who are invested in enhancing conversations, research, and best practices for spirituality, secularism, and religion in higher education. Their leadership team is headed by **Kenzalia Bryant-Scott**, chair, and **Sable Manson**, vice chair.

Learn more at

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[NASPA Blog Posts](#)



JCC to Publish Special 20th Anniversary Issue February 2020

“Educational Strategies for Cultivating Character in College”

With Contributions From Senior Scholars and Leaders in the Field of Higher Education

Call for Submissions in Response to Anniversary Issue Articles Will Be Ongoing

Whether it be worries over high profile academic cheating, sports scandals, racial intolerance, sexual harassment, student suicides, or gnawing concerns about narcissism, increasing materialism, consumerism, and declining social capital, colleges and universities today face compelling ethical issues that place them at the crossroads of decision making.

Moreover, many students come to college today with expectations that learning will not only prepare them for good jobs but will also help them to explore their inner lives in a search for the highest “calling” that will fulfill their deepest purpose and meaning.

As the JCC editors look toward celebrating 20 years of publishing on student character development in the college years, they recognize the increasing need for colleges and universities to address moral decision-making. The goal of the upcoming 20th anniversary Issue, to be published in February 2020, is to provide robust and varied reflections on the broad topic of cultivating character in college.

Senior scholars and leaders author articles relating to the role of cultivating character in colleges and universities with an introduction by JCC editors **Jon C. Dalton** and **Pamela C. Crosby** and a preface by NASPA’s president **Kevin Kruger**.

A call for submissions will be sent out when the issue is published for scholars to respond to the articles. More information to come October 2019.



Alyssa N. Rockenbach

The Evolution of Character Capacities in
and Beyond College

Marcia B. Baxter Magolda

Developmental Complexity: A Foundation for
Character

Anne Colby

Purpose as a Unifying Goal for Higher Education
Character Education for the Public Good

Michael J. Cuyjet

Advocating Cultural Competence in College
Students as a Component of Moral and
Civic Development

Larry D. Roper

Inspiring Community and Institutional Change
Through Social Justice Education

Eboo Patel and Benjamin P. Correia-Harker

Bonding and Bridging: An Equilibrium that Matters
for Engaging Religious Diversity in a
Pluralistic Society

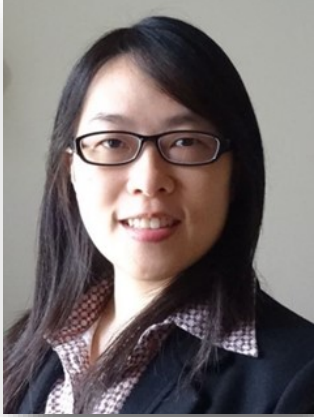
Richard Keeling

Cultivating Humanity: The Power of Time and
People

Coating the Pill in Sugar: On Compliments and Improvement

By Hsin-Yu Chen

When I first arrived in the US, I had many opportunities to communicate with others. My English was poor, and I was often forced to rely on body language. But at the end of such conversations, my interlocutors would often tell me,



“Your English is good” or “not bad.” I had a similar experience during my studies. Although I had extensive preparation in using my second language in coursework, I knew that whatever the format—presentations or written assignments—I still couldn’t perform as well as I wished.

Nonetheless, after every presentation, my friends and classmates would often drop a verbal compliment, telling me, “Hey, you did a good job!” or “Nice work!” Even my instructors’ comments often started with positive notes. Looking back, I can see that these compliments played an important role in my development. The encouragement made me feel good and motivated me to work hard to adjust to my new living environment, especially at a time when I lacked confidence in using English to survive.

At the same time, even though I felt good receiving compliments, I didn’t really know how to respond and often became a little shy and awkward. As a result, I often responded with something like, “No, no, no, I am not that good. My English is very poor,” or “No, I did not do well because I was so nervous”

Growing up in a culture that values collectivism in which people try their best to minimize themselves in communication and modesty is esteemed as a virtue, I was accustomed to the norm that when receiving compliments, one should refuse or deflect them. We were told that we needed to thank the person for their kind words, but also had to remember that we are not good enough.

Not only did denying or deflecting the compliments show modesty and politeness, but otherwise you might seem cocky and arrogant—as if you thought you really were as good as the compliment says you are. Above all, it is always important to emphasize that there is room for improvement.

The reaction to praise that these values instilled in me has become deeply ingrained. Even though I eventually learned the American way of responding with “Thank you” and a smile, it took a while for me to truly feel comfortable with being complimented and to respond in a natural manner.

One time, a group of international students were getting together, and we discussed American compliment culture and shared cultural differences in responding to compliments. This conversation brought home to me how navigating a new language environment requires not just mastering vocabulary but also grasping to understand the relevant socio-cultural context.

In US culture, we observed, refusing compliments—as were the reactions of my fellow international students and me—can make others feel you are being passive-aggressive, overly pretentious, insincere, and indirect. It also implies that you don’t believe what others have said to you and are implicitly questioning them. Ironically, in the US context, the same behavior—refusing compliments—that we considered polite ran the risk of seeming rude and unfriendly.

The more we talked, the deeper our reflections went. We even joked that maybe there is a gap between what native speakers of American English say, what they really mean, and what non-native speakers understand by it. For example, when native speakers said, “Good job,” maybe what they really meant was “You did OK”—which we then understood, or rather misunderstood, to mean that we did a very good job. Was it possible that the words we had received in praise, and which we then tried to place in rank order—words like *terrific*, *outstanding*, *wonderful*, *excellent*, *superb*, *awesome*, *fabulous*, *great*, and *very good*—actually meant the same thing? Perhaps navigating the real world meant not taking things so literally.

After all, as I began by saying, I was encouraged by the compliment culture. It made me feel full of energy. Indeed, for a time I became so appreciative of praise as

Inside, Outside,
& In Between

By Hsin-Yu Chen

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Coating the Pill...? (cont. from page 6)

positive reinforcement that I almost came to depreciate the cultural value according to which “the modest receive benefits, while the conceited reap failures (謙受益，滿招損).” Always emphasizing the need for improvement and thinking that we are not deserving of compliments might make us less confident or less able to express our feeling honestly or directly. And in any case, even people in Confucian cultures commonly feel pride; it is simply not very common to show your pride to others.

On the other hand, the compliment culture is not without its dangers. Must I confess that I did try to Google the nuanced differences between these terms (e.g., *outstanding*, *superb*, *excellent*)? There have been times when I have even felt addicted to receiving compliments. Not only did I want them all the time, but—as is typical with addiction—I needed compliments of increasing intensity to be satisfied. When *good* or *great* isn’t enough, there is always *outstanding* or *terrific*. But what then? It was only when I was able to reflect on the possible contradictions of this cultural norm that I was able to keep my cool. Most importantly, I began to look out for one particular, crucial detail: the word *but*. Not

only were comments that included a “but” likely to be more honest, they also helped me to keep improving.

Ultimately, I have realized that compliments can be a double-edged sword—especially for the person, like me, navigating between two cultures. While the traditional culture I grew up in helped me be modest and humble, the culture of compliment and encouragement that I learned in the US helped me be more positive and confident. Today, what I think is most important is finding the golden mean—between both cultures, and within them. Graciously taking compliments and feeling good about it are important—but we should not forget the importance of being humble and improving. Perhaps the best compliment is like the pill in sugar. I shouldn’t just enjoy the sweet part without taking the pill that can really help me. In this way, I strive to get the best of

Hsin-Yu Chen is an adjunct assistant research professor of anthropology at The Pennsylvania State University. Her research brings a transdisciplinary and cross-cultural perspective to studying skin color’s meanings and ramifications for identity development, social inequality, human behavior, lived experiences, and health outcomes. In addition to being a contributor to this column, she is JCC contributing editor of Cultural Cross Currents on Campus.

Larry Roper Writes on the Inner Landscape of Senior Leaders & Their Call to Campus Healing

In his latest [essay](#), “The Inner Landscape of Senior Leaders—Preparing to Lead Campus Healing,” published in the August 2019, *JCC’s Ethical Issues on Campus*, Contributing Editor Larry Roper argues that senior leaders must do the internal, or inner being, work needed to respond appropriately to the emotional and psychological condition of the communities they lead.

Specifically, he outlines three dimensions of the inner landscape: *Weight*, *Breadth*, and *Depth*.

When looking at the **weight** of one’s being, the leader asks such questions as “How much psychic/emotional weight do I carry?” “Who in our community carries the heaviest emotional or psychological load?” “What ‘lifting’ is required of me (as a senior leader) to be in relationship with each other?”

Leaders’ **breadth** of being relates to constructing and sustaining relationships and responds to “What is the range of my humanity?” “When I look at my ‘circle,’ who is included?” “Who resides outside the ‘circle?’” “What is the range of people with whom I am capable of being in community?”

Leadership **depth** demands that leaders explore their heart, soul, and consciousness in order to be present for the emotional condition of those with whom they interact. Depth also requires leaders to be conscious of their own story and how their story influences the ways they might show up in the world by exploring such questions as “What experiences most profoundly shaped my current values and beliefs about others?” “How deeply am I able to explore the life and experiences of others?” “Whose stories get told or go untold in our community?”

Larry goes on to offer the implications or “truths” of these three dimensions in senior leadership which include

- **The world does not look or feel the same to all of us.**
- **Personal history is embedded; recordings are challenging to erase.**
- **Visible and invisible diversity must be acknowledged and addressed.**
- **Beliefs are powerful, but they can be reframed.**

All in the Family: The Importance of Student Reflection on Familial Relationships

By Alan Acosta

In June 2019, my grandmother, **Monsa Acosta**, passed away at 86 years old. While her death was not unex-



pected, it did hit me emotionally. One of the ways I process grief is by becoming very contemplative about my interactions with the special person in my life who is gone, so it is not surprising that in the days after her passing, I thought pretty deeply about all of the ways that she impact-

ed my life and all the ways she influenced how I see, feel, and think about the world. This included reflecting on how my grandmother influenced my education and the work I do in higher education.

My grandmother never got a formal education because she started having children at a very young age. My grandmother knew almost nothing about postsecondary education, the higher education environment, or what it is like to be a higher education professional. However, she knew the importance of graduating from college and its transformative impact on our lives, and she was never shy about imparting important life lessons to me that I use in my work and pass on to the students and colleagues I work with on a daily basis. I did not realize it until after she was gone, but she had an absolutely tremendous impact on my life, particularly when it came to my education and the professional work I do. I never would have been able to articulate the true depth of her influence while she was still alive.

Part of how my grandmother influenced me was in how she would talk to me about the collegiate experiences I was having. She would ask me when I was an undergraduate student how my classes were and what I was learning; she wanted to know that I was getting the skills I needed to become a strong, independent person.

She knew that when I was a master's student, I was getting more education to work at a college, and she was curious if I had the training I needed to get a good job and support myself when I graduated.

Grandma wanted to know when I was a full-time professional if I was happy, how my work was going, and if I was healthy and well. At each stage of my life, I assured Grandma I was okay, I was enjoying what I was doing, and that, overall, I was healthy and taking care of myself. It did not matter that Grandma did not really know what college was like or the nitty gritty of what working at a postsecondary institution entailed; she wanted to know if I was a good person with good values who was able to chase after and achieve my dreams.

The interactions I had with Grandma about my college and professional experiences are very similar to many of the stories I hear from the students I meet with in my job. There is much research that discusses the ways families influence students' higher education experiences and development; yet, when I talk to many of my colleagues about their interactions with students' families, it is often met with groans, eyerolls, or other verbal and nonverbal expressions of frustration or contempt.



While I know there are plenty of families that can make the work higher education professionals more difficult, families also have the ability to make that job easier. I challenge my fellow higher education professionals to reevaluate their view on families and the ways to engage them in the student experience.

One way to rethink about engaging families is by helping students reflect on what their families have

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Family... (cont. from page 8)

taught them. Grandma helped impart to me that it was important to have pride in my identities. She always encouraged me to be proud of my heritage as a Puerto Rican, to learn more about my culture, and to never stop representing my ethnic heritage in a positive light. And even though I do not speak the language fluently, she always lit up whenever I would say a few words in Spanish.

Grandma taught me that there was no right way to be Latino or Puerto Rican. Her example has made me into a better person, and it has been a lesson I have passed on to many students throughout my career. Asking students, including those of all ethnic identities, how their families have influenced their perceptions of their heritage can provide some interesting and dynamic learning opportunities.

Higher education professionals can also encourage student learning through familial relationships that centers on civic and community engagement. After her passing, I learned Grandma was a very active citizen in her community and place of worship, even receiving an award in the early 1990s from her town in Puerto Rico for all of her civic efforts. When we held her viewing, many people told me and my family about how wonderful Grandma

was and the positive impact she had in her neighborhood. I knew Grandma loved her community, and it made me proud that she had learned about active civic engagement. Her community activism and the positive impact she had on others continue to inspire and serve as a role model to me as I think about how to continue to support my local community. Higher education professionals can use students' family members as positive examples as well.

I recognize there are lots of really great initiatives and programs at institutions across the U.S. that engage families and help students connect their familial relationships with their academic and extracurricular achievements. Higher education professionals can take a positive approach to familial engagement and helping students reflect on how those relationships have impacted them. Doing so can allow higher education professionals to meaningfully and thoughtfully engage students in reflections on their values, experiences, and contributions to their community.

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.

Upcoming Session at 2020 NASPA Annual Conference

Peter Mather, *JCC's* senior associate editor, will convene a session at NASPA's 2020 Annual Conference in Austin, TX, in the spring, highlighting themes of articles by *JCC* authors which will appear in the 20th Anniversary issue in February 2019. See below for the session description:

Humanizing Higher Education and the *Journal of College and Character*

Throughout contemporary higher education, market forces are shaping the way both the curriculum and co-curriculum are offered to today's students. In this environment, it is valuable to recognize the ideas and voices that represent alternative conceptions of education—in particular, ideas focused on student-centered and transformative education.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the *Journal of College and Character*, a forum that has kept matters of student dignity and character at its core. This session features presenters who authored articles for a special anniversary issue of the *JCC*. The authors will highlight the ideas presented in their respective articles and will explain why these topics are of importance at this



point in time. Participants will be invited to participate in the conversation that will be initiated by the authors.

Time, place, and date will be announced later in the fall. For more on the 2020 NASPA conference, go to <https://conference.naspa.org/>

Fostering Authentic Care—and Taking Care of Ourselves

By Michael J. Stebleton

I recently attended the retirement party honoring one of my favorite professors from graduate school. **Tom Skovholt**, faculty member of Counseling and Student Personnel Psychology at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, retired after 42 years of service to the university and the College of Education and Human Development.

Tom and I met over 25 years ago when I was a master's student in the program. At the event, colleagues distinctively lauded his many academic accolades, including 14 authored books and over 100 published articles and professional presentations. His most notable contribution, *The Resilient Practitioner* (2001), is now in its third edition, and is utilized frequently in counselor education programs around the world. "Not too bad, Tom," as one colleague quipped during the celebration—echoing a commonly used phrase that Tom favored over the years.

More important than the impressive list of achievements, Tom served as primary adviser for numerous graduate students who entered the counseling profession. Several of these former students delivered passionate speeches about the positive impact that he played in their personal and professional lives.

Ironically, not one of the students mentioned his scholarly publications or a conference presentation that altered their professional trajectories. Instead, the students honored Tom by sharing stories that embodied the authentic care and attention that he invested in them.



Applying this idea of authentic care to student affairs and learning, I challenge educators to reflect on their own strategies towards developing meaningful relationships with students, including undergraduates. Equally

important, student affairs practitioners need to discover strategic ways to care for themselves.

Academic Transaction or Meaningful Interaction?

Much has been written about the countless changes in higher education. In many ways, higher education mirrors the commodity mentality that students take with other service providers in their lives. Many students (and their families) expect good service and results (e.g., an "A" grade). Some students expect immediate responses from higher education professionals. At some institutions, leaders view students as customers or consumers of educational products, often in online learning contexts. From this perspective, higher education and our interactions with students can become rote and transactional.



This shift continues to create ambivalence among educators. Faculty member, **Liz Mayo** (2019), recently expressed this service-minded sentiment. She lamented, "I'm not the revered professor I always saw in my own higher education mentors. Instead, for students, I am the nameless worker standing by the drive-through window asking robotically, "Would you like fries with that?"

Certainly, many student affairs educators feel similarly and struggle with these changes. Whether intentional or not, students often view educators as alternate forms of service providers who appear expendable and transient. I concur that this consumer-first mentality presents a critical issue in higher education; I see it in my own interactions. Yet, I wonder if there are counter perspectives to embrace.

As I listened to the students' speeches at Tom's party, I was impressed by the level of sincerity and vulnerability. For many, Tom changed their lives; his compassion, empathy, and love served as guideposts in their formative years as young professionals. Tom's relationships with these students did not appear transactional but rather reciprocal and meaningful. I left the event feeling inspired and optimistic, albeit somewhat perplexed. Was there something unique about the program

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Authentic Care (cont. from page 10)

that led to these types of relationships? Granted, it was a counseling psychology graduate program where students were often inclined and encouraged to seek out close relationships. Were there generational differences between Tom's students (who were now experienced professionals), compared to current graduate-level students? Perhaps these contextual factors could have shaped students' experiences. Certainly, Tom worked diligently to foster these connections. Like Tom, higher education practitioners can continue to cultivate these key relationships with both undergraduate and graduate students. In addition to individual student attention, higher education needs to continue to embrace and foster this ethic of care from an institutional perspective.

An Ethic of Care

In a 2014 article published in the *Journal of College and Character*, **Richard Keeling** (2014) wrote about a shared responsibility between students and the institutions of higher education. This relationship grounded itself on an ethic of care and well-being for the students, and in particular, students' learning and development. Keeling defined the *ethic of care* concept using four traits: (a) paying attention, or creating conditions where students feel like they matter; (b) accepting responsibility to act on what is noticed; (c) assuring ability, capacity, and competency; and (d) responding, which accepts the principle of "differential vulnerability," a recognition that not everyone responds in the same way (p. 143). I assign the Keeling article to my own higher education graduate students.

Keeling (2014) stated that learning and support should be touchstones for institutional decision-making. Impressive graduation rates often serve as measures of student success; however, success should be more holistic and focus on well-being. Given the consumer-driven approach followed by institutions and students, this serves as an urgent reminder.

The focus on mental health caring remains critical given the increased need for mental health services. Taken together, authentic caring includes two elements: the individual attention and support modeled by Tom Skovholt, and the institution that provides support through its policies, services, and mission.

Setting Boundaries and Self-Care

Student affairs educators and faculty face complex challenges around students' expectations. How do we best serve students in a timely manner while aiming to develop meaningful relationships? Can we nurture relationships based on authentic care and meet the service-oriented demands?

Setting boundaries and intentionally communicating with students about expectations seem paramount. Mayo (2019) discussed the tendency for many educators to respond to student emails in the evenings and weekends; she wondered if this practice enables the "right now" generation. On the contrary, some employees do not respond to emails when they are not in the office or over breaks. There is no correct answer.

Much of Tom's scholarship focused on supporting practitioners in their professional development, including self-care and burnout. In *The Resilient Practitioner*, Tom suggested that individuals develop effective strategies to sustain the personal self and the professional self in order to avoid fatigue. Although his advice aims at counselors and therapists, I urge higher education professionals to heed these recommendations. Tom contended that professionals avoid playing the role of savior or hero whereby we need to respond urgently to every student issue, problem, or question. Part of this process involves "learning to set boundaries, create limits, and say no to unreasonable helping requests" (Skovholt, 2001, p. 144).

Relish Small Victories along the Way

Tom Skovholt serves as a model for others and me. In his *Resilient Practitioner* text, he discussed the idea of thinking long-term and relishing small "I made a difference" victories (p. 130). He advised younger professionals to see their careers as a long adventure, and to break goals into manageable steps.

As I listened to the testimonials, I noted that Tom cultivated his student-educator relationships over time—42 years. Fostering these connections and mentoring relationships take time, energy, and commitment, whether working with undergraduate or graduate students. More importantly, Tom cared deeply about his students, listened to concerns, and offered support long after students graduated.

(cont. on page 12)

(cont. on page 11)

My hope is that we can apply these lessons to our own professional work in higher education contexts and to our interactions with students, finding time to celebrate successes.

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