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# KNOWLEDGE COMMUNITY PUBLICATION

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# 2022 NASPA Annual Conference

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The Annual Knowledge Community Conference Publication

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# Welcome from the National Knowledge Community Director

*Dear NASPA Colleagues,*

We are delighted to share with you the 2021 NASPA Knowledge Community (KC) Publication. The articles presented here highlight the wonderful work of our NASPA colleagues across the 36 KCs representing a variety of functional areas and social identities. One of the central goals for the KC program is the creation and dissemination of valuable and timely knowledge with our membership. This publication will likely expose you to a KC with which you are not affiliated. We encourage you to see what they have to offer – and then to join the KC, follow them on social media, or contact their leadership to find out more.

Our sincere gratitude goes to the 2021 NASPA KC Publication Committee for their steadfast commitment to shaping this compendium. We greatly appreciate the many authors, who while navigating isolation, insecurities and trauma that the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and racial injustice has brought to the forefront, shared their time, labor, and knowledge on behalf of their respective Knowledge Communities. Additionally, we would like to thank the KC Chairs for their partnership in bringing this publication to fruition. The collective commitment of our NASPA Leaders, KC Publication Committee, KC leaders, and members is what makes this publication possible.

At the 2022 Annual Conference in Baltimore, we will gather in fellowship and reflect on and live our Association values: Integrity, Innovation, Inclusion, and Inquiry. KCs provide a wonderful way for our members to find their place in NASPA. Please make time to engage with the KC program, by attending a sponsored session, reception or gathering, or by joining an open KC business meeting. We encourage and welcome your involvement.

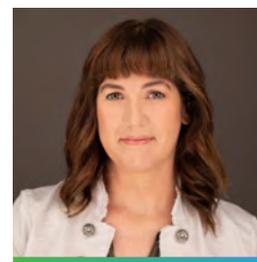
And in the spirit of coalition building, we hope you enjoy this publication.

**Sincerely,**

**Amy J. Hauenstein, Ph.D.**  
(she/her/hers)

*NASPA KC Publication Chair*  
NASPA

*Director of Curriculum & Non-Degree Programs*  
Northwestern University,  
School of Communication



**Leanna Fenneberg, Ph.D.**  
(she/her/hers)

*National Director of Knowledge Communities*  
NASPA

*Vice President for Student Affairs*  
Rider University





2021-2022

## NASPA Knowledge Community Publication Committee Members

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**Cecilia Suarez**

*Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural  
Education and Communication  
University of Florida*

**Ben Williams**

*Director, Student Orientation & Family Engagement  
Georgia State University*



## *Administrators in Graduate and Professional Student Services* **Considering the Current State of Graduate and Professional Student Affairs**

### **Valerie Shepard, Ph.D.**

*Senior Writer, Content and Assessment  
 UCLA Recreation*

### **April Perry, Ph.D.**

*Associate Professor  
 Program Director, HESA Graduate Program  
 Assistant Department Head, Department of Human Services  
 Western Carolina University*

### **Katherine Hall-Hertel, Ed.D.**

*Associate Dean for Graduate Academic & Student Affairs  
 Associate Graduate Faculty  
 Deputy Title IX Coordinator  
 UNC Charlotte, The Graduate School*

By definition, graduate students are engaged in higher learning. They attend classes on campus and online. They participate in student government. They pay student fees. Although NASPA and ACPA have largely viewed student affairs through an undergraduate student-centered lens, these two organizations began paying more attention to graduate and professional students starting in 1998, the year when the first informal meetings of graduate student services practitioners took place at each organization's annual meeting. We, as faculty and graduate student administrators, also know that student affairs and higher education preparation programs often do not train professionals to work with graduate and professional (G&P) students. For more than

## **Leadership** Research and Scholarship



20 years, NASPA's Knowledge Community (KC) for Administrators in Graduate and Professional Student Services (AGAPSS) has been a source of community and support for practitioners who work with G&P students. This article presents a brief context for the G&P student population in the U.S. and relevant theoretical perspectives for supporting them. The article then shares the AGAPSS KC's response to the current state of the field in G&P student affairs, including creation of a practitioner's guide (to be published by Routledge in early 2022) and initiating a curriculum project to meet the growing need for training and resources.

## The G&P Student Population in the United States

In the 2019–2020 academic year in the United States, 1.4 million graduate degrees were awarded, and of the 3 million of the 19.9 million students who enrolled in postsecondary education in 2019, 15 percent were pursuing graduate education (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.-a).

These numbers reflect enrollment in U.S. graduate programs; when students in professional degree programs, such as law, medicine, pharmacy, and dentistry are included, the total number of G&P students increases by more than 200,000. Given that, from 2000 to 2018, full-time employed adults ages 25–34 with a master’s degree or higher reported a median salary 20% higher than that of adults with only a bachelor’s degree, there is reason to expect these enrollment trends to continue (NCES, n.d.-b). Graduate students are not just older versions of undergraduates, though. Student affairs practitioners must recognize that G&P students need unique services and support to be successful.

The Council of Graduate Schools, a national association focused on deans from G&P schools, publishes numerous recommendations for best practices to support graduate student success (Council of Graduate Schools, 2021). Though these recommendations include helpful guidance for recruitment and retention, specific attention to graduate student development and support is sparse. Traditional student affairs models may address adult learners but rarely note that G&P students’ needs differ from undergraduate student needs and require specialized services.

## G&P Student Development Theory

Be it a theory of moral development, psychosocial change, identity formation, ethical development, or any of the many others often cited in student development literature, traditional theories of student development most often address 18- to 22-year-old undergraduates and, often, omit

references to G&P student development. One theory addresses G&P students specifically, although it is not broadly included in training or preparation for student affairs professionals: Weidman et al. (2001) analyze the process through which graduate students learn to become professionals in their academic discipline. Their theory of graduate student socialization describes role acquisition, mentoring, and enculturation. Although these concepts are analogous to ideas posited in student development theories, Weidman et al.’s theory is targeted more to the experiences in the academic program and geared toward practice in the discipline. It is about the learning process, as it reflects the socialization into the academic program and the practice discipline. Whereas undergraduate students are forming identity more broadly, G&P students may be acquiring a new professional identity (Weidman et al., 2001). This process—critical to G&P student success—is more nuanced than the fundamental identity development described in traditional undergraduate student development theories.

In addition to graduate student socialization as it relates to academic program and practice in one’s discipline, G&P students struggle to belong—to a profession, an academic discipline, or a new identity such as teacher. Many student affairs professionals understand the importance of a sense of belonging, as described by Tinto (1987), but these traditional theories need to be expanded to consider the differing experiences of G&P students (Strayhorn, 2018).

## Where to From Here: Response From AGAPSS

A reference for practitioners and faculty, *A Practitioner’s Guide to Supporting Graduate and Professional Students* brings together existing literature and reinterprets and applies existing theory and practice to G&P students. Using case studies, the guide presents many promising practices to enable practitioners and administrators to better support graduate student success. Because G&P student

success is holistic, academic support can fall to student affairs professionals working with G&P students. Likewise, student affairs professionals may be housed in academic units when working with G&P students. Success is defined differently depending on the student and the particular academic environment. For example, part-time professional students may have different needs than those of full-time Ph.D. students, like juggling a full-time job or family.

This book will help practitioners understand how to support the academic and professional socialization process for graduate students—regardless of their degree level or discipline. It is organized in three parts: Part I provides a general overview of both G&P student services and graduate education in the United States and includes a focused chapter on G&P student needs. Part II describes successful strategies for G&P student affairs, including information on transitioning into graduate school, advising, mentorship, engagement, belonging, and assessment. The section also includes a chapter on a diversity, equity, and inclusion approach to graduate student access to programs and services. Part III forecasts potential training needs for future practitioners. It includes a chapter on the AGAPSS curriculum project that has been piloted over the past year, in which modules on G&P topics were created and implemented into current graduate courses in higher education student affairs.

## Conclusion

Building more inclusive campus programs and services that meet the needs of G&P students should be our goal. Student success should mean success for all students. As G&P practitioners, may we continue to connect, share ideas, conduct research, and contribute new resources to the field. As a community of practice, the AGAPSS KC is a space for this work to continue and for each practitioner to find support in this work.

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*Adult Learners and Students with Children Knowledge Community*  
**The Student Parent HELP Center:  
 An In-Depth Program Evaluation of a  
 Broad-Spectrum, Campus-Based Support Program  
 for Undergraduate Student Parents**

**Susan Warfield, MSW, LICSW**

*Program Director, the Student Parent HELP Center  
 University of Minnesota-Twin Cities*

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 Social Justice



The Student Parent HELP Center (SPHC) at the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities (U of M) is one of the largest and longest-standing support programs for students who are pregnant or parenting while in college. Founded in 1967 as a college-based support program for all underrepresented U of M students, the SPHC transitioned to working exclusively with pregnant and parenting undergraduates in 1984. In 2005, when the SPHC’s non-degree-granting, developmental model college was closed and absorbed into other colleges at the university, the center was administratively placed within the Office for Student Affairs. Nationally recognized in the field, the SPHC spearheaded the formation of the Adult Learners and Students With Children Knowledge Community, for which I was the inaugural chair. Nonresidentially based and open to any undergraduate student enrolled at the university,

regardless of where they are in their parenting journey, the SPHC has typically served approximately 300 undergraduate students in any given term. Though the SPHC began working with graduate and professional parenting students in recent years, the program evaluation reviewed in this article exclusively studied only undergraduate, SPHC-involved students.

Pregnant and parenting undergraduate students continue to be an invisible, underserved, and understudied population. Highly diverse and typically low-income, single, and at risk from myriad barriers (Hagedorn, 2005; Reichlin-Cruse et al., 2019; Wyatt, 2011), this population continues to be left out of the research, with student parents feeling unengaged, unwelcomed, and unsupported, particularly at four-year institutions. Though interest in this population has increased in recent years, much of this attention—and the current research available—has

occurred external to higher education and has been almost exclusively focused on providing childcare access and funding. The SPHC, with funding from the philanthropic organization Raise the Barr, completed a year-long evaluation project to understand more deeply the impact of a range of services and programs.

*Academic Outcomes of Undergraduate Student Parents Served by the University of Minnesota's Student Parent HELP Center: A Retrospective Study, 2000–2018* (Pendleton & Atella, 2020) is a third-party, comprehensive program evaluation completed by Wilder Research. The study pool consisted of 1,549 pregnant or parenting undergraduates who engaged with the SPHC between 2000 and 2018. Of those 1,549 students, 78% identified as female, 48% were BIPOC, 51% were single/divorced or never married, 51% were first-generation college attendees, 89% were PELL awardees, and 68% were transfer students; the median age was 28 (as of first term of enrollment). These basic demographics, highly representative of those of student parents across the nation, speak to the many economic, social justice, and access issues faced by these students. Because of these factors, parenting students have far lower graduation rates, with 52% leaving within 6 years with no degree, compared with only 32% of nonparenting students (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2019). The SPHC had been able to track the overall graduation rates for student parents attending the University of Minnesota, but it had never been able to conduct this type of in-depth evaluation of those students engaged with SPHC services. For this study, we at the center compared the types and degree of student engagement with student parent outcomes, as measured by graduation, retention term to term, and GPA. We wanted to take a deep dive into exactly which programs and services seemed to have the greatest impact on student outcomes.

The SPHC offers a broad range of advocacy, financial, and programming supports to student parents enrolled at the U of M. These services include a team of master's-level social workers providing crises

intervention, coaching, and advocacy; a weekly Parents as Students Support (PASS) group; a series of family-friendly campus events; a holiday assistance program; childcare grants made possible from state funds and student fees; emergency assistance; and a centrally located, student parent-specific lounge and computer lab. All students seeking services from the SPHC must complete an in-depth grant screening and intake interview. At intake, students are added to a contact list and receive communications from the program. After intake, students are free to utilize SPHC services for as long as they are enrolled at U of M. The SPHC has an assigned program flag within the student records system, allowing it to track the graduation, retention, and GPA of any student who has ever completed intake. The SPHC was also an early adopter of logging and service tracking databases, providing a rich data set including any contacts ever made by any student in the data pool.

### Staff Contact

One key research question in this project was how staff-student contacts affected academic outcomes—primarily retention, graduation, and GPA. Because SPHC is a highly relational, engagement-focused program, staff witnessed how often academic coaching, PASS participation, and crisis intervention had been a key factor in student retention and graduation. The data appear to support staff observations. As a staff-facilitated, affinity group, PASS appears to have significant impact on all outcome measures, with attendees having better graduation, retention, and GPA outcomes than those of intake-only students. Students with high levels of staff contact were significantly more likely to graduate than were those who completed intake but opted out of further engagement (74% and 56%, respectively). Retention rates were also similarly and positively affected by student contact with staff, with 77% of high-contact students retained and only 57% of no-post-intake-contact students retained. Even students in the lower staff contact group had significantly higher GPAs than those who made no contact post-intake.

## Childcare Grants and Other Economic Assistance

Those students receiving “childcare (grant) assistance only” with no additional program interactions had outcomes similar to those who did not receive childcare assistance at all but engaged with staff and program services. This is a key finding, as it supports what we have seen in our many years of work with student parents: that childcare funding alone is seldom enough to ensure retention and must instead be one part of a structured set of services and programs. Likewise, emergency assistance funding on its own showed widely varied academic outcomes; since financial needs are often correlated with stress and mental health issues (Macintyre et al., 2018), emergency aid should be accompanied by additional services.

## Conclusion

In summary, staff coaching, mentoring, and referral work can have as great an impact on student parent academic outcomes as childcare and economic assistance. Faced with myriad barriers to academic success, student parents need staff trained to respond to their broad range of parenting, economic, social, and academic needs. It will take both expertise and economic assistance to retain the largest number of student parents, and given the socioeconomic stressors and the social justice and equity issues affecting this particular population, we feel these findings hold relevance for other at-risk student populations as well.

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*African American Knowledge Community*

## **There Is No Strength in Silence: The Importance of Black Men Sharing Our Lived Experiences in Higher Education**

**Dr. DuJuan E. Smith**

*Associate Director of UCPE Graduate Advising  
The University of Chicago*

It is hard being a Black man in higher education, and somewhere along the way I lost myself. I cannot even pinpoint when it happened, but it did. My doctoral journey forced me to face an unthinkable reality: I had become a public success and a private mess. It was not easy to come to grips with this reality because, for all intents and purposes, I appeared to be a success in the field. I was deeply involved in various professional organizations, had won many awards for my service, and was a sought-after mentor for graduate students and new professionals.

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“Work twice as hard to be half as good” was my mantra because it was taught early and reinforced often as a necessary survival tool for Black people in America. I began to put my career over my own holistic well-being. As a result, I existed in perpetual states of stagnation and exhaustion—and saw my physical and mental health decline. The hardest part was feeling like I had to endure it alone. I can recall going into conference spaces for Black men, hoping to hear someone else talk about what I was experiencing—but the dialogues rarely dipped

beneath the surface. This reality only reinforced an assumption I had: that admitting my struggles felt equivalent to being weak, failing, and giving up.

After six visits to the emergency room in the summer of 2019, I knew things needed to change. I made the decision to prioritize my wellness because my current way of existing was literally killing me. I focused on committing to my weight-loss journey, actively engaging in therapy, and journaling to explore the deep-rooted issues that haunted me. These ways of healing led me to my dissertation study, which explores the lived experiences of nine senior-level Black male administrators at historically White institutions. Through candid reflections, these men voiced their personal sacrifices, successes, strategies for self-care, and advice for aspiring senior-level Black male administrators (Smith, 2020). Under the guise of pseudonyms, all the participants allowed themselves to be transparent and vulnerable. The identities of the participants needed to be protected because of the low number of senior-level Black male administrators within the profession. Without anonymity, these men could face such risks as hyper surveillance or termination for sharing their experiences.

## Why Sharing Matters

Higher education can be a challenging space to navigate for Black men. In an open letter, Dr. Jamie Riley declared that he was walking away from the profession because he mistakenly believed he was truly safe as a Black man in higher education (Riley, 2020). “Microaggressions, tokenism, impostership, and racial battle fatigue attest to the psychological torment regularly visited upon Black humanity in higher education” (Dancy et al., 2018, p. 188). Studies show a correlation between workplace discrimination and adverse outcomes (e.g., job stress, job dissatisfaction, burnout), but they also establish a clear empirical relationship with symptoms of psychiatric disorders (e.g., depression, anxiety) and poor health conditions (Perry & Pickett, 2016). Furthermore, there is an *invisible labor clause* (Melaku & Beeman, 2020), which represents the

mental, physical, and emotional toll marginalized groups experience to perform ascribed norms in White spaces.

Jay Z said, “You can’t heal what you never reveal” (Carter, 2017). Both positive and negative experiences faced by Black men must be unpacked and processed. The totality of these challenges can leave Black men feeling what Hoff (2020) described as being picked to pieces. Picked to pieces characterizes a gradual change in one’s holistic self, being, or uniqueness. Far too often, Black men are suffering in silence. In silence, one cannot express any wants or needs, or seek the help that others can perhaps provide. Vulnerability is often perceived as a sign of weakness; however, there is power in sharing our unapologetic truths.

## Our Stories Are Needed

Hamilton (2020) said, “Be yourself so that the people looking for you can find you” (p. 133). Amid two pandemics—COVID-19 and anti-blackness—our lived experiences and perspectives are needed more than ever. Van derhoot Lipsky and Burk (2009) coined the term *trauma stewardship*, which is “the entire conversation about how we come to do this work, how we are affected by it, and how we make sense of and learn our experiences” (p. 6). When one person shares, many are slated to benefit. Dr. Riley’s open letter exists as a transparent reflection of lessons learned in this field, which can be used for teaching and solution-oriented purposes.

## Wakanda

Black men need to support each other as they navigate the day-to-day in higher education. Wakanda can be a source of healing and safety that supports that effort. Though it was introduced as a fictional space in the film *Black Panther* (Coogler, 2018), Wakanda has real and symbolic elements of safe spaces that already exist in the real world. Wakanda represents a community of people to love, uplift, challenge, and be authentic among—a reciprocal space where Black men can pour into each other.

Through Wakanda, Black men have the opportunity to heal some of the wounds inflicted from the *battlefield of the academy* (Hester, 2020).

## Conclusion

I chose to role model the use of vulnerability in sharing my own lived experiences in higher education. There is a true need for more Black men to share their perspectives—to provide a blueprint to assist others. Despite many challenges, Black men are drawn to serve in higher education because it is a calling. There is strength in telling our stories.

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## Assessment, Evaluation and Research Capturing the Good From Trying Times

### Shaun Boren, Ed.D.

*Director of Assessment  
and Research*  
The University of Florida

### Kevin Grant, Ed.D.

*Director of Assessment  
and Research*  
California Polytechnic  
State University

### Tim Kresse, MEd, MBA

*Director of Student Life  
Budget and Technology*  
Miami University

### D'Arcy Oaks, Ph.D.

*Senior Associate Director  
for Program Review and  
Strategic Planning*  
The Ohio State University

### Sara Hillis Ousby, Ed.D.

*Director of Student  
Affairs Assessment*  
University of North Texas

## Assessment, Evaluation and Research Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice



The COVID-19 pandemic has stressed higher education in the United States and worldwide, making both areas of strength and pain points more apparent. Higher education has risen to new heights of innovation in its delivery of courses, moved supportive programs and services online, and provided opportunities for involvement to all students. Simultaneously, inequities have been exposed and the disparities of students exacerbated. All of us are desperate to return to some sense of normalcy, but we simply cannot “return to normal” post-pandemic. The COVID era must be used as a catalyst for growth. How can we capture the good that has come out of this trying time? How can we continue to address and mitigate the recently revealed pain points? How can higher education push forward with

a vision of student success and sense of belonging for all students? Can higher education learn from this experience, informed with assessment and data, to truly invest in effective and sustainable practices?

One way to answer these questions is to view this moment as a unique opportunity to reflect and learn from the pandemic. Instead of viewing the COVID era as an outlier to be discarded, perhaps higher education should consider it an unwanted and unplanned—yet invaluable—experiment in physical and social distancing. For example, long before the pandemic, belongingness was a central concept many institutions of higher education and student affairs practitioners utilized when considering factors of student success. Hausmann et al. (2007) found that “greater sense of belonging at the start of

the academic year was associated with peer group interactions, interactions with faculty, peer support, and parental support.” As the pandemic altered in-person interactions among students, their peers, faculty, and staff, and as many campuses shifted to fully remote or hybrid courses and delivery of programs and services, there was an anticipated yet unknown shift in student sense of belonging and how to nurture it.

Often, belongingness is measured through such national surveys as the 2017 National Survey of Student Engagement and the 2020 Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory; however, when campuses were forced to shut down, campus leadership and assessment professionals faced the challenges of shifting assessment priorities nearly three quarters of the way through the academic year and assuming the unprecedented task of leading through a worldwide pandemic. In spring 2020, during the initial shift to remote learning, campuses rushed to survey students about their experiences with classroom technology, accessing services, institutional response, engagement activities, and more. National organizations, such as Institute for Effectiveness in Higher Education (IEHE; 2020), EDUCAUSE, and Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS; 2020), as well as individual campuses created and implemented surveys to ensure students felt supported and connected to campus.

Administered in March 2020, IEHE’s Ask Our Students Survey found more than 50% of students reported that engagement was still important. With remote classes and limited opportunities for social and educational events, the residential experience remained a central component to ensuring that engagement continued for students. The HEDS fall 2020 survey found that 44% of respondents reported living on campus and another 44% reported living off campus within commuting distance; however, only 23% of survey respondents indicated a very strong connection to their institution. Although 79% of the students living on campus reported being satisfied with their on-campus living environment, less than

40% responded that they were satisfied with social opportunities, occasions to be involved in student organizations, or the opportunity to participate in campus events.

These findings demonstrate the importance of residence halls in not just providing a space to live but also supporting the development of peer relationships during a time when social interactions across campuses have been limited. As campuses return to in-person instruction, they must not only connect with incoming first-year students but also make up for the gap in connectedness that sophomore students felt. Campuses must likewise remember that the junior class had its first year interrupted and completed a second year in a variety of modalities (remote, in person, or hybrid) and with reduced opportunities for in-person connection.

In addition to reflecting on the pandemic, higher education also has the unique opportunity to establish a new baseline, to reset the educational landscape in a world that may be punctuated, at least in educational technologically/modality speaking, in “BC” (Before COVID) and “AD” (After Digitization). No apples-to-apples comparison exists. There is a new normal, and campuses need to use the tools at their disposal to make it a “better” normal.

The abrupt transition to virtual education disrupted higher education’s status quo and has prompted a new wave of attention to assessment, revealed the importance of student engagement, and increased fiscal uncertainty. Many administrators and department leaders who previously did not prioritize data collection and the institutional assessment infrastructure have come to value these efforts with new appreciation. Assessment, evaluation, and research can illuminate the successes and remedy the shortcomings to build an inclusive educational experience—reaching all who desire the transformational opportunities of higher education.

As a profession, we may be good at adding new initiatives, but we rarely stop to cull the herd of our portfolio for optimum organizational health.

The reflection and establishment of a new baseline underway in a land of (perceived) resource scarcity should lead us to assess our programs and offerings to key on the most effective offerings. The abrupt transition forced by the pandemic may loosen the long-rusted cogs of change in many institutions of higher education.

In a sense, all of us have tested positive for the impacts of COVID. The virus affects the entire planet; too many have felt significant impacts in terms of physical health, mental health, and economic impact, and those who have gotten by without feeling those momentous impacts have still had their lives disrupted on almost every level. Higher education has a limited-time opportunity to counter its impulse to ignore lessons learned in this pandemic and “return to normal,” through the use of intentional reflection and establishment of a new baseline. If those of us in higher education seize this moment, we can learn how to better serve students through similar challenging times—but more importantly, we can learn how to better address students’ evergreen problems, such as social isolation and barriers to belongingness, which have been all the more illuminated in this dark era.

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## Campus Safety and Violence Prevention Considerations for Mask and Vaccine Post-Pandemic Mandates

**Katie Treadwell, Ed.D.**

*Director of Student Conduct and Community Standards  
University of Kansas*

**Jonathon Hyde, Ed.D.**

*Dean of Students  
Pacific University*

In a year of unprecedented turmoil and crisis, campus leaders encountered countless new facets of campus safety and disaster response. The Centers for Disease Control and state and local health departments issued guidance about the criticality of masks and vaccines. Legal experts, legislators, and advocacy groups quickly countered with protests, legislation, and litigation designed to question, circumvent, or prohibit health expertise. Often, newly issued mandates were in direct violation of existing laws (National Constitution Center, 2021). Already navigating enormous challenges, student affairs professionals, campus emergency managers, and law enforcement officers continue to find themselves amid a battle between conflicting laws, policies, public health guidance, and political motivations. This campus safety issue has impacted nearly every individual working in higher education.

**Law, Policy, and  
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### Mask Mandates

Historically, in many states and consequently on many college campuses, mask wearing has been prohibited by law (Kaplan, 2015). Certain legal exceptions have sometimes applied to mask wearing, such as use during holidays, religious and cultural exceptions, and in some states, medically necessary mask use. In some cases, mask prohibition laws have been challenged in court, for example, in relation to citizen protest (American Civil Liberties Union, 2020). Mask prohibition laws have also been criticized for being inequitably applied, oftentimes among racial or religious lines.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, some states scrambled to provide or extend exemptions to mask-related laws. While previous mask-related laws were justified as public safety measures, public safety

during the COVID-19 pandemic required mask usage in direct contradiction to many state laws. In an effort to allow the public to protect themselves and others from COVID-19 transmission, common sense and discretion undoubtedly led to a lack of enforcement of mask-related laws across the nation in favor of mask wearing guidance to suppress disease transmission. In fact, the state of North Carolina formally suspended its mask prohibition laws and sought to extend the suspension of mask prohibition after it expired (Fain, 2020).

As the US approaches a return to in-person learning, many institutions of higher education have begun to or are considering future mask mandates. So where does this leave student affairs professionals in higher education who must attempt to balance law, policy, public health, religious freedom, and freedom of speech related to mask wearing?

Student affairs administrators should determine answers to several questions that will inform their work related to mask wearing on campus:

- What are your state and local laws related to mask wearing in public and private, indoor and outdoor spaces?
  - Have these laws been suspended in the wake of the pandemic?
  - Do those charged with enforcement have discretion in the application of these laws?
- What is your institution's current policy related to prohibiting mask wearing?
  - Have there historically been any issues, incidents or arrests on your campus related to the wearing of masks?
  - Is there any policy differentiation between a mask that is designed to stop transmission of disease versus a mask designed to disguise one's identity?

- If mask prohibition policy has changed during the COVID-19 pandemic, how was it modified?
- How long will those changes remain in effect?
- What is your institution's current policy requiring the wearing of masks to reduce disease transmission?
  - How does this apply (or not) to individuals who have been fully vaccinated?
  - Does your institution provide masks to the university community and is there an associated cost?

## Vaccine Requirements

As campuses settled into mask mandates and began to consider post-pandemic plans, focus shifted quickly to vaccine availability, mass vaccination sites, and requirements. On March 25, 2021, Rutgers University became the first American institution to announce a vaccine requirement for all fall semester students, prompting a flurry of legal considerations and national media coverage. Dozens of other institutions quickly followed suit. By the end of April, 181 institutions announced similar requirements. All but 15 are in states that voted for Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential election, and only five designated the requirement for residential students only (Thomason, 2021). Critics were quick to note the inability of public institutions to issue such requirements, though Rutgers – a public institution – issued the first mandate. As the list grew, so did the number of public institutions requiring vaccines. By early May, 41% of institutions with vaccine mandates were public colleges and universities.

Legally and politically, requiring vaccines or other health activities presents risks, though the issue is not new. Nearly 90% of the 700 American College Health Association (ACHA) member institutions require proof of vaccine against mumps, rubella, and other diseases (ACHA, 2021), though often with exceptions

for medical issues or religious considerations. In anticipation of COVID-19 vaccine requirements, at least 10 states issued executive orders, spending bills, and other legislation prohibiting institutions from mandating vaccines for all students or employees (Redden, 2021). As primarily republican governed states began to limit institutions' ability to mandate vaccinations, colleges and universities in those states introduced creative incentives for students, examples of which include offering anything from no testing to free textbooks and tuition grants in exchange for proof of inoculation.

In light of the ACHA recommendation that all colleges and universities mandate vaccines for fall 2021 students (ACHA, 2021), and in consideration of the future, campus leaders should consider the following:

- What are your state laws governing health and vaccine requirements for students and employees?
  - Are there recent executive orders or pending legislation that may impact your campus requirements?
  - Do state laws differentiate between fully authorized vaccines versus those under Food and Drug Administration emergency authorization?
  - How do legal requirements vary for students versus employees?
- How does a COVID-19 vaccine mandate impact policy development and operations for the institution?
  - Are vaccine tracking systems available within the institution?
  - What exemptions exist for those who cannot or do not want to be vaccinated? How do these differ for students or employees?

- What are the HIPPA implications of requiring vaccines and sharing information within the institution?
- How will vaccine requirements impact other COVID-19 public health mandates on campus?
  - May a fully vaccinated person cease mask wearing or social distancing?
  - How will the institution enforce mask, distancing, and vaccine requirements as the percentage of the population fully vaccinated increases?
- Can and should your institution incentivize vaccines?
  - Do institution policies dictate guidelines for incentives, gifts, or drawings?
  - Are there concerns with using state funds or other institutional budget sources for vaccine incentives, particularly in states prohibiting required vaccines?

Navigating the global pandemic successfully in higher education will require campus leaders to respond to difficult challenges and questions. As they face this immense task, the resources and questions posed in this article can provide a starting point for organization, review, and planning. Undoubtedly, coordination, collaboration, and a basic knowledge of the public health issues involved will promote safer environments on campus.

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## Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Knowledge Community

# Sowing the Seeds of Leadership and Engagement: How Volunteering (Even One Time) Makes a Difference

### John W. Lynch

*Assistant Professor in Managerial Studies*  
University of Illinois at Chicago (College of Business)

### Spencer A. Long

*Senior Director of Member Education and Development*  
Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity

### Sandy J. Wayne

*Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs &  
Professor in Managerial Studies*  
University of Illinois at Chicago (College of Business)

### Siyi Tao

*Doctoral Student in Managerial Studies*  
University of Illinois at Chicago (College of Business)

### Howie Xu

*Doctoral Candidate in Managerial Studies*  
University of Illinois at Chicago (College of Business)

Volunteering can be a transformative activity—for both the community and the volunteer. Service-learning researchers have established that immersive volunteering experiences provide students with opportunities to learn and develop (Lester et al., 2005). These immersive experiences often take the form of weekly volunteering programs or “alternative spring break” trips that can last a week. Along these lines, researchers often study volunteering in terms of frequency or length of volunteering opportunities (Rodell et al., 2016). However, recruiting and retaining volunteers for such time-intensive commitments can be a challenge given the competing demands students

## Student Learning and Development

### Research and Scholarship



face. As a result, many institutions organize one-time (“one-off”) events where volunteers can donate just a few hours of time. Though these events may serve the community, what do students gain from such brief volunteer encounters? Can the volunteering be structured in a way to have an impact on the student’s leadership development and community engagement? To explore these questions, we worked with the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Knowledge Community (CLDE KC) to examine how participation in one-time volunteering events relates to immediate learning outcomes and longer term leadership and civic participation.

## Conceptual Foundation

Volunteering refers to giving one's time and skills to a community organization during a planned activity (Rodell et al., 2016). As an experiential activity, volunteering can foster learning through hands-on tasks, interacting with others, and exposure to social issues. Such experiences can develop citizenship and practical skills and encourage deeper involvement in the community. Research into volunteer design (e.g., Grant, 2012; Lester et al., 2005) has identified five characteristics that may encourage these outcomes; practitioners can design volunteering activities with these traits in mind to result in positive experiences for participants. Summarized in table 1, these characteristics involve (a) the perceived significance of the volunteering tasks, (b) the variety of tasks, (c) tasks that produce identifiable pieces of work (and thus fuel a sense of completion), (d) the degree of autonomy the volunteer has in completing the tasks/work, and (e) the feedback the volunteer receives about how well they are doing (Grant, 2012).

Drawing from volunteer design literature, we speculated that these five characteristics can positively influence volunteer engagement—the mental, physical, and emotional energy participants invest while volunteering. According to Astin's (1984) student involvement model, the degree to which students engage themselves in an activity is associated with their learning from it. Applying that theory, we hypothesized that volunteer engagement during one-time volunteer events would be positively associated with immediate learning outcomes (i.e., civic and practical skills), longer term outcomes of servant leadership (a community-oriented form of leadership; see Liden et al., 2008), and community problem-solving.

## Research Study Procedures

With the assistance of the CLDE KC, between August 2019 and December 2020, we collected data at five college campuses from different regions of the United States. These institutions ranged from small to large;

they were public and private, research- and teaching-oriented; and located in rural, urban, and college-town areas.

On each campus we obtained data from volunteers using three rounds of online surveys. Students completed a pre-event survey before volunteering and a post-event survey afterward. The surveys asked questions about the volunteering background of these students; their perceptions of the volunteer tasks; their engagement level while volunteering; and their immediate learning in the form of civic and practical skills. Measures primarily used Likert scales. Several months later, volunteers completed an end-of-semester survey in which they answered questions about their servant leadership and community problem-solving behaviors since the volunteer event.<sup>1</sup> For their participation in the research study, volunteers received Amazon.com gift cards. An award from the University of Illinois at Chicago's Institute for Leadership Excellence and Development [iLEAD] funded this project.

## Results

A total of 207 volunteers completed the pre-event, post-event, and end-of-semester surveys for 48 events across the five campuses. We conducted a series of regression analyses to determine the extent to which the volunteering characteristics related to students' level of engagement and how this engagement shaped immediate learning and longer term behaviors. These results show that the major predictors of volunteer engagement were the perceived significance of the volunteering; the autonomy volunteers felt; and the feedback the volunteers received. Volunteer engagement was positively associated with immediate learning outcomes (i.e., civic and practical skills), servant leadership, and community problem solving. Further, the variety of volunteering tasks was directly associated with learning outcomes and community problem solving.

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<sup>1</sup> To obtain the survey measures and/or statistical results, please contact the lead author.

## Interpretation and Recommendations

Based on the results, several features of the volunteering experience influence immediate and longer term outcomes. Perceived significance, variety of tasks, sense of autonomy, and feedback positively related to learning and behavioral outcomes. This finding is noteworthy because some of these effects were detectable even several months after a single volunteer event. Further, these results remain consistent even when controlling for how often students volunteered in general. Together, these findings suggest that one-time volunteer events can indeed be impactful if practitioners can find ways to implement the five volunteer design characteristics; in table 1, we include examples of how it can be done. We hope our model and results offer practitioners a framework to improve the short- and long-term outcomes of their one-time volunteering events and that it allows campuses to compare their successful practices with those of other campuses to identify and validate effective approaches (Shutt et al., 2012).

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Table 1

### Volunteering Design Characteristics

Design Characteristic	Description	Example
Task significance	Volunteers believe the activity affects the lives of others.	Sharing information with volunteers about how their volunteering impacts the community (before, during, and after the event)
Variety of tasks	Volunteers participate in multiple activities and use many skills.	Allowing volunteers to rotate through different roles during a volunteer event
Task identity	Volunteers perform tasks that result in a whole, identifiable piece of work.	Involving volunteers in all parts of the volunteer activity such as planning the event, setting up, running the event, and assessing the event's success
Autonomy	Volunteers have freedom and discretion in the activity.	Giving volunteers responsibility for a task but not necessarily step-by-step directions or oversight for completing it
Feedback	Volunteers receive information about how well they are performing.	Structuring tasks in such a way that volunteers can clearly see their progress as they work and can solicit feedback directly from the nonprofit organization or service user.

Adapted from Grant, 2012.



*Fraternity and Sorority Knowledge Community*

## What Institutional Leadership and Supervisors Can Do to Support the Retention of Student Affairs Professionals in Fraternity/Sorority Life

**Vianca Williams, Ph.D.**  
 Director, Fraternity and Sorority Life  
 University of Central Florida

### Organizational and Human Resources Professional Development and Engagement



For years, fraternities and sororities have been scrutinized by the media, administrators, and faculty due to risky behaviors like hazing, alcohol and other drug abuse, sexual assault, and systemic racism (Kuh et al., 1996; Lautrup, 2020; Wade, 2017). Having knowledgeable and experienced student affairs practitioners in the fraternity/sorority area ensures that health and safety are prioritized and that these groups align their goals and outcomes with student success practices and institutional priorities (Williams, 2020). Unfortunately, retention in such roles is a concern. In 2016, the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors published a summary paper focused on their membership statistics. Of the 71% of members who were campus-based professionals, 57% had been in the field for less than 5 years; the average amount of time spent in these roles was

3 years, 4 months (Koepsell & Stillman, 2016). Steiner (2017) studied the wellness practices and burnout of campus-based fraternity/sorority professionals who had been in the role for 5 or more years. She found that those in this functional area normalized burnout, citing expectations and demands associated with the position. Also, pay disparities among student affairs department directors reveal that those individuals overseeing fraternity/sorority life are the lowest paid (The College and University Professional Association for Human Resources, 2015). These findings highlight the need for institutional leadership and supervisors to implement strategies to retain these individuals. This article offers a framework and strategies that can help student affairs practitioners in the fraternity/sorority functional area retain staff.

## A Framework for Retention

The theory of work adjustment (Dawis, 2005) aims to predict the retention of employees—something achieved when individuals and their work environment fit. The theory states that, when the employee's abilities match the requirements of the position and the employer, satisfactoriness results. Additionally, when the employee's values match the reinforcers provided by the employer (like salary, benefits, professional development, and recognition), satisfaction is achieved. When satisfaction and satisfactoriness are attained simultaneously, retention occurs. This framework gives institutional leadership and supervisors an opportunity to examine their practices and adjust approaches that lead to retention, especially within the context of fraternity/sorority life.

## Recommended Strategies to Increase the Retention of Those in the Role

My dissertation study, which focused on the retention and attrition of professionals in the fraternity/sorority functional area, employed the theory of work adjustment. The results of the dissertation revealed that the actions, decisions, and advocacy of supervisors and institutional leaders have an effect on staff turnover (Williams, 2020). I recommend the following strategies to help retain professionals in the fraternity/sorority functional area:

### Hiring Practices

When departments are recruiting, they must seek candidates who can balance relationship-building skills, have knowledge of student development, show a strong understanding and command of the stated job responsibilities, possess exceptional cognitive skills, and can manage concurrent tasks. The role is multidimensional and requires depth of knowledge and skills to succeed, beyond being a member of a fraternity/sorority and understanding the operations of such groups. Critical in the recruitment and final selection of candidates are intentional design of job descriptions (achieved by conducting a thorough audit of the programs, services, initiatives, and actions

associated with the role, and then pairing them with expectations placed on the practitioner) and interview processes that thoroughly vet the competencies needed for the job.

### Professional Development

The role's ongoing competing priorities (e.g., advising students, building and maintaining relationships with multiple stakeholders, managing crises and risk reduction, coordinating programming and education, handling administrative tasks) make it difficult to prepare candidates for the job. Professional development is essential for practitioners who must address the high demands facing sororities and fraternities and their undergraduate members. Whether it's attending conferences, providing in-house training, or investing in webinars and/or subscriptions, professional development helps fraternity/sorority professionals expand their tool kit. They are generalists (carrying out duties spanning across functional areas such as advising, programming, wellness education, conduct, and housing) working with a specialized population. They need to know a lot about a lot to do their job well, so professional development is vital.

### Intentional Supervision

Participants in the dissertation study described the supervision qualities they needed to persist in the role, such as someone who understands and values their work, does not challenge or question unnecessarily, and recognizes everything is not under the control of the fraternity/sorority student affairs professional. Supervisors demonstrate these qualities by advocating; appropriately challenging; guiding; role modeling; providing autonomy and trust; and establishing clear, reasonable expectations. When these supervision pieces are missing or misaligned, supervisors may contribute to the attrition of fraternity/sorority professionals.

### Reducing the Constant Adjustment Required in the Role

Those who have worked in the functional area over the long term describe having to constantly adjust due

to the role's complexity and demands—which leads to burnout. Study participants often mentioned the need to exhibit resilience in the workplace and confidence in work product because of the constant adjustment stemming from difficult situations (including crisis and risk management, power dynamics between alumni and administration, students being dishonest or unsafe in their practices, or feeling overworked and under resourced). Supervisors must not only offer coaching that assists these practitioners in adjusting but also find ways to minimize processes, procedures, and institutional practices that lead to burnout (e.g., expecting a duplication of programs already provided by other entities like national organizations or requiring excessive documentation and reporting practices). It is also important that the responsibilities and expectations of those in the role reflect those of an educator, not a compliance officer.

### **Examining the Human and Financial Resources Needed**

Institutional leaders can retain fraternity/sorority professionals when they provide human and financial resources that match the expectation the institution places on these practitioners and the corresponding department. Institutions should take time to assess how many staff members are necessary per number of chapters (not per number of students in the community, as the number of chapters is what truly drives the day-to-day work of the fraternity/sorority community; the per-member size may be a mitigating factor in risk but that is not proven). Further, supervisors should assess job responsibilities and compensation comparable to hours worked, and the responsibilities should be examined to appropriately determine the level (e.g., coordinator, director) at which the position should reside. Having multiple people working in the functional area allows for the division of responsibilities, so that part of the team focuses on proactive tasks (e.g., designing educational interventions) while the other manages reactive ones (e.g., managing crises). The institution's expectations of those in the role should reasonably match (and not exceed) the structure of the fraternity

and sorority advising program; in other words, if the institution's expectations of the fraternity and sorority area involve a lot of intentional advising and coaching, compliance with policies, and accountability practices, then the number of staff members provided to the area needs to be in line with the number of hours needed to intentionally carry these practices out. Finally, a budget corresponding to desired outcomes should be provided by the institution to the functional area for educational and programming components.

When institutional leadership and supervisors demonstrate support to the fraternity/sorority program and those working in it, practitioners are given a reason to stay in their roles (Williams, 2020). My study revealed that, when the approaches discussed above are not implemented, the morale of those in the role decreases and they question remaining at their institution. These strategies demonstrate a commitment to the success of the fraternity/sorority community and the work of the fraternity/sorority advisor, which leads to better retention of individuals in that role.

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## Gender and Sexuality Knowledge Community

# Leadership Lessons From Member Engagement Survey

**khristian kemp-delisser, Ed.D.**  
*Director, Multicultural Affairs*  
 University of Bridgeport

## Assessment, Evaluation, and Research

Assessment, Evaluation, and Research



### Introduction

The 2019 leadership transition brought unexpected, extraordinary leadership change for the Gender and Sexuality Knowledge Community (GSKC). Of the 33 members of the core leadership team, 28 left their positions because they either reached their term limit or switched roles for professional development. The GSKC was unprepared for the challenges of onboarding and orienting so many new core members eager to serve their constituents and the larger NASPA membership. Those core members often asked questions such as “Who are our members?” and “What do our members want from us?” The co-chairs and others on the KC charged with onboarding these new core members to the team soon exhausted

their anecdotes from former leadership members or scattered, incomplete records of the member activities and reports. In this article, we present some of the preliminary findings from a member engagement survey that can help KCs keep in the forefront a profile of their general membership.

### About the Survey

GSKC co- chairs used those questions of new core members as a foundation for a survey to distribute to our members. We worked with NASPA to ensure demographic questions and language was consistent with other information NASPA regularly collects on its members. Additionally the GSKC leadership team was asked to take a period of two months to consider

and respond with any suggestions, changes, or edits. Information was also gleaned from review of other surveys and self-studies conducted by other student affairs organizations, particularly the Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Professionals (2018). From there the survey tool was developed employing varying formats, such as multiple choice or open-ended questions. We arranged our engagement survey into four main sections. The first section asked members to share demographics about themselves, such as their NASPA region membership(s) and what other KCs they have joined. The second section asked about their level of participation with signature or new GSKC programming in the past four years. The third section explored where our members worked and their level of familiarity with LGBTQ-inclusive policies at their institution. The fourth section contained open-ended general questions inviting members to share their ideas for programs and services. This report will focus on the results of the demographic and open-ended sections to provide a glimpse into our membership and what they can teach us.

### Demographics at a Glance

Although we received fewer responses from our members than we had expected, the results from the diverse group of 51 people who responded offer valuable lessons. Using the most popular answers to the multiple-choice questions, we identified patterns and trends that resulted in the following profile of the typical survey respondent:

- Lives or works at an urban or suburban midsize public school in a New England, Northeast, or Mid-Atlantic state
- Relies on the GSKC primarily for professional support and interacts most with our conference engagement, communications, and collaborative/virtual learning positions (Identity- or affinity-based core member positions).
- Expects to be job searching in the next 5 years
- Holds a master's degree in student affairs or higher education administration and serves as coordinator, assistant director, or director of a university unit/department, while still considering themselves a mid-level professional
- Currently holds or has held memberships in other gender-related KCs, including Womxn in Student Affairs, Men and Masculinities, and New Professionals and Graduate Students

Overall, the snapshot of this section underlines the potential importance of our core members' functions supporting job searches, mentorship, and NASPA Undergraduate Fellows Program engagement. They each help reinforce or build a pipeline to leadership and to career networks in the field. Each core member would benefit from exploring how they can provide support and services through the lens of career preparation and readiness. Given that most survey respondents resided in the Northeast, greater efforts are needed by the KC to recruit and retain leadership from a variety of regions to reflect our membership. Also, because there was no representation from divisions or regions outside of the United States, we should consider partnering with international education or study abroad organizations to extend our international reach and expertise.

### Open-Ended Answers

The final section of the survey was composed of open-ended questions that provided opportunities for the survey respondents to tell us in their own words how to make the GSKC more accessible. They identified a range of challenges to their KC engagement, ranging from difficulty making social and professional connections across discipline and subject areas to navigating identity politics at work. Their comments reflected concerns about lack of transparency regarding volunteer role expectations, lack of a clear career ladder, and anxiety about entering new or impersonal spaces. Suggestions focused mostly on increasing the variety of volunteer opportunities

and methods of engagement. These suggestions demonstrate that survey respondents would like GSKC members to be thought leaders, with broad topics and opportunities to build communities of affinity and job function in addition to identity.

We also invited survey respondents to share their suggestions for new events, services, or programs. Respondents wanted to see KC core members lead more by creating innovative programs and professional development. Their feedback suggests that respondents have confidence in our judgment and capabilities as elected or appointed leaders. Specifically, they rely on us to promote scholarship on best practices for supporting queer staff, and they encouraged more development and sharing of LGBTQ-inclusion tips and best practices for students.

## Conclusion

This year's experience has underscored that, although periodic leadership transitions offer a valuable opportunity to refresh the skills, competencies, and vision of the GSKC, our efforts and mission can be hindered by lack of consistent and deliberate tracking and recording of the core team's knowledge and activities, and periodic collection of feedback from members. Our survey, despite lower-than-expected participation, offered a "good enough" (Upcraft & Schuh, 2002) solution to address the immediate need to make decisions about KC activities. Surveys can contribute to a relationship of accountability and trust with our members. As changes in GSKC practice are adopted and developed, we must be sure to connect them to the data in the survey. We hope to see program attendance increase, volunteer leadership roles on the KC being explored, or perhaps even co-sponsorship and other forms of resources grow as our members observe us operationalizing the data we collected from them. In order to develop a culture of assessment further in our KC we have built the engagement survey into the job responsibilities of our scholar/faculty in residence and co-chairs have returned to the raw data and shared it to apply to different questions that arise among the leadership core member team meetings.

- Overall, this survey process and use of the resulting data enabled our leadership team to support the NASPA Professional Development and Engagement strategic goal and develop our competency in a variety of developmental outcomes, including the following:
- Foundational: "Facilitate appropriate data collection for system/department-wide assessment and evaluation efforts using current technology and methods" (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 20).
- Intermediate: "Design ongoing and periodic data collection efforts such that they are sustainable, rigorous, as unobtrusive as possible, and technologically current" (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 20).
- Advanced: "Facilitate the prioritization of decisions and resources to implement those decisions that are informed by AER activities" (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 21).

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## *Indigenous Peoples Knowledge Community*

# A Storytelling Journey for Indigenous Student Success in Engineering

**Tiffany Smith (Cherokee/Muscogee), Ph.D.**  
*Director of Research*  
 American Indian Science and Engineering Society

## Social Justice and Inclusion Advocacy for Student Success



Underrepresentation of Indigenous students in higher education is a long-standing problem (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016; Shotton et al., 2013). Indigenous students compose only 1% of the total undergraduate population at postsecondary institutions (Aud et al., 2011). Furthermore, they earned the lowest percentage of all groups in the amount of engineering bachelor's degrees awarded, at 0.3% (National Science Foundation, 2017).

The research is scarce on examining the experiences of Native students who are persisting successfully in undergraduate engineering programs. Native students are often absent from institutional data

and reporting, the curriculum, and research and literature—an omission deemed the “American Indian research asterisk” (Garland, 2007, p. 612; Lowe, 2005; Shotton et al., 2013). When Indigenous peoples are represented in the data, they are often lumped together with other marginalized groups, which “denies the central and critical difference of Natives as tribal peoples of distinct nations with sovereign status and treaty rights” (Grande, 2000, p. 344). Indigenous student stories are critical to encouraging the next generation of Native students to pursue engineering pathways, as well as to guiding administrators on policy and environmental change necessary at the postsecondary level.

## Methodology

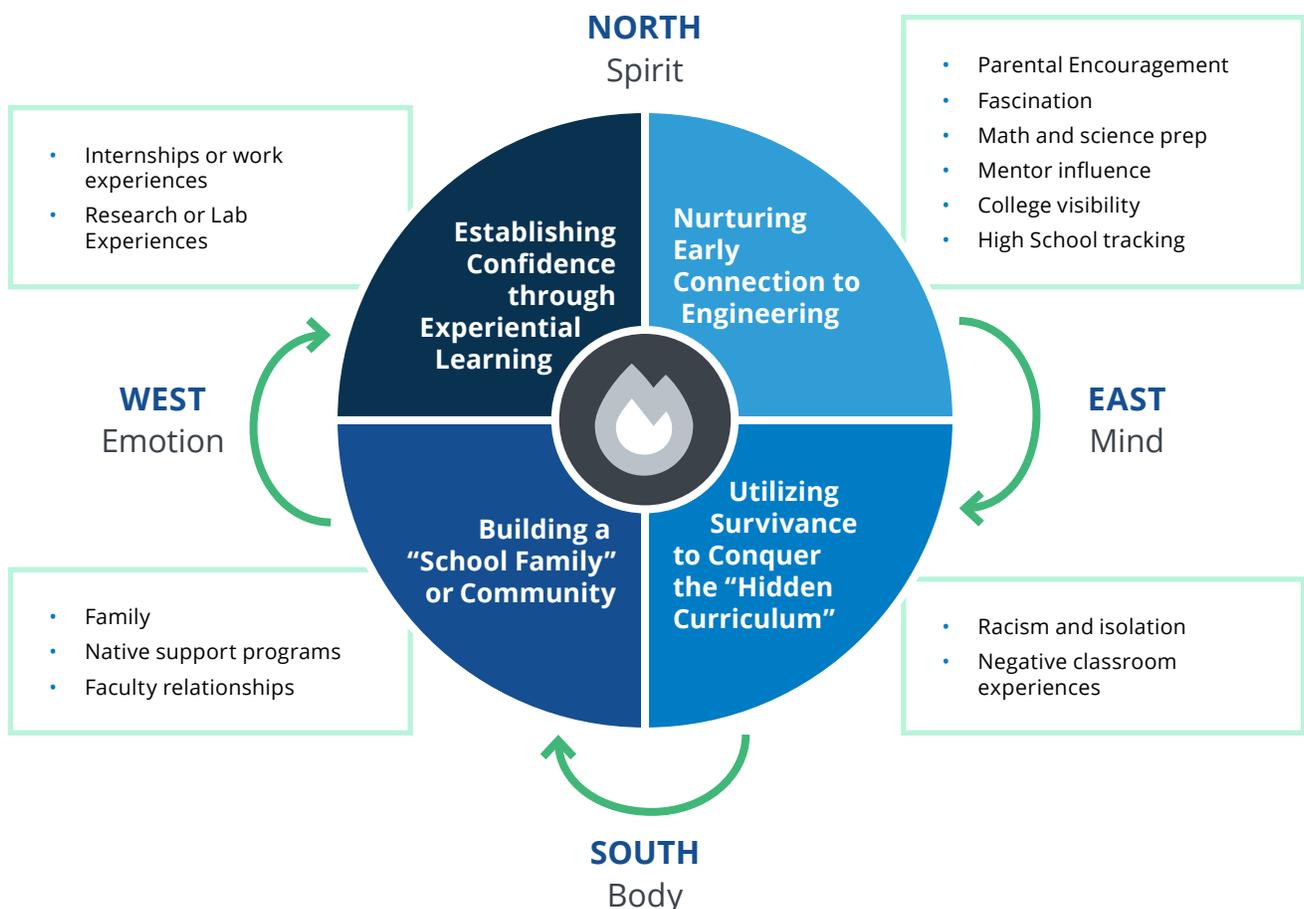
As a Cherokee and Muscogee womxn who worked with Indigenous engineering students for 13 years, I sought to reclaim our ways of knowing and gather stories responsibly utilizing two Indigenous-centered conceptual frameworks: tribal critical race theory (Brayboy, 2006) and the Indigenous research paradigm (Wilson, 2008). I then employed Indigenous storywork (Archibald, 2008) as the methodology. Through storytelling, one can achieve balance, because “stories have the power to make our hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits work together” (Archibald, 2008, p. 12). Cherokees strive to maintain Utiyvhi (balance) and we may smudge and/or participate in ceremonies to re-center our mind, body, and spirit. Smudging is a spiritual practice where we burn sacred plants, such as sage or sweetgrass, to cleanse our whole selves, as well as the space. I designed this study to visibilize Native student stories. To fully understand their experiences, I conducted individual

Skype conversations with seven students currently enrolled as an engineering major at public 4-year, non-Native institutions, or those who had graduated within the past 5 years.

## Findings

As I worked toward establishing Utiyvhi, I turned to the Cherokee four cardinal directions of North (the Spirit), East (the Mind), South (the Body), and West (the Emotion), as a way to think through the seven engineering students’ stories. What developed was this medicine wheel graphic that portrays the relational flow and connection that the four lessons learned from the students’ stories have with one another. The four lessons provide Utiyvhi to their persistence in these STEM programs. At the center was the students’ maintenance of their cultural identity through connection to their communities, indicated by the sacred fire that symbolizes strength and unity as they come together in a powerful, collective way.

Figure 1: Utiyvhi (Balance) Maintaining Cultural Identity (Sacred Fire)



## The Four Lessons

For the students in this study, the first lesson was a connection, beginning in their early childhood years, to STEM and later to engineering nurtured by their parents and teachers. Parents and teachers were instrumental in nurturing a fascination with STEM through K-12 education, facilitating math and science exposure and preparation. Parents encouraged the students' pursuit of higher education. Connections to colleges from an early age aided in the students' matriculation to college and college choice. College choice was based on proximity to home and other factors such as degree offerings and relevant cultural messaging. The two post-traditional students experienced hostility from their high school counselors, who attempted to "track" them to trade schools over college.

The students' second lesson was utilizing survivance (Vizenor, 1998) to conquer the hidden curriculum during their collegiate journeys and to overcome serious systematic challenges, such as racism and isolation, and negative classroom experiences. Vizenor (1998) presented the concept of survivance as not just survival in hostile contexts but as an active presence and resistance to erasure. One of the students described the hidden curriculum as the dominant group's way to maintain power in the engineering field, through sharing of past class notes and exams. She likened it to "playing a game" to be successful in these engineering majors (Smith, 2019). Negative classroom experiences included challenging coursework and difficult faculty members, which often led to setbacks in the students' degree completion. All of the students engaged with hostile environments that could have caused them to drop out or switch majors.

The third lesson was building a community or "school family" (as one student coined it) and focused on the students' avenues for support throughout their undergraduate engineering experiences. Students built their school family through family support, Native support programs, and faculty relationships. Most of the students noted that family members were

integral to their persistence. Additionally, students built community and gained financial support through involvement in the American Indian Science and Engineering Society, the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science, Native cultural centers or other Native organizations, and multicultural programs. Relationships with faculty also increased the students' social capital in the engineering profession.

All of the students' experiences in engineering came full circle to the fourth lesson: establishing confidence in their engineering disciplines. Research has shown the link between self-efficacy and students' choices to pursue and persist in engineering (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 1996). The students in this study recognized the Indigenous knowledge they bring to the field makes them better engineers and problem solvers. Experiential learning attributed to self-efficacy in their field and provided additional financial assistance.

To reach Utiyvi at non-Native institutions, it is crucial that higher education administrators seek to listen and understand the experiences of Indigenous engineering students. Armed with these problem-solving skills learned in the academy and from their own tribal nations, these students are a powerful force that utilize their engineering skills to protect tribal lands and water resources and assist in healthcare, technology, and infrastructure advancements. As I have been transformed through this research, I hope others will gain invaluable insight that is applicable to their institutions, and will inspire them to recognize and support Indigenous engineering students.

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## *International Education Knowledge Community* **The Vital Role of Student Affairs/Services in Higher Education Internationalization**

**Tadd Kruse, Ed.D.**  
*Co-Chair*  
 NASPA International Education Knowledge Community

**Ken Guan, Ed.D.**  
*Co-Chair*  
 NASPA International Education Knowledge Community

The scope of higher education and expanding internationalization have evolved extensively over the past half-century, forcing education institutions to grapple with the challenges presented by more diverse and international campus climates (Reisberg et al., 2019). The impact of internationalization in higher education is expressed in part by the rapidly increasing number of students studying in countries other than their own since the mid-1970s (Freeman, 2010); growth in branch campuses and partnerships; and newly-founded institutions in the 21st century, especially in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. The number of students crossing a border to study has

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increased in 50 years from less than a million in the late 1970s to 5.6 million in 2018 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020). Roper (2014) stated that, with increases in diverse populations, campus communities require greater institutional responsiveness to meet students' expanding personal and educational needs. Student affairs/services professionals have a unique capacity to help ongoing campus internationalization efforts and prepare senior leadership to recover from crisis operational states, such as the COVID-19 global pandemic.

For over 40 years, the definition of *internationalization* has been greatly debated, and the popularity of internationalization in the education context has continued to grow (Knight, 2004). Internationalization is different from globalization. Globalization in higher education can be seen as a phenomenon defined as the economic, political, and societal forces pushing higher education toward greater international activity (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Internationalization is the “process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (Knight, 2004, p. 2). Institutions have increasingly established goals to promote internationalization, often related to partnerships, mobility programs, and, to a lesser degree, the curriculum and extracurricular activities. Per Schulz et al. (2007), the motivations for U.S. higher education internationalization efforts appear to be based on preparing globally competitive citizens and on institutional self-interest, drawing from a national need for citizens and companies to compete in the global market.

Knight (2004) explained that internationalization activities can be inserted into many spaces within college and university operations—most broadly, the categories of *internationalization at home* and *cross-border* education. To promote a global student identity, internationalization at home purposely integrates international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments (Beelen & Jones, 2015). Internationalization efforts in higher education consist of two general strategies: academic and organizational. Academic strategies focus on internationalizing the curriculum, developing intercultural research projects, participating in scholarly collaboration, and supporting external relations through domestic, cross-border, and extracurricular activities (Knight, 2012; Murshudova, 2011). Organizational strategies require operations that highlight appropriate organizational structures, systems, and communication and cooperation, as well as adequate financial support and resources (Knight,

2008). Internationalization efforts, however, can be hindered when senior staff do not reach a consensus about how to define internationalization and the steps needed to undertake the process (Bedenlier & Zawacki-Richter, 2015). As such, more than ever, postsecondary institutions are tasked with developing culturally relevant support services for increasingly diverse student populations.

Given the complex nature of internationalization coupled with the current context of advancing equity and inclusion, responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, and limited student mobility/enrollment, the role of student affairs/services professionals is even more profound. Roberts (2015) identified the importance of our work to support students in learning the value of unique cultures, respect, and being part of an emerging international community so they can be “more effective in both personal and work life” (p. 10). Effective student affairs professionals recognize the importance of the work, the key stakeholders and partners, and the necessary approaches to develop opportunities and meet increasing demands.

Literature indicates that internationalization engages a wide range of institutional stakeholders. In the spaces beyond areas with specialized student service missions, students can be left feeling underserved, requiring colleagues to be intentional in their work, showing their capacity to serve student needs within their respective professional area (Roper, 2014). To help institutions advance their goals for internationalization and students’ global and intercultural learning, the American Council on Education (2016) suggested the following areas for student affairs staff to create sustainable campus partnerships:

1. Contribute to strategic plans for internationalization.
2. Facilitate study abroad students’ reentry.
3. Create opportunities for international and domestic student interactions.

4. Collaborate with faculty to create experiential learning opportunities.
5. Help staff oversee branch campus and study abroad programs.
6. Model global competencies in student development.

Globally aware and culturally diverse student affairs teams that engage meaningfully with colleagues different from themselves, exhibit curiosity about the world, and seek out new global experiences send a powerful signal to students that these qualities are valued.

Universities have been international institutions since their medieval origins; internationalization has vastly expanded over the past half-century and continues to be a driving force in higher education, although with an uncertain trajectory (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Traditional internationalization efforts directly contingent upon student mobility-related programs can no longer be the primary means for institutions to meet strategic objectives for international perspectives, diversity, or intercultural awareness. Student learning and development within a diverse and global lens must remain central to educating future leaders.

The purpose of our profession is to support students. Student affairs/services personnel are pivotal in engaging colleagues to sustain and enhance internationalization efforts and can identify how campuses support students—by building partnerships, by actively seeking innovative practices, and by embracing internationalization opportunities on campus. Institutions, even during these unique and challenging times presented by COVID-19, must remain vigilant and committed to producing internationally minded graduates.

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*Latinx/a/o Knowledge Community*

## Latinx/a/o Students: Whom Are We Talking About?

**Delmy Lendof**  
Vice President for Student Affairs  
Pratt Institute

When scholars write about the experiences of Latinx/a/o students, they often interchangeably use the following terms to describe the students' identities: *Country of Origin*, *Hispanic*, *Chicana/o*, *Latinx*, or *Latino/a*. Few scholars offer an explanation about their choice of terminology or how their study participants described themselves. By not being clear and transparent about which pan-ethnic label is being used in studies focused on people from the Latin American and Caribbean diaspora, scholars

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erase important nuances that matter to specific communities and that can advance the quality of research and recommendations. My aim here is to share my own concerns about these terms but also to inspire others to critically consider the terminology they use as they engage in research.

I never questioned how I identified until I moved to the South Bronx at the age of 13. My family and friends made it very clear to me that I was Dominican

and NOT Puerto Rican. When I applied to college in 1989, there was no demographic box for Dominican in the application. Unsure of what category I fell under, I checked “other” and wrote in “Dominican.” Subsequently, my advisor told me I should check “Hispanic” because that included Dominican people, so I did.

During my first year of college, I took a political science course with Dr. Jose Sanchez, a political activist. He pointed out that the term *Hispanic* developed out of the U.S. government’s need to group people from many Latin American countries into a single category for the purpose of the census. What stayed with me from his class was this statement: “*Hispanic* was a term we did not choose but that was given to us, and if you get anything out of this class, remember that we are NOT anybody’s *panic*.” After taking this class, I always referred to myself as *Dominican* or *Latina*.

As I began working on my Ed.D., I knew I wanted to write about the experience of Latina/o students and their parents. As I worked on my literature review, I found myself frustrated with terminology, as I was locating publications focused on a sample of a single group of students, most often Mexican or Chicano students. Occasionally I would find publications on Puerto Ricans and Cubans, but inclusion of people outside these groups was rare.

As I thought of my dissertation proposal, I wondered if I should write about Dominicans and use the term *Hispanics/Latinos* since it seemed to fit with what I had read in my research. When I realized that most higher education institutions in the Northeast United States had Latina/o students who came from different Latin American countries, I decided to focus on Latina/o students in the Northeast because I did not often read about them in the literature. During my research process, the institutional review board asked that I define the terms *Latina/o* and *Hispanic*, choose which term I would use, and defend my choice.

I returned to the literature and found the *Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society* to be most helpful in operationalizing language. In 1980, the U.S. Census

Bureau began using the term *Hispanic* to describe descendants from Latin America, the Caribbean, and other Spanish-speaking countries, territories, and colonies. In the year 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau changed the term to *Latino* (Schaefer, 2008).

The term *Latino* has also been deemed controversial within certain communities. *Latino* is often used to describe individuals who trace their background to any of the nations south of the Rio Grande, regardless of their cultural heritage, and the term encompasses Spanish-speaking countries located in North America, Central and South America, and the Spanish-speaking nations of the Caribbean (Schaefer, 2008). *Hispanic* is often used to describe individuals of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or Central or South American background including Spain or Portugal. Both terms, *Hispanic* and *Latino/a*, tend to oversimplify the differences between and have failed to convey the heterogeneity among people of Latin America (Schaefer, 2008).

I thought the definitions above would be enough for my dissertation, but I was wrong. The day of my proposal defense, a committee member drilled me on the terminology and asked, “If I am White but self-identify as Latino, could I participate in your study? What if one of my parents is Latina/o but the other is not?” These questions showed that I needed to think about my sample a little deeper, so I went back to the drawing board and came up with a better definition for my dissertation. This is what I ended up with:

*In this study the researcher used the term Latina/o to describe students who self-identified as Hispanic or Latina/o and both of their parents or all their grandparents were born in a Spanish-speaking Latin American country. The term Latina/o is used irrespective of the language spoken at home or by the student (Lendof, 2013, p. 16).*

## Takeaways

It has been 8 years since I defended my dissertation, and I still find most publications that use the terms *Latina/o* or *Hispanic* fail to describe them or acknowledge the diversity within them. Furthermore, I am concerned that now that new terms have emerged (i.e., *Latine* or *Latinx*), this language will be used without considering the implications for who is and is not included in the sample. Most importantly, I worry about how misleading these terms can be used to be inclusive in research but do not actually include any participants that identify as members of the trans community or outside of the gender binary.

As scholars and practitioners, when we write or speak about these populations we must also acknowledge and recognize biracial and multiracial Latinx/a/o students as well as those who identify as Afro-Latino or Black (Haywood, 2017). In the United States and higher education, the Latinx/a/o population continues to grow. As such, it is essential that research continues on—and for—this group. Furthermore, scholarship must reflect the diverse cultural, racial, and social identities, and the personal experiences, of students and accurately reflect their countries of origin.

## Critical Reflection

Looking back, I wish I had included racial demographics and gender identity—if not in the demographic information, then at the very least in the participant discussions. In omitting it, I perpetuated a *blanqueamiento* (whitening) of those who are placed within this pan-ethnic label. It also leads to erasure of important gender differences that, coupled with race and interlocking systems of oppression, intersect to create a multiplicity of lived experiences (Crenshaw, 1991).

## Call for Action

We need to think critically about how we use terms to describe the experience of Latine, Latinx, Latino, Latina, and Hispanic students. As scholars and practitioners, we have a responsibility not only to describe terms and how we are using them but also

to be transparent about our sample, so that we honor the lived experiences and identities of our study participants. If using a pan-ethnic label, make sure to define it and describe the population reflected within it. If a sample is based on only one ethnicity or country of origin, name the ethnicity or country instead. It is important to stay critically attentive to the interlocking systems of oppression that impinge on students' lives and identities and to ensure robust scholarship that reflects the multiplicity of their identities research.

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## Off-Campus and Commuter Student Services Knowledge Community Supporting First-Year Off-Campus and Commuter Students Through Peer Mentoring

**Jeremy Moore, Ed.D.**  
*Associate Dean of Students*  
Naropa University

### Advising and Supporting Advocacy for Student Success



Many college campuses employ residency requirements that stipulate that first-year students must reside in institutionally owned and managed accommodations. Although such mandates are often enacted for developmental purposes, such as resourcing students with academic support or social connection, these decisions can also result from the institution's occupancy and revenue needs. Residence life programs often are well resourced with intentional programming or residential curriculum frameworks, professional and student staff such as resident or community assistants, and facilities to provide dedicated gathering and engagement space within the living environment. In contrast, commuter students often lack dedicated spaces and resources beyond common areas scattered across campuses.

Even prepandemic, many institutions observed a growing trend in students opting to reside with family members or identify conducive options close to their campus to save money and ameliorate the overall cost of living and education. With an estimated 86% of postsecondary students potentially falling into a commuter classification, the size, diversity, and variations within this population have tremendous implications for higher education practitioners (Jacoby, 2000). This article will explore one action research innovation piloted at a flagship public research university that sought to better resource and support first-year off-campus and commuter students.

## Identifying a Need

Off-campus and commuter students can be defined in a variety of ways. Weiss and Wright (2020) provided insight into the complexity of these differing definitions by exploring intersecting identities a student may hold such as race, first-generation student status, neurodiversity, and others. Dugan et al. (2008) introduced the concept of a *dependent commuter*—an individual who resides “in the home of a parent, guardian, or other relative”—versus an *independent commuter*—a student who lives in a private residence on their own (p. 282). Many campuses have both off-campus and commuter students, particularly as younger students may opt to reside in a family home to save expenses while having some familiarity with their living situation.

In recent years, the concept of a *sense of belonging* has become a popular focus area. Although a sense of belonging can be evaluated and defined in multiple ways and from various perspectives, Cheng (2004) stated that, at a minimum, individuals must feel an affinity, fit, or connection within an environment; feel unrestrained in sharing and expressing who they are; and have a perception of being cared about and of the existence of mutual respect. Moore (2020) found through mixed-methods research at one Western Research I public university that many first-year commuter students did not feel a sense of belonging or mattering among their first-year peers and often expressed a sense of anxiety in connecting with faculty/staff and difficulty in connecting with other first-year off-campus and commuter students.

## The Commuting Buffs and Commuter Peer Mentor Program

Launched as a pilot program in 2015, the Commuting Buffs program was established at a flagship public research university to provide dedicated resourcing and touchpoints for first-year commuter students. Initially, the program was launched with one commuter student liaison, a part-time student leader who assisted full-time staff with administration and programming tasks. Following the pilot year,

program staff determined that a different staffing and resourcing model would help distribute the work of supporting 350 first-year commuter students into something more accessible and manageable. Utilizing seed funding provided by the Division of Student Affairs, a commuter peer mentor (CPM) program began during the 2016–2017 academic year. As a result, the first four CPMs were recruited and hired.

Data from focus groups, program attendance, open rates, and surveys demonstrated a need for smaller clusters that provided a mentor-to-mentee ratio more attuned with resident assistant-to-resident staffing structures seen with many on-campus residential living environments. Coupled with an increase in the first-year commuting student population from 350 students in 2015 to over 750 in fall 2020, the program expanded to 17 CPMs and one commuter student liaison to provide dedicated programming, resource distribution, and academic support connections with tutoring, advisors, and faculty. Students were originally clustered into 30 to 40-person cohorts based on commuting location. However, as of the 2020–2021 academic year, commuter students were assigned to clusters based on their academic interest/college to mirror similar efforts of cohorting undertaken for on-campus residential students.

## Pivoting for a Pandemic

Working with a population of students who already reside off campus provided a unique opportunity when the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the nature of outreach, community-building efforts, and the ability of staff to offer in-person touchpoints. During fall 2019, Commuting Buffs piloted a virtual student community on Microsoft Teams to provide opportunities for students to connect virtually through chat, threaded discussions, and videoconferencing. Following a move to remote learning in March 2020, this setup enabled CPMs to continue outreach to their students in addition to email and phone/text messaging.

In the months after remote learning took effect, Commuting Buffs programming was adapted to

provide virtual engagement opportunities aligned with student interests and to offer opportunities for continued social and academic connection and belonging. Specific examples included game nights hosted on a newly established commuter student Discord channel; a 5-day KonMari organizing challenge facilitated by a professional organizer; and, to provide an extra motivational push following the start of the spring semester, a special shoutout message obtained through Cameo, an online celebrity video marketplace, from Nev Schulman of MTV's *Catfish* embedded in the weekly *Commuter Compass* newsletter.

### Implications for Practice

A peer mentoring program allows for student-to-student interaction, increased resonance with timely and relevant topical areas and support needs, and co-constructed learning which can occur in various organic ways. As practitioners seeking to serve off-campus and commuter students, we understand there are many implications for our continued practice, particularly as our students and their unique situations evolve. As practitioners, we can employ the following context questions as they reflect on ways to better serve commuter student populations:

- What research methods can your institution utilize to better conceptualize commuter and off-campus students' self-identified needs?
- What resources already exist on your campus to assist in meeting the developmental needs of first-year commuter students? What resources may need to be created or explored?
- How can your institution equalize access to resources between in-person, virtual, and residential/commuter student populations?
- What mechanisms can your institution develop or may already exist to assist in developing commuter/off-campus student social capital (shared support and community building acquired through interpersonal relationships)?

- What is the appropriate ratio of mentors to mentees for a peer mentoring program on your campus?

### Conclusion

Although peer mentoring programs are available for many student populations, fewer programs are dedicated to supporting first-year off-campus and commuter students. Practitioners should carefully study the demographics and specific need profiles of their students and align resources and services to best meet student needs. Faculty and staff alike should remain vigilant in understanding barriers that may arise for commuter and off-campus students while helping their campus create policies and practices that are inclusive and dynamic for the needs, engagement, and home location of each learner. Investing time and resources into these areas will allow for effective and appropriate implementation of evidence-based practices and strategies for off-campus and commuter students that can likely be adapted to enhance operations for other student populations.

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University of Pittsburgh School of Education

*Orientation, Transition, and Retention*

## Political Climate and Student Activism During the First-Year Transition

**Maximilian T. Schuster**  
*Assistant Professor*  
 University of Pittsburgh

Political polarization continues to produce hostility within the current U.S. sociopolitical context. Beginning in 2015, students on college and university campuses began to more acutely sense, experience, and contend with these hostilities on campus (George Mwangi et al., 2018; Schuster, 2020). As microcosms that magnify tensions within broader society (Rhoads, 1998), colleges and universities have documented this polarization playing out in a number of ways, including increases in undergraduate student activism, significant rises in hate crimes on campus, and upticks in white supremacist campus propaganda and recruitment materials (Bauman, 2018). Further,

### Social Justice and Inclusion Advocacy for Student Success



within the past 20 years, entering cohorts of first-year students continue to be more politically polarized than the last; it therefore comes as no surprise that today's first-year students are highly politically polarized (Stolzenberg et al., 2020).

For first-year students, transitioning to college typically includes acclimating to new academic expectations, experiencing excitement and uncertainty around making new friends or joining campus activities, and establishing a greater sense of independence (Azmitia et al., 2013). During these politically turbulent times, recent first-year student cohorts have also more readily found

themselves reflecting on their own understandings of their political ideologies, frequently participating in politics by attending political rallies or activist marches, keeping up on news through social media, and voting—often for the first time—in a federal election (Eagan et al., 2015, 2017; Thomas et al., 2017). Therefore, better understanding the political context on campus may support administrators in equipping students with firm foundations for exploring and expressing political beliefs alongside their peers in humanizing ways.

## Methods

In the qualitative research study that is summarized here, I conducted one-on-one interviews with 17 students with one or more minoritized identities attending an urban research university in a presidential electoral battleground state between 2015 and 2016. During these interviews, I was particularly interested in learning about students' lived experiences within the campus climate, as well as how the evolving political context was shaping their transition to higher education. I analyzed verbatim transcripts of these interviews through thematic coding (Saldaña, 2009). The strategies utilized for this study are supported by methodological principles for sound qualitative research (Bazeley, 2013). I also employed Hurtado et al.'s (2012) campus climate framework to investigate the interactions among the sociopolitical context and students' behavioral and psychological appraisals of the climate.

## Key Findings

Two findings from this study are most relevant for orientation, transition, and retention professionals. First, first-year students with minoritized identities noted how the broader sociopolitical context pervaded the campus climate in ways that adversely affected their transitional experiences. Political events happening on or near campus, such as an inflammatory conservative free-speech lecture and an open-carry firearm demonstration, gave new space for identity-based discrimination to occur. Study participants described working to minimize damaging

rhetoric, such as racial epithets, that were personally directed at them during these events. Contending with identity-based discrimination at various points during their first-year transition produced within some students a sense of exhaustion.

Second, students in the study used activism to rebuff these hurtful messages and combat oppression that was more readily surfacing on campus. They held counter-protests, developed processing spaces, engaged with the community, and petitioned administrators. Activism was not only an opportunity for first-year students to advocate for themselves to administrators and to push against identity-based oppression, but also a way for students to form connection and solidarity with one another. These connections were critical in sustaining students throughout their first year as hostilities continued to surge on campus.

## Implications

These findings connect to years of research (e.g., Linley, 2018) indicating that students with minoritized identities experience greater hostility in the campus climate. Moreover, these findings offer a unique perspective into how political context shapes students' transitional experiences. From these findings, I offer several recommendations for orientation, transition, and retention professionals. First, colleges and universities need to regularly assess their campus climates and incorporate measures that account for the current sociopolitical context. Such understandings are critical in identifying and disrupting marginalizing scripts that emanate in the broader sociopolitical sphere and emerge on campus.

Second, orientation and transition programming can specifically address ways for campus community members to engage in humanizing political discourse. By developing educational presentations or partnerships with faculty members, other offices, or nonpartisan community organizations, campuses can create opportunities for students to see a range of campus professionals model strategies for

effective political discourse; in turn, students may be encouraged to employ these techniques in their conversations inside and outside the classroom.

Finally, first-year student programming efforts that directly tie to topics of political discourse might include intergroup dialogue workshops, which have been shown to improve participants' empathy skills (Eagan et al., 2017). Similarly, providing pathways, support, and encouragement for first-year students' journeys toward activism and community engagement may provide students with empowering learning outcomes as evidenced by other recent research studies. One important consideration in formulating innovative programming for first-year students is that such programs often ask minoritized students to engage in additional emotional labor by participating in and educating others about their experiences through these programs. The education of dominant-identity students, faculty, and staff cannot come at the expense of the humanity of minoritized campus community members.

Considering the political context in orientation, transition, and retention programming is vital because political polarization is expected to continue to generate division on college campuses during upcoming election cycles.

## Author Note

The full findings from this study referenced here were published in the following article:

Schuster, M. T. (2020). "An experience unlike any other": The experiences of first-year students with minoritized identities with campus climate during the 2016 presidential election. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. Advance Online Publication. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000252>

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*Public Policy Division*

## Post-COVID Challenges in a Higher Education Policy World

**Denny Bubrig**

*Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs*  
University of Southern Mississippi

As the entire globe begins emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, effectively predicting the higher education policy landscape is a toss-up at best. With a new administration gaining its footing and states asserting themselves more into the national discourse, the known policy factors are numerous and subject to change in a matter of moments. Of course, there are also the unknown, the crises, and other spur-of-the-moment issues that may occur over the course of a calendar year. This article seeks to outline those higher education policy topics likely to stay relevant over the course of the next year.

### Law, Policy, and Governance

Professional Development and Engagement



#### Freedom of Speech

Free speech and free speech parameters continue to be ongoing topics at the state and federal levels as well as through the various levels of the judiciary. Social media plays a significant role, as made clear by the Brandi Levy case on the Supreme Court docket in late April 2021 (Totenberg, 2021). The case centered on whether speech causes disruption to school operations. In this case, what is the location of that speech, can a student be held accountable for speech via social media or in off-campus environs are types of questions that were seeking answers. Similarly, questions about the ability/appropriateness of prominent figures to appear/appeal advocate for policies to the general populace is also under

scrutiny. With many leaders being called to task for social media content and the appropriateness of their postings (e.g., the assistant coach of the University of Chattanooga Football team; Rittenberg, 2021), the ability to advocate or speak out on social issues for the citizenry, or for public figures, may be ruled by very stringent guidelines before any consensus can be reached. Many states are taking stances on how protests are managed and what actions they can take. These legislative moves are being countered with freedom of speech arguments throughout the country. To illustrate the breadth of the debate, 222 bills have been considered and 32 enacted in 45 states. It's clear that free speech will be debated well into the foreseeable future.

### **Title IX and Gender Equity**

At the time of this writing, the Biden administration has begun a formal review of the Title IX guideline revision issued by the Trump administration, attempting, in part, to roll back those guidelines to make the Title IX hearings less legalistic in nature (Kingkade, 2021). This comes on the heels of high-profile gender equity questions involving the NCAA Women's Basketball tournament, the final report issued on the Louisiana State University (LSU) Title IX violations by Husch Blackwell (2021), and several state legislative challenges related to transgender concerns. Multiple states are also engaging in legislative action from varying perspectives. Further, many states are writing or debating legislation regarding trans student athletes and participation in competitive athletics. These debates at the state level all but confirm that these discussions will not end anytime soon.

### **Affordability and Finance**

As higher education moves into the fall months, the Biden administration budget package will be subject to much debate, and financing for higher education hangs in the balance. The federal budget's higher education-related pieces include funding Pell Grant increases, STEM, HBCUs, and more. Funding for community colleges and trade education are also part of the package. As the draft budget moves forward,

multiple bills have been submitted that attempt to reduce costs related to education through community colleges and institutions serving students of color (e.g., tribal-based institutions or HBCUs). As budget discussions progress, do not look for immediate passage of these initiatives due to the current levels of polarization (Burke, 2021).

Also part of the finance dialogue are multiple efforts to expand emergency relief for institutions and students. These various endeavors address student loan debt, capital financing for HBCUs, and other institutional- and student-related funding debt volumes.

### **State Legislation and Advocacy**

Although it is often the federal efforts that make it into headlines, state-level initiatives have gained more attention in 2021. Each of these policy directions have seen significant action in various state legislative bodies. Many of these directions will likely be challenged in coming months, as different entities have stepped forward to challenge this legislative movement.

### **Recommendations to engage in advocacy work abound, including the following:**

- Become familiar with your institution's government relations team and the issues or policies the institution is advocating for at the state level.
- Avoid advocating on work time or via work-issued equipment. It may be considered an employee policy violation if you work for a state-supported institution.
- Keep correspondence, conversation, and materials prepared for legislators tight and concise. The more you can say in few words, the better.
- Illustrate the human impact for the policy in question by sharing firsthand experiences or those of your students or someone close to you.

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*Sexual and Relationship Violence, Prevention, Education, and Response  
Knowledge Community*

## **Walking The Talk and Interrogating Anti-Blackness: A Note for the Anti-Opressive Liberation**

**Sarah Colomé, MS**

*Founder & Chief Executive Officer  
Collective Futures*

**Wanda Swan, MA**

*Founder and Executive Director  
The Swan Center for Advocacy & Research, Inc.*

In an era marked with mandatory lockdowns and global changes brought on by COVID-19, many anti-violence professionals find themselves also employing a new strategy for anti-oppressive service provision: reading the anti-violence field for filth. The global pandemic has presented compounding issues for survivors of violence in ways that many of them may not have imagined. Lockdowns and layoffs presented unique complications to service provision; one such challenge was fully housing and securing safety measures for all survivors requiring care, including student survivors whose abrupt transition from

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Inclusion**  
Equity, Inclusion, and  
Social Justice



campus could also mean sheltering in place with those who have previously harmed them. Although these and other obstacles certainly are overwhelming for any student, advocates quickly recognized how the pandemic revealed systemic disparities that call specific attention to the anti-violence field's inaction in resolving its past sin of anti-Blackness.

For many anti-violence professionals, the training orienting individuals to this work is a cut-and paste history ripe with White Savior Industrial Complex (Lodhia, 2016) and the overarching message that progress is slow but achieved through self-sacrifice for

the greater good. Once unquestioned, this perspective is now coming undone in light of new untold histories of Black founders of the movement; a form of Black feminist ideology, known as Black feminist abolitionism, that precedes mainstream feminism (Swan, 2020); and strategies created by enslaved African antirape activists (Feimster, 2018). The reverberation of this reveal has professionals seeking truth and acknowledgment of both the erasure of this history and how a White-washed legacy with ties to anti-Blackness impacts Black survivors and other survivors of color. Higher education is not exempt from interrogation.

### **It's All Innovative Until It Threatens Whiteness**

One obvious concern lies in the field's current inauthentic praxis. A gap continues to grow between the movement's abolitionist origins and the professionalization of the field, and this widening often leaves the most vulnerable members of our student communities in the margins. Reliance on carceral systems of monitoring and reporting that have historically impacted Black, Indigenous, (and) people of color (BIPOC) survivors lives in direct conflict with the liberatory goals of the movement and creates a chilling effect for survivors seeking support. This approach narrows options of survivor autonomy for those students whose cases are labeled "difficult" and promotes a system that, in its current iteration, has no way of establishing equity for BIPOC survivors. How did this happen? The same underlying ideology that severed the work and erased the history of the Black founders of the anti-violence movement is the same underlying ideology that propels higher education. Yes, higher education depends on anti-Blackness to thrive, and when anti-violence service provision is positioned under such an umbrella, oppressive advocacy flourishes. In short, the anti-violence field has succeeded in carving out a place within higher education where it can function without ever actively advocating for the liberation of minoritized students or establishing anti-racist curricula as a form of prevention education.

This iteration serves a culture of systems-agreeable advocacy of White avoidance that prefers resting in spaces of neutrality than enacting change.

Another point of concern is the lack of direct uniform action to enable an anti-oppressive approach that centers the foundational Black expertise of the movement. A performative cycle of faux remorse has been allowed to thrive for far too long when the system is once again called to the carpet. The year 2020 saw many calls of reckoning from 46 state coalitions, national organizations, and recognizable figures who, after the murder of George Floyd, were able to finally see the relationship that exists at the intersection of race and violence, a relationship that had previously been interrogated within the core value of Black feminist abolitionism centuries ago. Finally, these institutions put pen to paper to recount the myriad ways that White leadership in this movement promoted "increased policing, prosecution, and imprisonment as the primary solution to gender-based violence" and ignored approaches to accountability and restoration that BIPOC communities had found successful in their movement building (Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence: Moment of Truth Statement, 2020). Promises to center margins, reduce police involvement, invest in liberation, and so on, rang out across this country—with very little change to systems' protocol over just a year later. This cycle of national and state organizations defaulting back to Whiteness (Swan, 2020) trickles down to campus systems and strategies, becoming nothing more than mere lip service and perpetuating an uninterrupted cycle of acknowledgment and inaction. Harmful systems that erase the cultural nuances of BIPOC survivorship remain—as do White-centered leadership that stunts liberatory decision making.

### **Knowledge Community Walks the Talk**

These concerns and others have been of great priority to the Sexual and Relationship Violence Prevention, Education and Response Knowledge Community (KC). We are at a time of reckoning where we must pivot

from commodified instances of intentional discussion focusing on marginalized needs, to embedded, ongoing, structural engagement that recognizes that all experiences, spaces, research, and practice is racialized.

Destabilizing our normalization of anti-Blackness requires a fundamental shift in both practice and place. Calls for anti-racist praxis and public statements against White Supremacy are ineffective and performative without an actionable commitment to assessing and changing the structures and systems within higher education – the same structures and systems that are born of and perpetuate White Supremacy. Woven within that same thread is the reality of campus sexual misconduct advocates, who must simultaneously navigate systems bred from the lens of compliance while working to create new possibilities of how we prevent and respond to harm. Rape culture and anti-Blackness are born of the same desire for power and control, propagated through individual interactions, institutional cultures, and social structures.

The 2021 NASPA Strategies Conferences marked the inaugural launch of the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Advocate Track (Track). The Track aimed to recenter advocates' voices by reclaiming the origin story of the movement to end violence and by calling on all corners of higher education to recognize their individual and collective roles in the prevention, intervention, and response to sexual and relationship violence. The Track was born out of practitioner-based concerns that many local discussions and most national trainings in the wake of the new 2020 Title IX regulations were exclusive of the expertise held by advocates—ultimately modeled after historical approaches to collegiate violence prevention that defer to concerns over liability, compliance, and conservative applications of often more broadly available legislative interpretation. To what end does a conversation with a campus's general counsel, human resources, Title IX office, and executive leadership lead? We argue it does not culminate in a result that prioritizes the needs of marginalized survivors.

When raising these concerns to NASPA leadership, we were invited to lead the cultivation of a new approach to the discussion, one that better situated the role of advocates as thought and practice leaders, while calling on our colleagues to develop new understandings of traditional approaches too often rooted in white comfort and the faux notion of neutrality. Sessions were designed collaboratively between presenters and KC leadership, with attention to the unique roles that advocates have played historically and in current contexts. Stretching beyond direct survivor support, sessions outlined the essential role that advocates play in strategic planning, designing processes and procedures, and developing and implementing policy. The Track also emphasized the importance of advocates' insights when engaging faculty, building coalitions, addressing retention, and cultivating communities of care that do not reinforce the responsibility of harm reduction to the individual. Within sessions, and while designing them, we engaged in honest conversations about the invisibilization of queer BIPOC leaders and the intentional exclusion of the role that enslaved and free Black womxn played in cultivating many of the strategies used today for sexual misconduct advocacy and healing. To be clear, this work is both difficult and ongoing. We aimed to call forth the weaponization of terms like *survivor-centered* and *expertise* to challenge conference planners and attendees to interrogate how and why these terms were being used, and which agendas are being furthered when they are used.

The gaps between purported values and actualized theory through practice result in an inauthentic praxis. Authentic engagement requires us to sit in the discomfort of unlearning, with the understanding that the ground must often shake beneath us if we hope to build a new foundation. The Track was no exception, as speakers and attendees engaged in dialogues challenging one another to imagine what could be created, as opposed to navigating an existing system rooted in paternalism, either/or thinking, power hoarding, objectivity, and other characteristics of White supremacist culture (Okun, 2021).

The KC's process of designing and leading the Advocate Track is one example of how academic spaces, and professional communities within NASPA can more authentically dismantle anti-Blackness and disempower and reconstruct systems dependent on White Supremacy culture. From this approach, the authors have identified the following guiding questions to support other KCs and institutions on their journey to liberatory praxis:

- How is anti-racist praxis embedded in your strategic planning in an actionable manner?
- Is anti-Blackness, colonization, and White supremacy explicitly mentioned in your prevention education strategies to create population-level change?
- To what extent are leaders building the capacity of professional members of the community to better understand, recognize, and resist anti-Blackness?
- How are you preparing your department and/or institution to embrace the destabilization of anti-Blackness?
- How do our traditional notions of knowledge production intentionally and covertly rely on Whiteness to create professional expectations and standards?

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*Student Affairs Fundraising and Communications Knowledge Community*  
**Using Inspiration and Impact to Influence Program Design and Assessment for Continued Donor Relations**

**Braden Foreman-Black**  
*Teacher Scholars Academy Coordinator*  
 College of Education & Human Sciences  
 University of Nebraska-Lincoln

**Assessment, Evaluation, and Research**  
**Advocacy for Student Success**



The landscape of higher education fundraising is changing, particularly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Evenstar, 2020). At the end 2020, institutions of higher education expected a 40% decrease in annual giving, making for an uncertain future for many student affairs-related programs (Evenstar, 2020). Before the pandemic, some regions across the United States had been anticipating teacher shortages in P-12 school systems. This shortage is only expected to increase as the pandemic continues, with a reported 27% of P-12 educators considering leaving their positions for a new career (Horace Mann, 2020). To retain qualified teachers,

collaborations between higher education institutions and P-12 school districts have been proliferating in the United States. These partnerships often exist as a strategy to promote college access and retention, by utilizing various strategies of engagement throughout communities and schools; an added benefit is attracting K-12 students to the teaching profession (Núñez & Oliva, 2009).

As these programs grow and develop, higher education fundraising must also implement innovative strategies to meet the needs of changing demographics and student success. For example, in Nebraska, a future crisis is growing out of an

increasing number of students and a declining number of teachers qualified to fill open teaching seats across the state (Nebraska Department of Education, 2017). Recognizing these growing concerns, the University of Nebraska Foundation looked to bolster donor relations so it could establish a partnership intended to attract a new generation of teachers. By doing so, a new scholarship program was established utilizing high-impact practices in student affairs. The challenge remains: How can student affairs professionals play a role in the donor and fundraising process?

## Student Affairs Fundraising

Many student affairs graduate programs do not go into detail about fundraising at higher education institutions, choosing instead to impart only general knowledge about finance and higher education. So, when a student affairs professional is dropped into a role that requires fundraising as a core competency, a transition period in which new skills are learned is typical. The strengths we student affairs professionals employ daily are crucial for the fundraising process: We know our programs, we know our students, and we know the impact of what we do. Whether that knowledge acquired is through formal training or through experience working directly with students, our expertise is critical in fundraising and communications. To be successful student affairs fundraisers, we need to remember only a few key details about fundraising: inspire, learn, engage, ask, thank, and show impact (Jepson, 2020). Using the University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL) Teacher Scholars Academy as an example, this article will highlight the *inspire, learn, and show impact* elements.

### Inspire and Learn

The donation that founded the program came about because of an anticipated need and a wish to inspire the next generation of teachers and students; however, the data had to track the program for roughly 10 years, because the original donors wanted to know whether these students remained in the teaching field after roughly 5–10 years (a key indicator

of retention in the teaching profession). The program's main goals were to recruit a new generation of educators, narrow the teacher shortage, and support long-term success in teaching careers. Although the academy is only in Year 2 of a 10-year project, early data and students' own words already highlight the need for a scholarship focused on equity through teaching.

To motivate higher education donors, student affairs professionals can create programs and curricula that inspire and demonstrate innovation. As a new program, the UNL Teacher Scholars Academy collaborated with UNL Teacher Education faculty to implement the College of Education Racial Literacy Roundtables into the first-year seminar. Racial literacy is "a skill and practice in which individuals are able to probe the existence of racism and examine the effects of race and institutionalized systems on their experiences and representations in U.S. society" (Sealey-Ruiz et al., 2014, p. 129). In these roundtables, education students discuss racism within schools and communities and how that impacts their abilities as future teachers. After the first year of roundtable implementation, early data show that participation in these discussions has given students a sense of confidence in navigating difficult conversations about race, particularly in the classroom and with parents. Conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion, paired with a service project in Nebraska's schools and communities, give a glimpse into the students' long-term success as educators. This service project fosters coalitions of future teachers and allows opportunities for participants to make professional connections.

Another reason teachers leave the field is the rigor required to perform every day within the classroom. Some teachers are leaving the field within their first 5 years on the job (Nebraska Department of Education, 2017). One of the main reasons for this exit is strained mental health and well-being, and the rigorous demands of the profession. To ensure that students in the program possess the self-care skills acquired for long-term success, a robust mental health component

of the curriculum was established, collaborating with both campus partners and mental health practitioners in the community. To bolster mental health as it relates to teaching, a P–20 partnership was established between the UNL Teacher Scholars Academy and Education Services Units in Nebraska with a psychotherapist who specializes in P–12 mental health in schools. Workshops and school collaborations led by this psychotherapist have resulted in students having an increased confidence in their ability to recognize when to ask for help. These partnerships between P–12 institutions and higher education institutions have created opportunities for school psychologists and future teachers to collaborate across multiple systems of education (Núñez & Oliva, 2009).

### Show Impact

The academy boasts a 98.75% retention rate, a cumulative Grade Point Average of 3.72, thousands of service hours logged, and a more diverse applicant pool each year. At a time when fundraising should be more personal, highlighting individual student successes remains critical; simply put, donors want to see impact. Student affairs fundraisers should obtain quotes and stories from students in their own words, as such testimony makes donors realize their donation is personal. Materials presented to donors should encompass a variety of media, such as video, formal assessment, infographics, and student stories. The academy's overall impact is not yet known; however, early assessment from student affairs programming indicates early success. Retention rates, cumulative GPA, and other achievements are important to highlight. These data, coupled with students attesting to the impact of their experiences, give a well-rounded sense of the impact those donation dollars make.

### Conclusion

Leaders in student affairs programs need not be experts in fundraising; however, our ability to create, inspire, and make connections is the most important factor in maintaining donor relations. The work we

do is valuable, and fully demonstrating our impact—through program design, assessment, evaluation, and success—is a great way to help raise needed funds. Student affairs professionals should rely on the experts such as university foundations and grants to specialize in obtaining funds, but also be a supportive partner in the process by sharing campus stories and success. Although fundraising is a business practice, Jepsen (2020) states that being vulnerable and sharing failures are also important in order to highlight the reality of students' experiences. We must do what we student affairs professionals do best: Humanize the experience to external stakeholders and show the value of our programs.

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*Student Career Development Knowledge Community*

## **Taking Action: NACE Core Competencies and Inclusive Career Programs for Students and Employers**

**Carolyn Meeker**  
*Career Specialist*  
Florida International University

**Shannon Niedzwicki**  
*Assistant Director of Internships and Employment Development*  
University of Toledo

In 2020, the Student Career Development Knowledge Community focused on how the language we use describes career readiness and civic engagement. This year is all about action. How can career centers and their partners play a crucial role in dismantling systemic barriers and help historically underrepresented students build skills that help them thrive in life after college? Career centers are uniquely positioned to work with students, alumni, colleagues, and employers to advocate for equity and social justice. Students continue to face discrimination and bias long after they complete a college degree. Although many employers focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts, inequities remain in wage

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gaps, underrepresentation in internships and co-op experiences, and lack of legal protection for the LGBTQA community. In a recent article published by the National Association of College and Employers (NACE; Collins, 2021), employers reported that 62% of their interns were White and 57.6% were male. This disconnect of espousing DEI values and not putting them into action maintains systemic barriers for underrepresented students; we know internship experience gives students an upper hand when applying and accepting job offers. With this issue in mind, higher education stakeholders have made career readiness a focal point.

In April 2021, NACE published a revised definition of *career readiness* as “a foundation from which to demonstrate requisite core competencies that broadly prepare the college educated for success in the workplace and lifelong career management” (NACE, 2021a, para. 1). Career readiness is essential when students prepare to move from college to career. NACE also revised two of its eight core competencies, changing Global and Cultural Fluency to Equity and Inclusion, and Career Management to Career and Self-Development. In a webinar on the revised NACE competencies, presenters explained the change to Career and Self-Development as having “elevated the concept of career management that encompasses all of the competencies while also elevating career development” (NACE, 2021b). The rationale for changing to Equity and Inclusion was that this competency “recognizes the importance of these concepts to a successful workforce and the responsibility we all have to contribute to a society free of racism, sexism, and other forms of bias and discrimination” (NACE, 2021b) The intent behind these changes is to simplify and clarify the core competencies and to make them more inclusive of lifelong career professionals.

Making higher education an inclusive experience means uncovering inequities in student and career success and rebuilding programs and practices organically for complete change (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2016). Career centers can help with inclusive excellence by examining current, sometimes transactional, practices and adopting a culture of change. Questions to consider include the following: Are you using inclusive language on your website and print materials? Do your spaces promote inclusivity for individuals with disabilities? Do you have programming designed for specific populations? Does your office have a diversity statement or statements focusing on equity and inclusion? An excellent example to follow is Villanova University Career Center’s Diversity Commitment on its website:

*The Villanova University Career Center is committed to the university’s advancement of diversity, equity and inclusion and recognizes that these principles are integral to our work. It is necessary for Villanova students and alumni to develop intercultural understanding and inclusive communication practices in order to be a positive influence in the global workplace. We seek to create a welcoming environment in all that we do, ensuring that all identities, perspectives, and experiences are heard, respected, and valued in conversations about career and professional development. We develop programs and resources to support underrepresented and minoritized students and alumni in achieving personally rewarding careers. We will continue to listen, learn, and serve as advocates for all members of the Villanova community as we support individuals on their personal and professional journeys (Villanova University Career Center, 2021).*

In previous messages to members, the Student Career Development Knowledge Community shared resources related to Villanova’s Inclusive Hiring Meetup, which is a prime example of DEI in action. How can you work with employers and recruiters to share inclusive hiring practices and DEI best practices?

At Florida International University (FIU), the Career and Talent Development (CTD) Department hosts an annual Employer Institute where approximately 60 CTD colleagues and employers spend a day together learning about one another, FIU students, and FIU employees. This event provides an opportunity for

FIU to better prepare students for the workforce and for employers to recruit and retain interns and professionals. The 2021 Employer Institute will include a session titled “How to Recruit for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.” This session will be presented by the CTD’s DEI Workshop Committee, based on its “In the Workplace” series. This series convenes monthly panel discussions in which FIU alumni, recruiters, and staff speak about their experiences and provide tips, resources, and encouragement to students and alumni. Specific panel topics have been African diaspora, disabilities, dress and professionalism, LGBTQA, veterans, and women. Tanaisha Brisbon, an “In the Workplace” panel co facilitator and university relations manager with INROADS, an organization that helps to place students from underserved populations in internships, shared the following:

*Because INROADS works with diverse and marginalized communities, the mission and work of the FIU DEI Committee falls in alignment with the vision, mission and work of INROADS. I was happy to serve in a co-facilitator capacity for the session earlier this year. The committee was very gracious for inviting me to participate and display some of my expertise on the topic. . . They are truly committed to serving FIU students and as well as strengthening the partnership between INROADS and the FIU Career and Talent Development Center and the DEI Committee.*

Another relevant example is the University of Toledo’s Diversity Career Connections, a collaboration between Career Services and the Office of Multicultural Student Success to provide professional development that bridges the gap between underrepresented individuals and employers. The Diversity Career

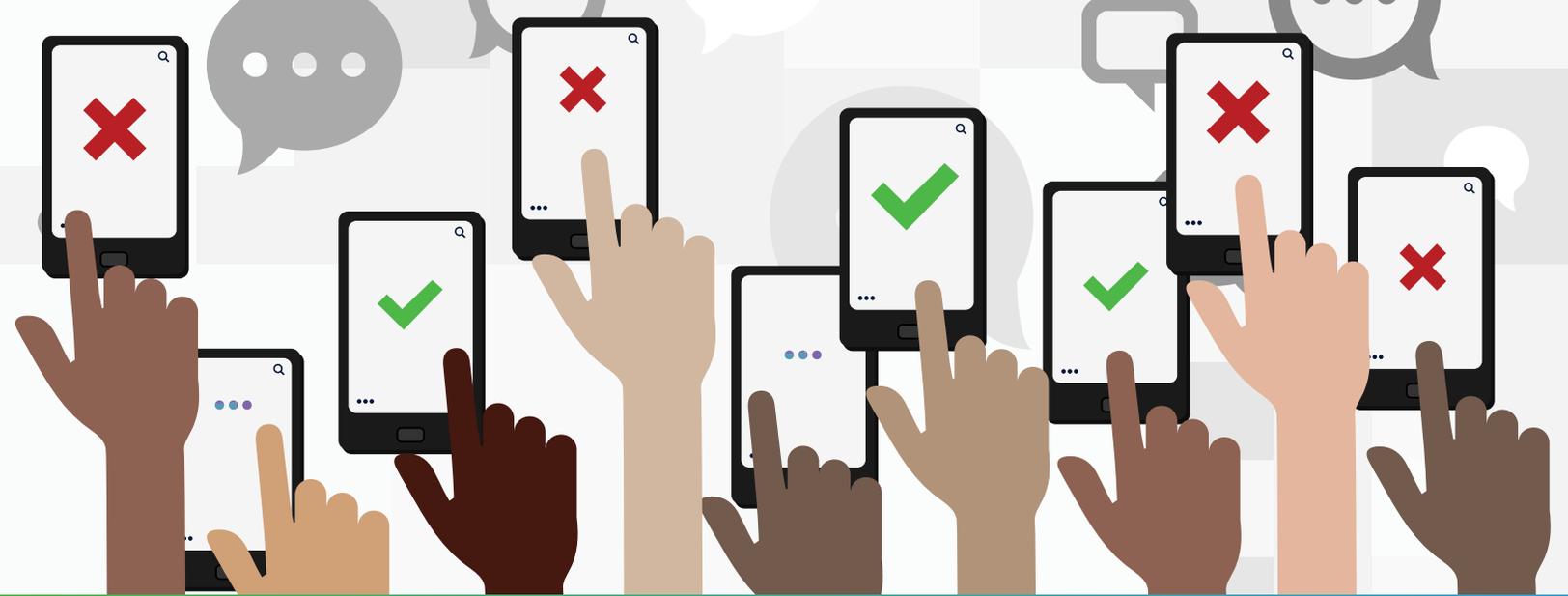
Connections series includes “Designing the Professional You,” “Professionals of Color,” and “LGBTQA Professionals” panels intended to give underserved students the tools they need to build career self-efficacy and prepare for career success. “This series really gives underserved students the space to ask questions and get professional development from industry professionals who represent their identity,” stated Aleiah Jones, interim director of the Office of Multicultural Student Success. Though some of the sessions were recorded to allow later viewing, staff also recognize the value of not recording roundtable discussions so all students will feel comfortable sharing their authentic selves and engaging in conversation.

These three examples demonstrate that career centers and their partners are clearly helping students develop core competencies in Equity and Inclusion and Career and Self-Development. We would love to know what you and your organizations are doing to support students, alumni, colleagues, and employers in these areas. [Please share any ideas, programs, or resources via this form.](#)

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*Student Government Knowledge Community*

## **Administrator–Student Partnerships for Equity and Inclusion: Advancing a Call to Action Through College Student Government**

**Dr. Michael A. Goodman**  
*Assistant Professor of Practice*  
University of Texas at Austin

**Dr. Kaleb L. Briscoe**  
*Assistant Professor*  
Mississippi State University

Student government elections occur annually in higher education, and candidates spend weeks, even months, leveraging their vision and skills to achieve a top spot in student leadership. Such roles afford access to administrators (Miles et al., 2008; Student Voice Index, 2018) and grant students a “seat at the table” (Goodman, 2021, p. 41) to influence institutional decisions and direction. As such, student governments often hold significant power on college campuses.

When students run for elected office, they typically put forth a platform of values and ideas. These platforms are espoused by candidates, who sometimes appear alongside a “ticket” of peers with a similar vision; as such, these platforms can reveal and highlight students’ key areas of concern about

### **Advising and Supporting Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice**



their institution. One common thread in student government elections is a desire to support and further equity and inclusion on campus; this effort, often a responsibility assumed by the students themselves, is illuminated by students’ on-campus experiences and usually concerns those areas where students see the institution lag.

Specifically what gaps do student government campaign platforms reveal in institutional commitments to equity in inclusion? What do the platforms say about administrators and campus personnel and their inability to support and use equity and inclusion rhetoric? Are candidates unsatisfied? Are they filling space that should otherwise be taken up by the institution or

administrators? Through student government campaign platforms and elections, students are passively and actively describing the numerous issues and current events with which they are grappling—both on and off campus.

For example, at the University of Maryland, College Park in 2021, the student government president-elect [shared with the school's newspaper](#) that he would “uplift international student voices” and prioritize inclusivity (Garay, 2021, para 9). The president-elect’s platform focused on creating a diverse environment for students, one that prioritized student safety (Garay, 2021). Similarly, the president- and vice president-elect at the University of North Dakota also envisioned diversity, equity, and inclusion as part of their focus (Kruger, 2021). For example, the president-elect [shared with a campus publication](#) that student leaders and administrators would have to work to make campus a more “welcoming and equitable place” (Kruger, 2021, para 12). Higher education administrators should take note of such goals and evaluate their own responsibility as accomplices or barriers to students’ work and attention to equity and inclusion.

The following questions are a call to action for administrators who seek to create and advance equitable environments that reflect and engage students who ran for or were elected to student government.

*Do students feel heard or unheard?  
Are they satisfied or unsatisfied with  
institutional equity and inclusion  
initiatives?*

This year, the student body president at Santa Rosa Junior College, Delashay Carmona Benson, [shared at a campus event](#) that she ran on a platform of advocacy, diversity, inclusion, and equity for all (Fry, 2021). She was quoted by campus news saying, “I want dates,

timelines. . . . If we’re going to have a [Black student success] center, what day is it going to open and what time? We are tired of talking. There’s nothing else for us to tell you. You heard our demands” (Fry, 2021, para 6). As this example makes clear, students are seeking results—especially in those areas of concern they have repeatedly voiced. Administrators should consider the varying demands that exist on campus and leverage their institutional power to work alongside, not against, students. Using their power, administrators can engage a more transparent approach with decision-making entities and allow students a platform alongside them in board meetings and community gatherings and when major budgetary decisions are made.

*What are students saying about diversity,  
equity, and inclusion?*

What words and phrases do students use to describe efforts around diversity, equity, and inclusion? Do students feel seen? Are they working without pay on initiatives that should be handled by the institution itself? Do Black lives still matter on campus—and in the way many institutions espoused during summer 2020? In 2021, all elected officers in the North Carolina State University student government advocated for diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in their campaigns (Office for Institutional Equity and Diversity [OIED], 2021). Student Body President McKenzie Haylin and Vice President Natalie Bress campaigned on having American Sign Language translators at large school events, updating the campus gender-neutral bathroom database, and implementing recommendations from the board and governor’s Racial Equity Task Force (OIED, 2021). Bress [shared that it was important they advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion](#), recognize student concerns and issues, and “work with administration to help alleviate these issues” (OIED, 2021, para 5). Such a commitment anticipates a shared approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion work.

Administrators should examine ways students are assuming roles that might otherwise be institutional responsibility (e.g., interpreters at large events). Administrators have a responsibility to tend to the many concerns raised by students, such as following through on issues of racial injustice, hiring (and retaining) diverse faculty, providing access to Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) funding or emergency grants, addressing labor issues or student fee requests for graduate students, and advising groups on organizing and governing. Further, administrators can also learn about who runs, or is eligible to run, in campus-wide elections. Administrators should take stock of which identities were present on different slates: Were students tokenized? Were students declared as “the first” from their respective identity (e.g., [Lamar Richards, elected this spring as the University of North Carolina’s first Black, gay student body president](#))? Follow-up and support for these students is essential for their administrations to succeed.

Although not every student ascends to the highest elected roles in student government—and some students avoid positional leadership altogether—student affairs practitioners can glean much about the climate of the student body via some of the experiences discussed above. Students are describing their personal and institutional values through the very campaign platforms they create, run on, and compete to enact. Further, these messages are displayed in multiple public ways, including campus press, campaign websites, debates and open forums, and one-on-one conversations. Campaign discourse can illuminate the current climate of an institution, and the real work begins when students and administrators work together to accomplish shared objectives. Administrators can support student leaders as they consider the values they hold and the ways they view the campus climate, as they create tickets and design platforms, and as they advance demands. Working with students in this way allows administrators—and students—to more effectively serve the community in this elected form of leadership.

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## *Student Leadership Programs*

# Administrator–Student Partnerships for Equity and Inclusion: Advancing a Call to Action Through College Student Government

**Michelle K. Chan**

*Associate Director for Budget & Finance,  
Student Leadership & Involvement  
University of Utah*

Student leadership programs provide engagement opportunities and attest to the importance of student involvement in explaining student persistence (Astin, 1984). Often student-led, these programs are designed to increase student engagement, and they require a certain level of student motivation to complete programming objectives. Student affairs professionals are responsible for advising student leaders, while fulfilling annual requirements for their departmental programming initiatives. The advising work is further complicated by such challenges as annual student turnover. Vincent Tinto's (2017) conceptual model offers ways to create an environment supportive of student leaders in completing their program and position objectives.

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## Student Learning and Development Advocacy for Student Success



Tinto's (2017) conceptual model of student institutional persistence describes three elements central to perseverance: self-efficacy, sense of belonging, and perceived value of the curriculum. These three factors are malleable and use students' perceptions of their own college experiences to describe persistence. The model originally sought to explain intrinsic factors that influence student degree completion. In student leadership programs, particularly those that are student-led, this model provides a framework for staff to maintain continuity between student leaders and understand factors that can influence program completion.

## Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is defined as a learned belief in one's ability to succeed based on individual experiences, and is dependent on the particular task (Bandera, 1977, 1994). In student leadership positions, self-efficacy manifests in students seeking out involvement and viewing themselves as leaders who can fulfill their programming mission. Student affairs professionals should promote students' perception of self-efficacy by setting clear expectations and building program foundations that support student decision making. For example, rather than building a conference plan from the ground up, students organizing leadership conferences may benefit from predetermined deadlines, a repository of forms and policy readings, and a menu of options for how to plan a successful student-led conference. Like the concept of scaffolding, clear choices and an established infrastructure can build on a student's programming idea and set students up for success.

## Sense of Belonging

As conceptualized by Strayhorn (2012), sense of belonging draws from Abraham Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of basic human needs and is defined as perceived feelings of support, connectedness, and mattering. Tinto (2017) uses sense of belonging in his model to explain that when students perceive that they belong and matter, they experience greater motivation and willingness to get involved—and thus are more likely to persist. This sense of belonging is shaped, in part, by representation (e.g., shared identities), campus climate, and the quality of interpersonal interactions (Boysen, 2012; Hausmann et al., 2007; Strayhorn, 2008). Student affairs professionals should evaluate the implications of daily interactions with students and be aware of how campus climate impacts student experiences. Campus climate has far-reaching implications, and research has shown that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color students report feelings of discrimination and prejudice that affect adjusting to and feeling a sense of belonging at college (Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). When building community,

student affairs professionals should be cognizant of how the larger campus climate (i.e., aspects of bias, discrimination, harassment, and inequality) can shape student engagement in leadership roles.

## Perceived Value of the Curriculum

Tinto (2017) defines students' perceived value of the curriculum as whether students feel engaging in academic studies warrants the time and effort. This equivalent in student leadership programs is the perceived quality and relevance of onboarding, and it may yield continuity between student leaders. Turnover of student leaders presents an annual opportunity to review processes and establish essential fundamentals for program management and student engagement. Onboarding and orientation should not be considered as means to an end; rather, student affairs professionals should reframe the conversation to convey the "why" in student leadership programs and instill shared values and perspectives. Intentional onboarding creates shared understanding and partnerships between staff and students. Furthermore, student affairs professionals should consider developing a series of trainings that build on onboarding and orientation to engage students throughout the year. Learning is an iterative process; it is not completed upfront. Student affairs professionals who reframe onboarding and orientation as an ongoing process help student leadership positions adapt to students' changing needs and interests throughout the academic year.

## Discussion

These recommendations draw on Tinto's (2017) conceptual model of student institutional persistence and offer strategies for advising student leadership positions. Although Tinto's model is the guiding framework, practitioners must be critical of past assimilationist approaches to student success (Tierney, 1999). Student retention and persistence theories have historically suggested that social integration is key to academic achievement—that is, students must conform or face failure. These theories are overly simplistic and do not consider

the unique experiences of BIPOC students (Museus et al., 2016; Tierney, 1992). Similarly, student affairs professionals must be intentional when applying to student leadership positions any lessons from academic persistence theories, striving to convey a sense of connection rather than promoting integration and disassociation with one's family or cultural identity (Guiffrida, 2006; Silver, 2020). Student affairs professionals are uniquely poised to promote student engagement, and by understanding student persistence theories, practitioners can bolster student persistence within student leadership positions.

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## Sustainability Knowledge Community

# Hawai'ian Resilience Strategies: Lessons About Culture and Climate for Student Affairs Professionals

**Vigor Lam, MEd (he/him)**

*Consultant, Facilities and Capital Planning*  
City College of San Francisco

**Heather Spalding, MEd (she/her)**

*Coordinator of Field Experiences*  
Central Washington University

Two members of NASPA's Sustainability Knowledge Community reflected on how much life has changed due to COVID-19 and shared what they learned as nonnative travelers to Hawai'i before and during the pandemic. Hawai'ian climate and educational initiatives both inspire student affairs professionals' work in higher education and highlight the value of diverse sustainability perspectives.

### Heather: Prepandemic Travel to Oahu

In 2017, I attended NASPA's Region V "Currents"-themed conference in Honolulu, O'ahu. I observed that sustainability was woven throughout the keynote and plenary speakers' talks, even though that specific

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word was not used. Care for our common home was seamlessly integrated into the perspectives being shared, just as one wave merges with another. One memorable keynote was offered by "Auntie" Puanani Burgess, a facilitator and community leader who was declared one of Hawai'i's Living Treasures in 2009 (NASPA, 2017). She spoke about how to see students as whole individuals and how individuals connect each day to their surrounding community and natural systems. As a student affairs professional, I continue to think about how sustainability challenges affect college students—and how we as NASPA members can enrich our own understanding of sustainability to create more effective higher education programs.

In January 2020, I was able to attend two more professional opportunities in Hawai'i just before COVID-19 restrictions began. I first attended 'Aha 'Aina Aloha: Our [K]new Evolution in Land-Based Relationships at the University of Hawai'i (UH), West O'ahu (UH, n.d.). Hosted by UH West O'ahu's director of Indigenous education, this event focused on native Hawai'ians' work and craft (also known as *Hana*) to restore community, traditional foods, language, and culture. Although non-Indigenous guests were welcome, the event was clearly intended to be an inward-facing reflection for UH's Indigenous community.

I attended a breakout session focused on creating climate change education, hope, and resiliency through ecopsychology. This workshop highlighted the UH System Office of Sustainability's research about students' feelings regarding climate change: 37% of respondents felt fear, while 28% felt hope, 16% experienced anger, 15% reported feelings of sadness, and 4.5% experienced shame [Hiser and Lynch, 2021]. UH, n.d.). Guests learned strategies to effectively educate about climate issues and shared how they could carry forward those lessons learned. I thought about my role in student affairs. As student development professionals, we understand theoretically and firsthand that the whole individual must be supported to ensure student success. Climate change is one of many intersecting topics affecting college students. During my 12 years as a sustainability educator within student affairs, I saw the way climate worries fueled students' emotional grief and despair—as well as their passion. Student affairs departments can provide outlets as students connect academic learning with tangible leadership activities.

At the Hawai'i Climate Conference a few days later, state officials discussed emerging strategies for adapting to climate change. I learned about plans to identify and improve vulnerable infrastructure on each island and heard about new initiatives that will drive changes to Hawai'i's systems and communities. By merging data, policies, and public and private

partnerships, Hawai'i is ambitiously preparing for the future. Strategies include building seawalls, funding conservation efforts, and banning sunscreens that contain oxybenzone and octinoxate to preserve marine life, among many others. In April 2021, Hawaii's state legislature was the first to declare a climate emergency.

Each event I attended viewed sustainability through different lenses, yet I saw overlap between the leaders in attendance and their goals. My main takeaway was that creative solutions to sustainability challenges must be implemented across all sectors of society. Many universities now include sustainability-related outcomes in their curricula, campus plans, missions and values, and programming. By understanding and integrating sustainability into student development programs, student affairs professionals have a unique opportunity to bring local and global initiatives to life across the student experience and campus culture (Devereaux, 2013).

### **Vigor: Pandemic Travels to the Big Island**

In October 2020, I arrived on Hawai'i Island, negative COVID-19 test in hand, to work remotely and was required to take a rapid test at the airport. Many other visitors continued to come to the island during this time. As a former student affairs professional and current construction manager for a future student affairs building, I have had my perspective on land and space—as it relates to racial justice and decolonization—changed. As a guest to the islands, I entered with the mindset to learn from the people and the land. I quickly realized the local population on the Kona side of the island was a tourist destination where predominantly White immigrants and visitors resided. I understood that Indigenous Hawai'ians are the islands' original sustainability champions; they have lived for millennia off of what the land can provide. This cultural legacy was in stark contrast to the many development-fueled settlements. I noticed private property along the coastline, non-reef-safe sunscreen rampantly used by visitors, and discarded plastics in public places and the ocean. As I continued

my stay through the American winter holidays, I witnessed an uptick in the population density of the island, which led me to reflect further on the effects of tourism.

Sustainable tourism development seeks to cultivate economically viable tourism that does no harm to the environment or society and ensures fair distribution of costs and benefits. The Hawai'iian economy depends on tourism for employment of residents and the standard of living such employment brings (Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism, 2006). NASPA considered these trade-offs when deciding to host the Region V conference in Honolulu. To be effective partners with local educational institutions, higher education organizations must consider how to be guests in each community where professional development events are held. How can we use our travel and professional connections to support vibrant educational and local communities?

The Sustainability Knowledge Community, which explores how sustainability intersects with the student affairs profession, recently hosted a preconference session at the 2021 National Conference on environmental justice and climate change. Even if institutions lack designated sustainability programs or offices, sustainability and climate can be interwoven throughout existing student affairs departments and programming. Initiatives like the Pacific Climate Warriors resonate with student leaders for being a way to engage in initiatives that connect social and environmental justice. The Warriors are “empowering young people understand the issue of climate change and to take action to protect and enrich our islands, cultures, and oceans” (The Pacific Warrior Journey, n.d.). By reflecting on and learning about sustainability, we support the strength and resilience of our educational institutions, communities, and (most importantly) our students’ development as whole individuals who can be effective and responsible leaders.

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## Technology Knowledge Community

# NASPA Needs a Core Data Service, and Why This Matters to You

**Paul Schantz**

*Director of Web & Technology Services*  
California State University, Northridge

## Technology



### Who You Gonna Call?

Who do you call when you have a burning question about technology? Chances are, you have a picture of “that one techie” in your mind. You know their name and you probably have their extension memorized. Beyond that, your knowledge of who does what with technology on campus likely gets hazy. You may rely on colleagues from other institutions. You also likely have colleagues who use the same software to administer departmental programming; they can relate to the challenges of obtaining institutional data, how staff manages social media, and so on. Wouldn’t it be nice if you could rely on an unbiased resource to provide benchmarking information about technology-related topics germane to higher education? Something like this exists . . . sort of.

### What’s a Core Data Service?

The idea for a multiorganizational technology assessment in higher education is not new, nor did it materialize out of thin air. Since 2002, EDUCAUSE, the world’s largest community of information technology (IT) leaders and professionals in higher education (<https://www.educause.edu/about>), has conducted an annual assessment that includes hundreds of campuses. Assessment activities culminate in a product EDUCAUSE calls the Core Data Service (CDS), which includes benchmarking data on staffing, financials, and a variety of IT services (<https://www.educause.edu/research-and-publications/research/analytics-services>). CDS is a fantastic reference for higher education technology professionals, especially leaders who need to know where they stand compared with their peers. The problem with the EDUCAUSE CDS is that it does not collect data or provide insights that are particularly useful to student affairs professionals.

## NASPA Needs Its Own CDS

Members of the Technology Knowledge Community (TKC) recognized the importance of technology many years ago, adding it as a NASPA Professional Competency Area in 2010. But NASPA has no benchmarking tool focused on technology. A NASPA CDS would be a valuable resource for any NASPA member making decisions about the use of technology in their programs. Such a tool would be a natural extension of the assessment culture built into our profession; as such, the TKC believes it should be a NASPA product.

You might ask, Why don't we ask EDUCAUSE to adapt its instrument so it can collect this data for student affairs professionals? First, the overlap between NASPA members who participate in EDUCAUSE (and vice versa) is small; simply put, the connection between organizations is not where it needs to be to make this happen. Second, most of the technology we use in student services, particularly software, is not universally important to everyone in our organizations. Third, technology staffing models vary drastically from campus to campus. The TKC hopes that EDUCAUSE will continue to evolve its CDS and that the data needs for student affairs will be more fully included. Until then, a separate CDS for NASPA makes a lot of sense.

## Enterprise Versus Niche Software

You may have heard the term *enterprise* uttered in hushed tones during campus meetings with IT and wondered what it meant. Enterprise refers to a product or service that everyone (or nearly everyone) in an organization depends on to do their jobs. When enterprise services go down, everyone panics. In the higher education software world, "enterprise" usually encompasses the student information system, human resource/finance system, online campus portal, and email/calendaring tools. Enterprise software feeds, stores, and works on data considered to be an organization's "source of truth." These systems are, by definition, critical. Enterprise software is expensive and complex, requiring a significant investment

in professional IT resources. For most campuses, responsibility for managing such systems lies with a centralized IT department.

Several functional areas in student affairs depend on software to support their work. In terms of complexity and usage, some of our systems compete with or rival enterprise software. Do you lead a career services department? There are software systems for you. How about student housing? You have multiple software options to choose from for managing residential life. Health services? Check. Judicial affairs/student conduct? Check. Clubs and organizations? Accessibility and Accommodation Resources? Assessment? Check, check, check. Our software is important to us, but it isn't universally important to everyone on campus. That's what makes student services software niche software.

## Technology Support within Student Affairs Units Varies Dramatically

Even though technology is enshrined as a NASPA professional competency, little consistency around how we fund and staff it exists. Models used by campuses to deliver student services technology vary widely. Some campuses have a highly centralized IT division that coordinates services for every functional area on campus. Other campuses have multiple, decentralized technology units. Student affairs divisions may have a large or small technology department—or none—depending on the services needed. There are probably as many technology delivery models as there are the 600 members in the TKC!

## Enter the Student Affairs Technology Survey

In 2017, Dr. David Sweeney et al. published the results of a system-wide student affairs software survey. This report provided Texas A&M University's senior student affairs officers with information about "the distribution of 'student affairs' typical software packages and platforms" and "contract data, with the aim of finding opportunities to share software across multiple units if indicated and desired" (p. 1). This

survey spurred interest among several TKC members in developing a similar but more expansive technology instrument. The TKC ultimately decided to measure the following:

- Institution (size and demographics)
- Student affairs organization (services offered)
- Student affairs IT (staffing level and type of support)
- Applications and services

The TKC saw these components as useful for senior student affairs officers. The TKC also felt this list would present a host of emergent benefits, including improved collaboration between universities, the ability to leverage our combined voices when communicating with vendors, provision of hard data for NASPA’s assessment team, and establishment of a data set that can be used to more effectively conduct peer review. To that end, the TKC developed a Qualtrics survey, currently hosted by the University of Pittsburgh.

A total of 27 campuses participated in the survey’s first cycle, and the TKC sponsored a well-attended session about the survey at the 2019 NASPA national conference in Los Angeles. The second cycle of our biennial survey began in March 2021, with a scheduled close date of December 1, 2021. A report of survey findings will be made available to survey respondents in early 2022. We in the TKC believe that the broader NASPA community will significantly benefit from a NASPA Technology CDS—and will participate accordingly.

To learn more about the survey, visit the link on the SAIT Pros website ([www.saitpros.org](http://www.saitpros.org)). SAIT Pros is a “nondenominational” association for people who perform technology work in student affairs. You don’t have to be a technology professional to join, membership is free, and the association hosts a Slack team where members share what they know about products, services, and processes—without having to worry about vendors listening in.

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## *Transracial Adoptee and Multiracial Knowledge Community* **Finding My Racial Justice Advocate Voice Through (Re)memory and Ancestral Connection**

**Sara Caldwell-Kan**

*Director of Multicultural Student Services,  
 and Ph.D. Candidate in Education*  
 University of Alaska, Anchorage

### **Social Justice and Inclusion**

**Equity, Inclusion, and  
 Social Justice**



### **Introduction**

Even if it sometimes means being unsure if you belong or if you are “enough,” there is an incredible uniqueness to being multiracial—to see the world in the “both/and,” to navigate spaces that were not built for us because we were never really supposed to exist in this way, to continually examine if we are enough, if we belong, or if we are too much. COVID-19 lockdowns, deeply divided politics, and a visible rise of violent white supremacy has left many multiracial individuals wondering, Where do I stand, with whom am I standing, and who am I?

As a multiracial, “white and” student affairs professional and Ph.D. student, I have frequently grappled with the simultaneity of holding power and privilege while also experiencing oppression and racism. How do I authentically show up for

communities of color in collective solidarity? To answer this question, I started by turning inward. I examined the embodiment of family struggle, the whispers of the ghosts who guided me, and how my own ancestors were warriors in the fight for a more just world. Leaning into my intuition, feeling, and histories gave me strength and allowed me to reckon with the ways dominant society has intentionally obstructed racial justice coalition formation.

Like many multiracial people, I have experienced—and continue to experience—microaggressions within my own family, including isolation, questioning of my racial authenticity, and the otherization of my Chinese traditions (Nadal et al., 2014). I often felt forced to choose between my racial identities or to find an alliance based on the room I was in, how people would perceive me, and what felt safe. Although this conflict

is sometimes still present, I am intentionally exploring my own mixedness and claiming my own lineage to those ancestors who have helped define my voice and strength. Such processing and healing also means acknowledging that I simultaneously inhabit positions of racial privilege and marginality (Wijeyesinghe, 2011). Through a decolonizing feminist scholarship practice of (re)memory (Rhee, 2020), I have started to understand how being a practitioner-scholar in the fight for racial justice and equity is in both my blood lineage and my scholarly lineage.

The practice of (re)memory, especially for those of us who have been disconnected from our roots, cultural heritage, and ancestors as a result of white supremacy, has helped me engage in a deep exploration of the truths of my family's history in the United States and the lies that I have been led to believe about what it means to be a Chinese American woman. Rhee (2020) offers a framework for reconnecting with our ancestral m/others: writing our (ancestral) mothers' (re)memory in the absence of hearing their stories directly from them. Through creative writing, I used Rhee's (2020) concept of (re)memory to understand the histories and traumas carried in my blood lineages. This practice included retracing my family story, historical accounts of people in my family and those like my family, and (re)imagining the stories my m/others carried with them.

Below is an excerpt from my (re)memory practice. I explored an event from 15 years ago, when my father and I visited Angel Island near San Francisco. My practice included reading some of my father's own words, talking with him about our family history, learning about the history of Chinese immigration to the United States, and intentionally listening to my own senses and body. Below I share part of my creative process of finding myself by reconfiguring the story of my great-grandmother, Bo Ying.

### **Ghosts of Angel Island, 1914 and 2004**

The breeze is cool and full of salty sea. As the boat docks, I feel it in my heart, in my body. I feel her here. She came through, carrying this spirit, my spirit. On

this island—Angel Island—they tried to take it from her. This small island, full of ghosts and pain, is quite beautiful. I walk toward the now historical landmark, the prison built to keep my family out of this country.

For six weeks she is imprisoned—feet bound, heart tied to the child she loved and lost in the homeland. It's 1914 and Bo Ying finally sailed the Pacific to be with her husband in the golden mountain and land of opportunity. She studies the very real papers of the family that isn't actually hers, to enter a country that has so explicitly stated she is not welcome. She leaves her poetry and pain in the walls of the prison. Six weeks she breathes the cold sea air before she is allowed to be with her husband. She smuggles a small pendant of jade and steps onto the mainland.

Her fight and spirit fill me up. I see the ocean and know that my blood has always been in the Pacific. I reckon with this idea that America—California—and this place that hates us so much was always supposed to be a midpoint in the journey. I am not supposed to be here. We were always meant to go back, to fight for Zhongshan, Sun Yat-Sen, and democracy. We were always meant to be in Nam Tong, never here for more than 100 years.

Bo Ying's spirit weaves through my blood. We are bound together through motherhood, child loss, existence as resistance, and a deeply embedded commitment to filial responsibility. I stand here, in a climate colder than what my body is built for, and I gulp the salty waves. I am exactly what white men in power did not want. Holding both—Chinese and American, fight and intellect, family and capital—I am a Chinese American woman, finding my voice, standing on the shoulders of Bo Ying.

### **(Re)Memory Practice in Building Solidarity**

What I have found in this developing journey is that my heritage, as told through my lineage and embodiment, is bound to the struggles, resistance, and strengths of the larger women-of-color feminist collectives. Not only is my quest for advancing racial justice the central purpose of my career and research,

but it is also a demand from my ancestors. I invite other multiracial and BIPOC individuals to examine your lineages. Upon whose shoulders do you stand? A critical component of the fight in building a more racially just society is being in right relation with our histories and embodying the strengths of our ancestors—blood and scholarly alike.

I fully believe that finding my inner ghosts, reconnecting to my heritages, and embracing the strength of those who came before me are powerful tools for dismantling the internalized oppressions many of us face in our lives. By engaging in this process, I can continue to authentically and humbly work in solidarity with other racialized minorities while actively examining and dismantling the ways we perpetuate white supremacy.

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*Undocumented Immigrants and Allies Knowledge Community*  
**UndocuSAPro Reflections on the DREAM Act**

**Alonso R. Reyna Rivarola**  
 Director, Middle School  
 Family Engagement  
 Adjunct Faculty, Ethnic Studies  
 Salt Lake Community  
 College

**Laura Bohórquez García**  
 Director, AB540 and  
 Undocumented Student Center  
 University of  
 California, Davis

**Diana Valdivia Ordorica**  
 Director, Undocumented  
 Student Services  
 University of California,  
 Santa Barbara

**Jesús Cisneros**  
 Associate Professor,  
 Educational Leadership  
 and Foundations  
 The University of  
 Texas at El Paso

**Social Justice and  
 Inclusion**  
 Equity, Inclusion, and  
 Social Justice



*I still clearly remember watching the news  
 when the 2010 DREAM Act failed to pass  
 by five votes.*

*— Diana, undocumented student affairs professional*

In 2001, Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Orrin Hatch (R-UT) proposed the first version of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, legislation aimed to create a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States as children. Since then, Congress has failed to

pass the act at least 10 times. Its latest iteration, the Dream and Promise Act of 2021 (H.R. 6), passed in the House 228 to 197, yet, it is still unclear whether it will come up for a vote on the Senate floor.

Despite these repeated defeats, the DREAM Act has been influential in shaping the discourse politicians, higher education systems, and student affairs professionals use to create undocumented immigrant student-friendly policies and practices (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020). One example of how this legislation perfuses higher education is the establishment of in-state-resident tuition policies, which began in

California and Texas nearly 20 years ago and are now viable in at least 19 states (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019). Another prominent example is the nomenclature of *DREAMers* or *Dreamers*, which many policymakers and student affairs professionals continue to employ when referring to individuals who arrived in the United States as children and are now college students.

As members of the undocumented immigrant community, undocumented student affairs professionals (UndocuSAPros) have intimately experienced the heart-wrenching effects of the DREAM Act discourse on campus as well as its failure to pass in Congress. In April 2021, three UndocuSAPros and past and present leaders of the Undocumented Immigrant and Allies Knowledge Community met via Zoom to reflect on the 20th anniversary of the DREAM Act's proposal. In their conversation, they described their tumultuous relationship with the failed piece of legislation. The following summarizes their sentiments about the DREAM Act and their positionality as UndocuSAPros.

### **The Hopes and DREAMs of UndocuSAPros**

Thinking about the DREAM Act, the leaders expressed disappointment and little hope. On one hand, they understood the material impact that such legislation could have on their lives and that of the undocumented immigrant students they served. Diana shared, "I am not putting all my dreams and hopes in one piece of legislation," while Laura offered, "I'm also not putting my life on hold for any piece of this legislation." On the other hand, these UndocuSAPros were also wary and critical of the effect of such legislation on the undocumented community. Alonso shared, "My experience with the DREAM Act is really personal, but I also critique it a lot because it doesn't open doors to many undocumented immigrants, just a very specific segment of the population."

In sociopolitical terms, the word *DREAMer* has become synonymous with undocumented youth who are exceptional, hardworking students, and American "in

every single way, but one: on paper" (White House, 2012, para. 2). As a result, DREAMer discourses subtly consent to the production of legal violence against undocumented immigrants who were not young, were not students, and did not arrive in the United States as children (González, 2014). Diana shared, "There is complexity in pushing for the DREAM Act knowing that this piece of legislation only seeks to protect a small segment of the [undocumented immigrant] population." For these reasons, these leaders' relationship with the DREAM Act remains complicated.

### **Achieving the DREAM on Campus**

Reflecting on the past 20 years of discourse surrounding undocumented immigrant students and the DREAM Act, Alonso, Diana, and Laura also noted how higher education institutions had or had not kept pace with changes in the sociopolitical climate. Diana shared,

"I don't know if [student affairs practitioners] understand how entrenched legislation is in the everyday lives of undocumented immigrant students." Laura remarked, "I am in disbelief that even in states like California, student affairs professionals still struggle to understand [in-state resident tuition] policies—how could one? It's been 20 years." Although institutions play a key role in helping students find resources necessary to achieve their educational goals, it was these leaders' experience that training and support is often not provided to professionals working with undocumented immigrants; instead, higher education institutions often relied on UndocuSAPros to perform the training and respond to the needs of undocumented immigrant students.

UndocuSAPros express "carrying the burden" of being their campuses' sole experts on undocumented immigrant student issues. Laura shared, "I think for me it's like, again, going back to us having to do the institution's job or these other people's jobs constantly." Diana agreed: "The duty to then raise a political consciousness around immigration then falls onto undocumented student services and centers, and we're at capacity . . . it's hard!" In many

ways, UndocuSAPros are expected to be experts on everything undocumented, including serving as primary responders when undocumented immigrant students' needs were not met or when support was not provided. This responsibility often requires knowledge of different institutional processes and functional areas in order to find solutions to unestablished institutional procedures for undocumented students (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020).

## Beyond the DREAM

Thinking about the impending debate by Congress about the DREAM Act in 2021, Alonso, Diana, and Laura considered the influence of the outcome on their professional lives. Alonso summarized, "I think that our investment is not with a piece of legislation itself but rather with the students and community. . . . I'm much more invested in ensuring that students have . . . a good grasp of who they are or what community means to them outside of legislative parameters. . . . This is why I keep going back to the idea that documentation will not lead to our liberation." The leaders' work as UndocuSAPros transcended the outcome of any policy decision. Diana shared, "I hope [institutions] know better, because I hope that that's not the conscience of the majority of folks, like, 'Oh, we're just going to support [undocumented immigrant] students until the DREAM Act passes.'" Laura echoed the sentiment: "That's the reason why my role was created as a contractor-at-will, because the institution was like, 'After . . . [Congress] figures out this whole immigration thing, we're not going to need this position anymore,' and I was like, Are you kidding me?"

For Alonso, Diana, and Laura, supporting undocumented immigrant students requires a long-term investment. The passage of permutations of the DREAM Act will result in people being ineligible to meet its criteria and thereby excluded from a pathway to citizenship. For this reason, the leaders reflected on the significance of being UndocuSAPros and the ways DREAM Act legislation affected their employment and roles on campus.

As Congress debates the American Dream and Promise Act of 2021, student affairs professionals across institutions and systems of higher education must reevaluate their commitments to undocumented immigrant students, UndocuSAPros, and communities—beyond legislative action. Undocumented students are students first, and it is the responsibility of student affairs professionals to support all students. After all, as Alonso affirmed, the documentation of undocumented immigrants will not lead to their liberation.

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## Veterans Knowledge Community

# Free and Low-Cost Support Services for Student Veterans and Service Members

### Kim Bullington, Ph.D.

Chief Departmental Undergraduate  
Advisor and Programs Manager  
Engineering Management and Systems Engineering  
Old Dominion University

### Julie Shank

Doctoral Candidate, Ph.D. in Education  
(Higher Education, Educational Psychology)  
Deputy Commandant for Operations, Plans, and Training (S3),  
Virginia Military Institute

### Nicole Messina

Doctoral Candidate, Ed.D.  
(Adult and Community College Education)  
Associate Director of Student Veteran Services  
East Carolina University

Student veterans and service members (SVSMs) attend 96% of all colleges and universities and currently make up about 5% of all college students (Radford et al., 2016). However, many SVSMs have never been on a college campus, have spent time away from academic settings, and, importantly, do not always have the same needs as other post-traditional students. Higher education institutions (HEIs) deliver support services focused on SVSM success; some are mature, others are nascent. Regardless, the need for free and/or low-cost best practices exists at many levels, partially because the literature on empirically based best practices is sparse. Although

## Advising and Supporting Advocacy for Student Success



other best practices exist, HEIs should consider five specific areas.

### Institution-Wide Efforts to Support SVSMs

One way to support SVSMs is through diversity, equity, and inclusion programming. As with the Safe Zone program, training can be adapted and implemented to honor and recognize the diversity of SVSMs and foster better cultural understanding for faculty, staff, and students. Training can take place in person or virtually; it is especially powerful when student voices are heard.

Although space on campus may be at a premium, a lounge area specifically for SVSMs to gather, particularly early in the transition, allows these students a place where they do not need to hide their military or veteran affiliation (Summerlot et al., 2009). Lounges can also help SVSMs make social connections (Vacchi, 2018). Between 2009 and 2012, the percentage of campuses that offered a space for SVSMs grew from 12% to 47% (McBain et al., 2012). COVID-19 made clear how important virtual spaces are. Videoconferencing and apps like Discord have allowed SVSMs to connect while maintaining social distancing. Whether it is physical or virtual, a dedicated space where SVSMs can gather can improve SVSMs' experience.

## SVSM Organizations

SVSMs are post-traditional students who possess unique life experiences compared with those of their traditional peers. Due to the nature of military service, SVSM may connect best with other SVSMs. SVSM organizations offer opportunities to connect students with similar experiences. In addition, these groups can function on many different levels (e.g., social, service based, networking, advocates) as members see fit (Summerlot et al., 2009).

Institutions should encourage social organizations such as Student Veterans of America (SVA), which requires founding documents to ensure a strong start. SVA provides a host of resources, including engagement, advocacy for veteran services, and scholarships (SVA, 2021). In any case, all SVSM organizations should be officially recognized by their institutions to elevate visibility and allow better access to institutional resources.

## Peer Advisors

Peer advising programs pair incoming SVSMs with more experienced students. SVSM advisors can inform advisees of campus events, scholarships, and other useful resources. It is important that advisors ensure continued communication to increase SVSMs' sense of belonging (Tinto, 1993). Advisors should also

be trained on campus resources, common VA benefit questions, how to handle low-risk emotional issues, and whom to contact for further assistance (Kees et al., 2017). To better educate peer advisors, institutions should consider the Peer Advising for Veterans Education program, which trains both SVSMs and advisors on how to be mentors and guides for both on- and off-campus students (Kees et al., 2017).

## Prior Learning Assessment and Transfer Credit

SVSMs have transferable skills learned during military service and are likely to be transfer students (Kratzer et al., 2021; Sansone & Tucker Segura, 2020). The American Council on Education has evaluated most military training and made credit recommendations (Kratzer et al., 2021); however, they are open to the interpretation and the discretion of the evaluator accepting the credits, and training may transfer as elective coursework (Karlen, 2014).

HEIs should examine Prior Learning Assessment and transfer credit policies for SVSMs to ensure that every credit hour transferred applies to their degrees. Prior Learning Assessment reduces time-to-degree (Cherrstrom et al., 2021) and the overall cost of a degree (Blaschke et al., 2020; Klein-Collins et al., 2020) while increasing student retention and completion.

## Uniform Data Tools

A uniform set of data tools can be used to collect and track information, including demographics, retention, and degree completion, on identified SVSMs. Because SVSMs must self-identify, they are often hard to track. Many institutions use the GI Bill as an indicator of veteran status (Klaw et al., 2021). A flaw with this approach is that SVSMs may not use educational benefits, or the benefits may be supporting their dependents (Molina & Morse, 2017). Adding unique veteran-related identifiers in the data tool can help HEIs assess programming and support institutional policy development as well as increase, streamline, or support communication with SVSMs (Klaw et al., 2021).

## Discussion

Creating campus climates that help SVSMs succeed is critical, and small improvements can have large returns. Though this list of best practices is not exhaustive, it highlights practices that can be implemented for free or inexpensively to ease the transition to college for SVSMs. Current programming could also be modified for SVSMs; each student is unique, but it is important to provide general resources to student populations like SVSMs to ensure their higher education experiences are as engaging and as targeted as possible.

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*Wellness and Health Promotion*

# Pivoting After a Pandemic: Applying Student Voice in Health Promotion Communication Strategies

**Christian Rafael Suero**

*Director of Coaching  
Leadership for  
Educational Equity*

**Katrina Wagner**

*Product Associate: Coaching  
Happify Health*

**Bethany Williams**

*Senior Associate Director  
of Health and Wellness  
Liberty University*

**C. Oliver Tacto**

*Associate Director, Office for  
Health Promotion Strategy  
Clinical Assistant Professor,  
Keck School of Medicine of USC  
University of Southern  
California*

## Technology Advocacy for Student Success



### Introduction

The global COVID-19 pandemic forced higher education and student affairs to create programs that are accessible, inclusive, engaging, and educational. With their increased engagement with online communities, students have leveraged *networked publics*, which Boyd (2014) defines as communities created by people, technology, and actions. As new approaches for communication and learning emerge (e.g., social media campaigns, virtual programming, asynchronous training), professionals must be intentional and inclusive, seeing students as partners in communications on well-being and health. This article discusses strategies that employ an inclusive and health equity-focused communications approach to support well-being and health promotion. This article leverages NASPA's 2019–2024 Strategic Goal in Advocacy for Student Success as well as NASPA/ACPA's competency on Technology for sustainable solutions.

### Culture-Centered Approach

A culture-centered approach (CCA; see Figure 1) is a foundation for building comprehensive, transformative, and health equity-focused programming to support students' health and well-being. This framework utilizes community-based participation to address health disparities and emphasizes the central role of students in defining and responding to health and well-being issues.

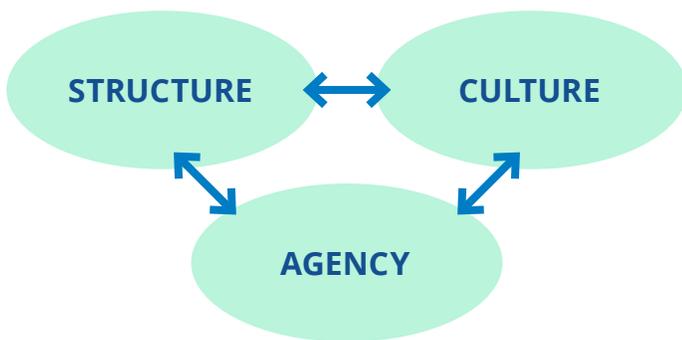
*The central aim of CCA is to focus on understanding health meanings and experiences in marginalized settings.*

CCA examines the communicative processes through which marginalization takes place and seeks to

resist the marginalization of the subaltern sectors through the foregrounding of opportunities for local grassroots participation in the definition of problem configurations and in the corresponding articulations of locally meaningful solutions (Dutta, 2014).

CCA questions how cultural voices of marginalized communities may have been erased, and it builds space for engaging those lost voices. This approach is exceptionally important given that the past year's high-profile social justice concerns and the pandemic have illuminated the stark inequities and continued oppression, violence, and hate crimes across the globe.

Figure 1: Culture-Centered Approach to Health Communications



CCA is built on three key concepts: structure, culture, and agency. Within institutions of higher education, *structure* refers to the policies, procedures, and protocols that support students (Dutta, 2008). *Culture* refers to a student's knowledge, social norms, attitudes, values, and intersectional identities. *Agency* refers to a student's ability to engage in various health behaviors. Note that these three key components depend on one another: Altering one changes the interaction between the others. In summary, this framework focuses on leveraging community involvement and advocacy in identifying problems and creating solutions to create a healthier campus community and improve the health and well-being of college students.

This approach invites parties to the table to be involved in the identification of problems as well as the solution-focused agreements. These solutions aim to create accessible, inclusive, and healthy equity-

focused programming that are beneficial for the student community. Keep in mind the following when using this approach:

- Students should define the nature of the problem.
- Students should have a voice in creating and delivering solutions to the problem.
- The approach should address the structural inequalities identified with the problem.
- Professionals/administrators should work alongside campus partners and students to build trust and respect; they should likewise provide space for these voices to be heard.

### Applying Culture-Centered Approaches in Steps

This section will discuss the six components—why, what, who, how, when, and where—to consider when applying a CCA for wellness and health promotion.

#### Identify Why

The American College Health Association states that the purpose of health promotion in higher education is to support student success (Czachowski et al., 2019). In the health promotion process, defining goals is crucial in order to determine what information will be shared and how. It is also important to clarify if the focus is to support health promotion (e.g., creating supportive environments, policy development, reorienting health care services) or skill development (e.g., health education, capacity building). An acknowledged purpose and intent will drive effective health communication strategies. Institutions of higher education should follow the model of the Okanagan Charter by embedding health into all aspects of campus culture—across the administration, operations, and academic mandates (Charter, 2015). Effective health communication teaches students that health is not just the absence of disease; rather, it is holistic and encompasses multiple dimensions of well-being.

## Identify What

The information identified in the *why* stage will show you what gaps your communication and initiative strategies should address and what actions to take.

## Identify Who

Identifying stakeholders is also key. Who are allies to help promote the information? Who are the consumers (what type of students are the target audience)? Who are the challengers? The health belief model confirms that both students who are motivated to change and those who are not ready to change should be part of the process. To craft an effective message, invite diverse community members to the table. Use the collective impact framework to emphasize collaborative leadership and address large-scale public health problems.

## Identify How

Through a call to action, student affairs professionals have an opportunity to promote agency in positive behavior change. Some ways to incorporate students' perspectives and lived experiences are roundtables, town halls, focus groups, peer education groups, and student-led committees. In the CCA model, students have an opportunity to voice the problem and present potential solutions, which lays the groundwork for them to thrive.

## Identify When

Communication must go beyond an online post or an email. Identify when (and how often) you will communicate with your audience. This includes identifying the best time and place for the intended target audience to consume the information. Understanding which messages are best intended for various media platforms is key as the intended audience for each platform will vary based on your audience's needs.

## Identify Where

Determine where you will communicate your information. What platforms are you using? Whether it is online polls, surveys, online live sessions, webinars, you must understand where you are posting and how that information will be consumed.

Research trending hashtags to ensure increased visibility. Because each platform has its own benefit, make sure that your content is tailored per location or platform.

## Conclusion

The 2017 NASPA Annual Knowledge Community Conference Publication defined technology as “a resource to be leveraged in all areas of student services and programs” (Cabellon et al., 2017, p. 74). During COVID-19 student affairs and higher education professionals have had to maximize technology to connect with different stakeholders. Because professionals see health communication and technology as a strategy, students must be at the center of the solution. Using CCA is one of many ways higher education and student affairs professionals can include students at the center. By having students as partners we can design intentional communication, understanding their experiences, and implement initiatives with a holistic approach.

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## Womxn in Student Affairs

# Countering White Supremacy Culture: Reclaiming and Redefining Professionalism

### Haniyyah Bashir

*Community Director*  
Georgetown University

### Erika Cohen Derr, DLS

*Assistant Vice President, Student Affairs*  
Georgetown University

### Mary Catherine Curley

*Senior Communications Specialist*  
Georgetown University

## Social Justice and Inclusion

Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice



This article explores how feminist fellowship programs dismantle the aspects of White supremacy culture that exist in professional development programming. We hope to provide a helpful lens through which womxn in all levels of the academy can craft meaningful professional development experiences that resist White supremacy culture.

The article describes a student fellowship program run by a university-wide womxn's alliance at Georgetown University. The volunteer-run alliance is made up of full-time university staff, faculty, and students. Georgetown Women's Alliance (GWA) was created in response to womxn's marginalization in decision-making spaces and roles. Although the founders served in "C-suite" roles, leadership and participation have transitioned over time to include womxn from units throughout the university and

are not contingent on holding specific roles with positional power. GWA has established strategic priorities in striving for antiracist practices and expanded initiatives to meet needs, through professional mentoring and networking, fellowship, and skill development.

Specifically, GWA created a year-long student fellowship program that includes monthly cohort meetings, mentor pairing with a womxn-identified leader in the community and support of a project that advances gender equity work on campus. The fellowship is open to students who are passionate about building community and contributing to gender equity work on campus. In place for several years, the main pillars are leadership, mentorship, and professional development.

As program co-directors considered which aspects of the fellowship were most vital to uphold during a shift to virtual programming in the global pandemic, we reflected upon what mattered most in a student fellowship program. The program operates in the context of a predominantly White institution in which students receive many messages, both directly and indirectly, about their professionalism and the development of a professional identity or “brand.” Many aspects of what is considered “professional” are coded characteristics of White supremacy culture, such as perfectionism and individualism (Jones & Okun, 2001). The program co-directors began to look at ways our fellowship program could counter those ideas and forge an alternative understanding of professional development—one that is more feminist, antiracist, inclusive, and in alignment with GWA’s overall strategic vision.

Jones and Okun (2001) identify *perfectionism* as a damaging characteristic of White supremacy culture that focuses on mistakes or inadequacies rather than building a culture of appreciation or a practice of reflecting and learning. Colleges and universities can reinforce White supremacy culture through competitive, achievement-oriented pursuit of grades, notable internships, job placement, or graduate school admission.

In the course of the 2020–2021 academic year, we countered perfectionism in the fellowship curriculum in several ways. Guest speakers shared how their social identities influenced their career trajectories and leadership development, modeling for fellows how to blend and balance professional narratives with personal stories—and how to acknowledge that mistakes, detours, and imperfections are part of our personal and professional journeys. Meditation and yoga sessions underscored messages that fellows should slow down and practice self-care.

Additionally, we intentionally chose to speak about students’ projects first and foremost as learning experiences, normalizing that student interests and goals may shift over time. We built a culture of

appreciation by modeling gratitude for one another’s labor, growth, and personal qualities in front of our fellows, starting each meeting with a meaningful check-in, celebrating individual victories large and small, and fostering a sense of team pride.

*Individualism*, another characteristic identified by Jones and Okun (2001), supports the division and isolation that serves to uphold a culture of White supremacy. In such a culture, roles, titles, and independent work acquire importance, while the substance of learning, collaborating, or having shared goals is secondary. We countered this culture by beginning each meeting with check-in questions that encouraged fellows to be appropriately vulnerable, ask for advice, and be honest about their struggles that we framed as opportunities not necessarily to present progress but rather to share, troubleshoot, and ask for help. We normalized the idea of fellows helping one another with their projects and frequently asked the group to reflect on how we could lend support. We found that these efforts provided a chance to talk about a fellow’s development as a leader and whole person, not just the face of a project or a professional “brand.”

We also led fellows through a reflection exercise with Clifton StrengthsFinder to remind them that no single person has every possible strength. We used this exercise as an opportunity to celebrate the different strengths of each person and to cultivate a collective mindset, recognizing that no individual knows (or needs to know) everything and that we are stronger when we work together.

Over the course of the academic year, the GWA fellowship program provided opportunities for students to explore how professionalism can be conceived more broadly and tied to personal values. Understanding the developmental projects and milestones that students face during their undergraduate years, we focused on establishing identity, building interpersonal relationships, and developing purpose (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Acknowledging that many individuals who face

gender oppression struggle with feeling seen and heard in spaces, we encouraged participants to reflect and engage in the correlation between their intersecting social identities, personal values, Clifton StrengthsFinder results, and academic and career interests to empower and increase their professional confidence. The goal is to ground the fellows in what matters to them on a fundamental level so they can make thoughtful choices to achieve their goals—rather than seek experiences that are seen as professionally useful on a résumé. During a feedback exercise, a GWA student fellow emphasized the relationships and community built within the program: “GWA has provided me with such inspiring womxn-to-womxn mentorship, support, and empowerment. The community we build together is one of the most caring and genuine spaces on campus for me and allows me to flourish as a stronger womxn leader.”

In summary, the GWA program provides evidence for an alternative conception of professional development that emphasizes community, cooperation, and a holistic view of students and their identities. Cultivating a group culture that explicitly seeks to counter the characteristics of White supremacy benefits student development. As womxn in student affairs, we offer the following tips for any womxn seeking to resist White supremacy culture in professionalism:

- Remember your “why”—seek out professional opportunities that align with your passions and purpose.
- Remember that you matter—acknowledge and affirm aspects of your intersecting social and personal identities.
- Find your person (or people)—build relationships where it’s safe to share more of your personal story and how that story influences your professional journey.
- Be flexible—foster a learning mindset among yourself and coworkers by building in regular

opportunities for feedback, emphasizing that mistakes happen and can offer valuable lessons

- Foster a culture of appreciation—encourage one another’s presence, talents, and gifts by intentionally incorporating moments of gratitude.

The more womxn and feminists working in student affairs can cultivate alternative ways of working and being together—ways that allow for mistakes, creativity, human imperfection, and collectivism—the more inclusive our professional communities can become. Moving forward, we have a powerful opportunity to value and cultivate community care, appreciation, and collaboration above perfectionism, individualism, and competition.

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