

CAMPUS ACTIVITIES

programming[®]

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A SENSE OF BELONGING

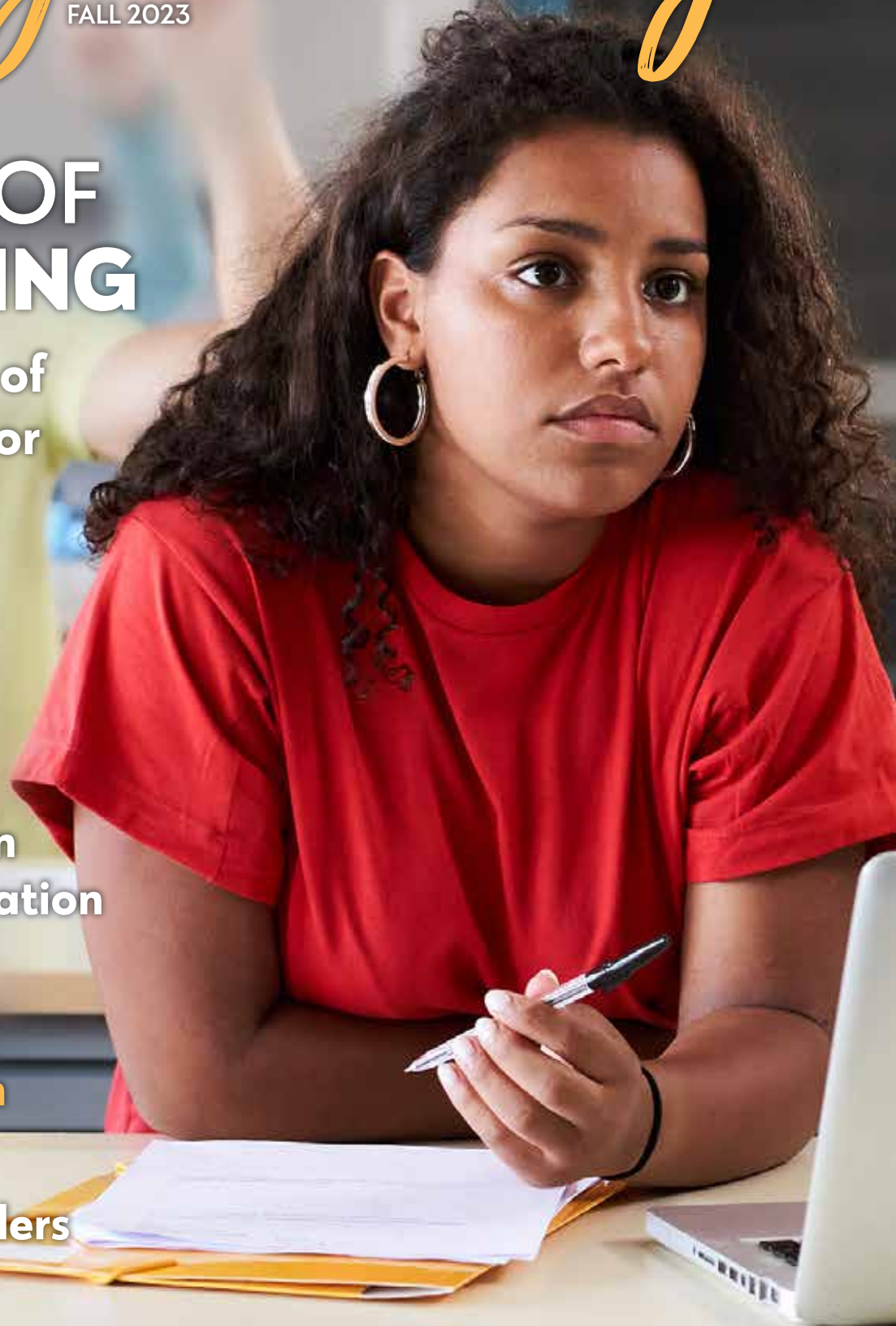
The Experience of
Students of Color
at PWIs

Supporting
Nontraditional
Students

PLUS:
Briana Hansen on
Finding Your Vocation

Writing
(and Surviving)
Your Dissertation

Board Games as
Community Builders



EACH NEW ACADEMIC YEAR brings opportunities, challenges, questions, and the ability to implement new strategies. As I think about the questions many institutions are facing, the continuing changes to higher education, and the needs of staff and students, I think about how NACA can help you. Association volunteers and staff are looking around the corner and considering how conferences, webinars, and resources provide turnkey/ready to implement solutions. Come spend time with your peers this fall at the NACA Conferences, discover new offerings from long-time and new associate members, find experiences that will make your life easier, source programs that will help create a sense of belonging for students, and speak face-to-face with people who know how you are feeling, what you need, and find solutions together! Our time together in Charleston, Syracuse, Little Rock, and Riverside, will renew your energy, help bridge ideas to reality, provide ideas to real campus challenges, and give your students the training and exploration they need.

Campus Activities is more than a one-time program. You design and conceptualize experiences that help promote a sense of belonging. You are training the trainer, you are supervising, advising student organizations, elevating the work of student government, onboarding, developing fraternal leaders and more. You are building the co-curricular experience that increases retention. Your impact is a cumulation of inputs, ideas, vision, and people. Our goal is to bring people together to help your vision of the student experience to life. When I walk the halls of the NACA conferences it brings me joy hearing the exchange of ideas, the responses to sharing tactics and lessons learned, the collaborative efforts of associate and school members coming together to conceptualize events that will serve many needs, that is at the heart of why the Association exists. NACA is a rich community of people who focus on supporting students. If you have never been to a NACA conference or it's been a few years, join us! The conference conversations range from business, to professional development, to how to create brave spaces. NACA conferences provide you and students training opportunities, affinity chats, tabletop discussions, featured speakers that are thought provoking, time to make business connections, networking, and a chance to breathe and recharge. Volunteers and staff want the time to be a combination of the things you need.

We are looking forward to hosting your school and are confident you will leave with solutions, ideas, new dates on the calendar and some laughs.



**AMBER SHAVERDI
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MISSION

NACA empowers members to amplify the campus experience through inclusive learning, meaningful connections, and engaging entertainment that transforms college communities.

VISION

To create college communities where everyone belongs.



AS I WRITE THIS, I've just gotten home from Welcome Week programming for the 2nd very long day in a row and I'll be headed back to campus tomorrow. I'm tired. I'm sore. And I ended up having to ride my moped home in the rain tonight (0/10, do not recommend). Despite these things, I'm looking forward to going back tomorrow. Working with our student leaders and first-year students energizes me in a way that nothing else does. Getting the opportunity to see our students experience campus, the co-curricular learning and the entertainment for the first time, is a joy to behold. I hope you feel the same way about the start of your year.

With each event that we accomplish, I've started making notes on how to make improvements for next year. Or, even recommending a complete change about something. As I make these notes, I'm thinking about how to position us to make these changes or get ideas to help us come up with ways to do things differently. The key is leveraging our NACA membership.

We purchased the summer essentials package, watched the videos and read through the packets of information. Now we're working on sharing those resources to benefit our whole campus. We're already planning our attendance at a NACA regional conference and looking through NACA 24/7 to determine the associate members who may have services or speakers that we want to introduce to next year's incoming class. I'm certain that if you haven't already started to do these things, you're preparing to do so very soon.

In thinking about my conference experience, I'm looking forward to ed sessions where I'll get new ideas and learn about emerging trends in campus activities. I'm also planning out the ed session proposal that I want to submit. It's almost like the "take a penny, leave a penny" tray at the cash register. If I'm going to benefit from others' ed sessions, I should share my knowledge with others. I hope you'll consider sharing your knowledge.

Partially for that same reason, I have volunteered at NACA events for a number of years. Whether it's volunteering for a role on a conference team or volunteering for something once I get to the conference, I always learn something by participating in that way. I learn from the other volunteers or I take on a task where I learn something. That allows me to take that knowledge back to campus and use it when I work with our students. I see this as a full circle from watching the students learn, to my learning, to using what I've learned to help students learn. I hope you'll consider taking on a volunteer role this year, whether it's big or small.

I hope the start of the year is energizing you and you're already thinking about your NACA engagement for the year to help you create an even stronger community where everyone belongs on your campus. Better yet, I hope to see you at a conference!



**SHELLY
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“
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”

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DARRIUS BARROW joined NC State in May of 2019. He serves as Associate Director for Student Leadership and Engagement where he works with student organization management, registration, and development. He also assists with the University Activities Board. Prior to coming to NC State, Darrius spent five years at East Carolina University as the lead advisor for the programming board. Darrius is an active member of the National Association of Campus Activities (NACA), where he has written a number of articles and given presentations. He is a native of Eastern North Carolina and is focused and intentional in his efforts to improve the experience for the NC State student population.

ALICIA BATES, Ed.D., serves as Advisor to the Edward H. Arnold Dean of Hesburgh Libraries and University of Notre Dame Press at the University of Notre Dame. Prior to her current role, Alicia spent 12+ years working in Campus Activities at institutions in the US and Qatar. She also serves as a member of the NACA Board of Directors.

ALEXANDRIA BROWN is a Senior Coordinator for Student Engagement at the University of Arizona. She assists with providing vision, leadership, and oversight for the university's student governing body, the Associated Students of the University of Arizona. Alexandria advises the Wildcat Events Board and supports other student engagement programs such as Bear Down Camp and ZonaZoo. She served as a graduate intern for NACA West in 2019. Alexandria is a 2022-2023 Leadership Fellow and continues to volunteer within NACA as a general member for the Diversity Advisory Group (DAG).

JALEN ELLIS earned his Master of Education degree in Higher Education with a concentration in Student Affairs Administration from UNC Greensboro and currently serves as a Program Coordinator for New Student Orientation and Family Program at Georgia State University.

TARON GREEN serves as the Associate Director at Texas A&M University-Commerce, where he plays a pivotal role in enhancing the student experience. With a profound dedication to student growth and development, Taron brings over a decade of expertise in higher education and student affairs to his role. From spearheading impactful events to championing a sense of belonging for all students, he is committed to fostering an environment where students can thrive both academically and personally. Taron is an active member of the National Association of Campus Activities (NACA) and is also a Leadership Fellow. His contributions reflect a genuine belief in the power of education to transform lives, making him an integral part of the Texas A&M University-Commerce team.

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LANCE THOMPSON is the Assistant Director of Student Involvement for Campus Activities at Carthage College. Lance is the staff advisor for the Carthage Activities Board, helps with the implementation of New Student Orientation, and is the coordinator of the more than 130 clubs and organizations on campus. He loves listening to hipster music in his office, attending baseball games, collecting junk, and watching unwatchable YouTube videos with his son.

DEYMARIS (DEY) ZAMBRANA-SOLER, M.Ed. is a Career, Academic, and Personal Advisor at Guilford College. She obtained her Master of Education degree in Higher Education, with a concentration in Student Affairs Administration. Her background in Sociology ignited her passion for the study of Intersectionality, and she's dedicated her career to studying the impact of intersecting identities throughout the college experience. Her research interests are neurodiversity in higher education, the impact of liberal arts education on faith, and equity and inclusion of invisible disabilities.

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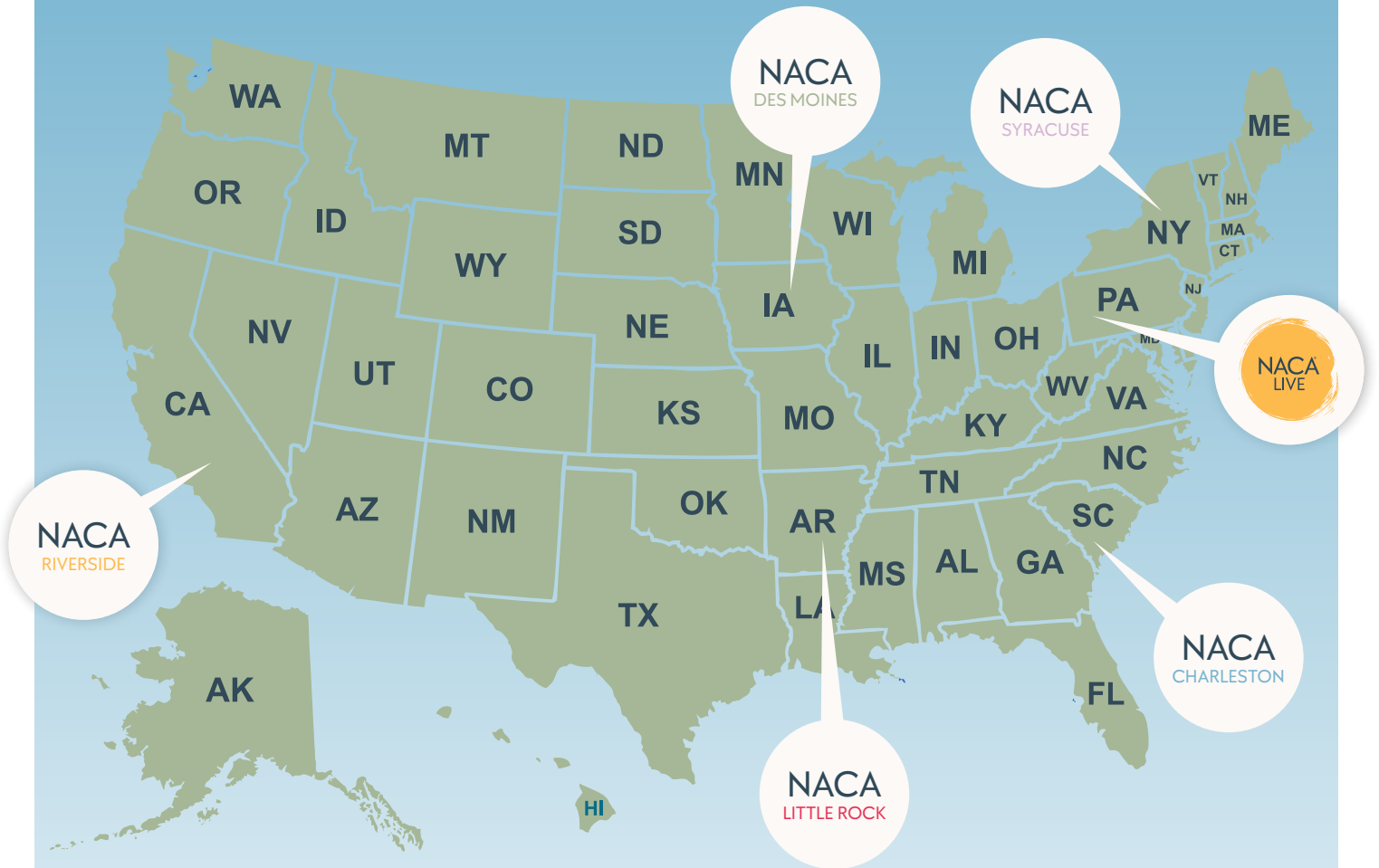
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NACA's 2023-24 Event Schedule



CONFERENCES

Charleston, SC	October 12-14, 2023
Little Rock, AR.....	October 19-21, 2023
Syracuse, NY	October 26-28, 2023
Riverside, CA	November 16-18, 2023
Des Moines, IA.....	April 4-6, 2024

NACA® LIVE 2024
Pittsburgh, PA
Feb 23-26

Scheduling note: Some program components will begin on Friday, Feb. 23, including the Forum for Student Org Advisors, the Welcome Reception at the Heinz History Center, and marketplace exhibitor load-in.

For the latest info on NACA events, visit naca.org and follow [@thenaca](https://twitter.com/thenaca) on social.

2023 NACA® Institutes

Thanks to all of our volunteers and delegates for making this summer's Institute series a success!



...see you next summer!



The GOOD, the BAD, and the FUNNY

How a Series of Seemingly Unrelated Choices Led to My Life's Work

By **BRIANA HANSEN**

ON THE SURFACE, I'm an unlikely sex educator. I grew up in the Midwest, where talking about taboo subjects is, well, taboo.

My personal upbringing didn't exactly set me up for a positive intimate interactions. I was taught to practice politeness at all costs. I believed that saying "No," setting up a personal boundary, or disappointing others was rude. And being rude was a cardinal sin.

I was told that my value was in making other people feel good. On the positive side, that meant I got really, really good at making people laugh. Laughing feels great.

But that also meant that I consistently, and almost exclusively, put other people's needs before my own. That translated to a lot of unhealthy coping mechanisms, the most egregious one being constant and consistent self-deprecation.

I became an expert at making myself small so others would feel big.

I didn't have the language or framework to understand what speaking up for myself would even look like. I feared that I would be shunned or shamed for it. I mean, what happens if the other person gets upset? Or, even worse — *gasp* — doesn't like you?

Combine that mindset with the pervasive "grin and bear it" messaging all around me, and it's no wonder I learned to silence my intuition and override my body's needs.

Of course, it didn't help that my my favorite movies as a kid were *The Little Mermaid* and *Grease*. Both feature catchy songs and female protagonists who are rewarded and lauded after giving up everything that makes them unique in order to become what they think their male partner wants.

Though the music didn't seep into my unconscious and cause problems in my adult years, I can't say the same about the storylines.

Yet now I find myself regularly talking about sex and sexuality with thousands of students every year. But talking about sexuality is basically talking about connection.

And I am obsessed with connection.

The truth is, this work actually makes total sense for me. I've been accruing a perfect cocktail of applicable skills for years.

My degree is in Philosophy, Politics, and the Public (shout out to Xavier University). It's an interdisciplinary honors major that challenged me to make connections between seemingly disparate ideas. It inspired me to integrate ongoing advocacy, positive change making, and service into everything I do. And it made me question what it takes — externally and internally — to feel like you're part of a community.

I spent most summers and all of my spring breaks in various pursuits of service. Jesuit schools emphasize service to others, which meant I was lucky enough to have multiple opportunities to serve all sorts of different people and communities that I would otherwise never have known. It gave me the chance not only to increase my empathy, but to understand how to use it as a tool for actively serving the greater good.

At school, I doubled-down on my own love for theater and writing. My senior year I wrote *Xavier: The Musical*, a multi-night an hour-long massive multi-student undertaking that involved multiple different on campus communities, including a dance number by the Army ROTC community and a cameo from our celebrity-status basketball players.

It was a hit.

I relished in the joy it brought the crowd. But my favorite parts happened backstage. Groups of people who would never otherwise interact were hanging out, playing cards, and casually conversing.

Every night, the sold-out audience's laughter and the backstage hangouts were tangible proof of human beings connecting.

And, like I said, I'm obsessed with connection.

For my senior thesis, I wrote and performed a satirical interactive solo show that attempted to weave social issues and humor. I felt (and still feel) laughing together creates an immediate sense of community by connecting strangers in a shared act.

Laughing is social. It's infectious. It's dangerous. It's subversive. It's cathartic. It's powerful.

I named my thesis show *That's What She Said*.

I'm really proud of what it started for me. I'm significantly less proud of the title.

I taught comedy classes at Xavier after graduating before moving to Chicago to do as much sketch and improv as my energy and finances would allow. The former was plentiful, but the latter was limited.

I created another interactive satirical solo show called *Femoir*. Better title, better show. Eventually it (and I) got good enough to go on tour. I traveled to festivals across the country wanting to make people laugh as much as I made them think.

After one particularly cold winter, I realized I prefer sunscreen over snow boots. So I moved to Los Angeles.

Despite the fact that LA is a physically sprawling and numerically massive city, it felt cozy to me. I quickly found a diverse network of likeminded creatives through extensive stand up, sketch, improv, and on-camera acting opportunities everywhere in the city. Eventually, that led to an opportunity to begin teaching and touring with multiple educational programs at colleges and military bases.

That's when it all started to click for me.

It wasn't long before I knew I had to carve my own path in this space.

I became a mother for the first time in the heart of the pandemic. As an active extrovert who loved independence and performing, isolated pandemic parenthood hit me hard. Without any peer or professional support during this major life transition, I floundered.

My mental health, along with my sleep, plummeted.

It didn't take long before there came a reckoning. I wasn't functioning properly, and not just from the sleep deprivation. Everything was off. Something had to give.

I knew the choices I was making were unsustainable. Everything that was supposed to bring me joy was making me miserable. Things that used to enlighten and excite me now felt like heavy

obligations. People who used to inspire were infuriating.

I was a shell of myself, which was unfair to my infant who deserved to have his super cool mom be fully present. And it was unfair to my super cool self to be so out of touch and out of sorts.

In order to figure out what was wrong, I tried something had never done before.

I listened to myself.

My gut told me to stop. Stop the mindless movement. Stop the noise. Stop the input. Stop the output. Stop the scrolling. Stop the justifying. Stop the proving. Just...stop.

So I did.

I stopped setting unattainable goals. I stopped thinking that my experience of postpartum and motherhood had to look or feel a certain way. I stopped producing just of the sake of staying busy. I stopped interacting with people who undervalued, overlooked, and made my mood plummet.

My energy was limited and my mind was fragile. I had to protect both at all costs.

It was scary. I was used to having a strict over-achieving schedule packed with superhuman levels of productivity and a ridiculous amount of daily goals.

Instead, I allowed myself one goal: I'd get my son to try blueberries.

Once the dust settled and my nerves calmed, I was able to hear my own intuition. In all the years I had spent seeking connection with others, I had lost the most important one: The connection with myself.

It was in that state of quiet, calm connection when the idea for my program, *Sex Rules*, came to me.

I use that language specifically because it really does feel like its own thing.

I believe ideas are outside of us and we are conduits for their creation. I was lucky enough to be given the chance to connect with this one, and I'm doing my best to honor it.

I'm not just saying that to be all woo woo (though I personally love woo woo). I have proof. Ask me for the story at a NACA conference, and I'll happily share.



Rather than immediately taking this project and falling into the same traps I had just freed myself from, I made this program a pursuit of passion. I didn't do this because I was trying to prove anything to anyone. I didn't put pressure or place unfair expectations on it. I did it because I wanted to. I enjoyed it.

And it immediately began to give back. It revitalized me. Working on it improved my mood. I began to feel more in my body. It felt like there were sunbeams breaking up the dark cloud that had been following me for months.

I didn't make more goals, I simply listened and followed, giving myself grace and space along the way. I focused less on what I needed to do for the program, and more on the type of person I wanted to be while doing it. I did what I could when I could as best I could, and let that be enough.

Most importantly, I got my son to try blueberries. Spoiler alert: He loved 'em.

This program requires me to be authentic, which means I have to confront a lot of unhealed, and often unrecognized, trauma. I have to be active participant in my own healing.

Like all of us, I have a lot of tangled layers of unhealthy messaging and emotional shields that I need to call out and smooth out. I've begun to understand how my own upbringing and external programming informed many damaging past choices. I'm learning how to make steps towards a better version of me in the future.

Some work I do on my own. Sometimes, I need professionals. All of it is important.

Researching and creating this program even gave me the language I needed to understand my own sexual assault. I now know that it's not something to downplay or override or excuse or hide or simply "get over" or nebulously label as "a weird thing a person I thought was my friend did to my body."

It was wrong. It makes me angry. It makes me sad. It hurts.

Recognizing and accepting all of that allows me to heal.

Sharing it allows me to connect.

I've learned so much through not only doing the program, but also being actively involved with likeminded students, support staff, and speakers alike.

I've learned that discomfort and growth often go hand-in-hand. That things don't always need to be immediately "fixed." That there may be times when you need to say something that will upset someone else because they need to hear it. That when you shine, you encourage others to do the same. That there is no cookie-cutter timeline for healing. That both grief and forgiveness are active processes with twists and turns and ups and downs. That the best thing to sometimes do is nothing. That my value is inherent, not earned.

And that if I encounter someone who — *gasp* — might not like me, I'll be alright.

Sex Rules, for me, is a living, breathing, ever-changing entity, just like the people it serves. Really, all interactive educational lectures embody the idea that the journey is the destination. There's nothing to simply hand out, click past, or check off. They require presence on all fronts.

“ I'VE LEARNED THAT DISCOMFORT AND GROWTH OFTEN GO HAND-IN-HAND.



photo courtesy of Cameron Rice Photo

The transformation for the students happens in that near-magic synthesis between the words and the presenter and the intention behind them and the people listening and the surrounding environment and the campus itself and the fleeting moment and the intangible *je ne sais quoi*.

Beautiful things can happen when people connect.

And, I don't know if I've mentioned this yet...but I am obsessed with connection. ■

* *The title of this article is not implying students of color do not belong at higher ed institutions; instead, it is highlighting the point that colleges and universities were originally designed without them in mind.*

Belonging Where You Don't Belong

Navigating the Experience of Students of Color's Sense of Belonging at Predominately White Institutions.

by
JEFFRY MATEO



IF YOU WORK IN HIGHER EDUCATION, you have heard the phrase “sense of belonging.” But what does this phrase really mean? This is a question I consistently ask myself as a new professional with mid-level experience. In order to feel like you belong somewhere, you have to feel like you have been welcomed into that community or environment. I don’t mean receiving an invitation, but instead, really connecting with intersectional factions that helps you fit in and ease tensions while transitioning.

The history of higher education institutions begins with the same exposition as the common “once upon a time story” known as America. It was originally created for—and to benefit—only White wealthy cisgender Christian men who met all of those criteria. Higher education has come a long way since, with many initiatives and accommodations to incorporate inclusivity to all student demographics. But students of color still face many challenges such as lack of representation, stereotyping, microaggressions, campus climate, racism, discrimination, access to resources, campus events, tokenism, politics, etc.

It is very critical that when a student of color sets foot in a predominantly White institution that they integrate into the campus commu-

nity as smoothly and as early as possible. In order for this to happen, institutions need to have measures in place that help combat a lot of the previously discussed challenges.

Tytiana, a first year student at Institution U, a predominantly White liberal arts institution, says she is excited to be going to Institution U. She is originally from Brooklyn and is doing the HEOP summer program. So far the program has been helping her transition into college life and she has learned a lot of meaningful skills that will help her navigate her transition. When asked if she has been developing a sense of belonging at Institution U she mentioned:

Right now I do feel a sense of belonging on campus with the HEOP cohort and the community we have built here. We all come from different backgrounds but we have connected with each other and have already established our mark on this campus. We all know that we will be the minority on campus in the fall semester. I don't know if I will feel that sense of belonging anymore when I return and see everyone else on campus. It is hard to say because I know my personality is a little different and I do not want anyone stereotyping me as the angry black woman when trying to express my feelings or emotions.

This is how many students of color may be feeling transitioning into college. Tytiana is already aware of the stigma behind racism and microaggressions as a student of color at a PWI. She is hopeful that her summer experience has prepared her to smoothly transition into college, but her fall semester will be unpredictable as she manages being independent and navigating her college journey.

Knowing how students are already feeling going to Institution U, that information can be used to understand how administrators at Institution U can be proactive in combating students trying to self isolate. I decided to interview two other students named Sanette and Kiara who are also first year students in the HEOP program at Institution U. When asked how Institution U can be proactive in continuing to support and improve their sense of belonging on campus when they get back in the fall semester, they mentioned the following:

One way Institution U can really make me feel like I belong is by providing cultural food in the dining hall. I don't know if it is just a summer menu or if they are just waiting for the students to get back on campus but I really miss my mother's cooking and I am tired of eating pasta and carbs everyday for lunch and dinner.

This is very important because having a sense of belonging also means calling Institution U home away from home. Students who go into an institution failing to also call that place home feel a disconnect impacting their sense of belonging. These students feel homesickness, and once that happens, it becomes very easy for them to disengage from the campus community. This would be a nightmare for any office whose sole purpose is holistic development and engagement of the student.

Sanette also mentioned having cultural events on campus to celebrate the diverse student body and different heritage months. She wishes to be a part of the conversation when Institution U begins planning for these events. It is good to have student input and feedback on how the events should operate to enhance their experience. Celebrating different cultures and student demographics allows for the students to feel not only that they belong, but that they matter and contribute to the campus community.

Isaiah, a junior at Institution U who also served as a tutor counselor for the HEOP summer program mentions how the events at Institution U used to cater to only a certain demographic of students on campus.

All of the students in leadership positions tasked with creating events were White students. There is nothing wrong with that, but you can tell who the events were designed for leaving out students of color [who have] to create their own events to show cultural differences. Despite that, I have been able to connect with other students through basketball at the recreation center. This has allowed me to expand my friend groups which allowed me to meet more people and become more social.

Isaiah's experience should be a reminder to institutions that it should not be the sole responsibility of the students to establish a sense of belonging. Yes, to some extent they are responsible in taking initiative and coming out of their comfort zone to help them create their sense of belonging, but institutions should be proactive by providing easy engagement opportunities encouraging students to be social.

I cannot stress enough how important it is for institutions to be proactive and not reactive or performative to help students in establishing a sense of belonging on their campuses. Based on the testimonies given by Sanette, Kiara, Tytiana, and Isaiah, here are ways that institutions can begin revolutionizing higher education:

- 1. Create diversity and inclusion initiatives if not already established:** These initiatives can assist in creating and executing cultural events designed to celebrate students of color on campus and their success.
- 2. Increasing representation in leadership positions:** Students of color want to be seen and heard and by encouraging students of color to be in these positions it increases their voice and sense of belonging.
- 3. Allow for transparent communication:** This will allow for students to trust their administrators making them more approachable to talk about certain topics and issues. This can also lead to the implementation of safe spaces on campus which is a bonus in creating transparency and trust between administrators and students.
- 4. Student, Faculty, and Staff Training:** Providing cultural awareness training for everyone on campus will help eliminate a lot of incidents that can contribute to a hostile campus environment. Having these training in advance also demonstrates proactive execution.
- 5. Allowing for an inclusive curriculum:** By ensuring that the curriculum allows for flexible and diverse perspectives, students of color will feel seen and valued in the classroom. This would also validate the experience of any student of color which is very important in integrating into a campus community.

These changes and ideas are not something that will happen overnight nor should they. It takes time and critical planning to ensure the effectiveness and execution of each goal. That is the meaning of being proactive and if done correctly, students of color will naturally experience a sense of belonging in a place that was not originally designed for them.

“
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THE CAMPUS COMMUNITY.
”



Using BOARD GAMES as Community Builders

By **LANCE J. THOMPSON**

*Assistant Director of Student Involvement
for Campus Activities, Carthage College*

YOU MIGHT BE THINKING, “I hope this article isn’t about making the programming board play Twister and have them all quit on day one...” No, no, no. With these tips, you should at least get a few days out of them. This article is about laziness and group activities that are actually fun as opposed to embarrassing and awkward.

My idea to use board games as community builders came about during the COVID pandemic, you may have heard of it; however, it’s always been on my mind because I cannot stand trying to come up with icebreakers and leading them is even worse. I’m a lazy icebreaker person, I admit it. As I was watching some YouTube board gamers play games over Zoom, I had a eureka moment that could solve my laziness. Here are a few games that can flip your frown upside down:

The first one is going to be a little obvious. Telestrations is a glorified version of the listening game “telephone.” Participants get a whiteboard and dry-erase marker, the first participant is told or shown a word or phrase, and they must draw that on their whiteboard. They then show that to the next person, draw what they think it is, and so on. Afterward, they all say what they thought the word or phrase was based on their drawing. This can be used to show how communication and details are important to the success of a team.

The next game is great for Zoom-type meetings and large in-person groups. Wavelength is a game where you give the group a topic spectrum, say “Hot/Cold” or “Bad Movie/Good Movie”, you then use a radial where the presenter has to give a clue for them to land that dial at the right spot between 1 and 10. If the dial lands on 5, you may say tap water for “Hot/Cold” or if it is 10, you may say Camp Rock for Bad Movie/Good Movie because, for some reason, college students love that stuff. Have the Zoom chat spam what number they think the prompt is, or have the crowd yell out their numbers and then reveal the number. This game is a great way to get everyone involved and get people loosened up for some good discussion.

Priorities is a game for tighter-knit groups, like an executive board at a mid-year retreat, for example. In Priorities, one participant selects five cards with prompts (e.g. Pizza, Selfies, Long Hugs, Dogs, Baseball) on them. Trust me, they won’t necessarily make sense together, but that’s ok. That participant ranks those cards from 1 to 5 based on whatever criteria they would like. Without telling the rest of the group their rankings, the group then discusses how that person would rank the cards. The ranker can’t speak, so no matter how the discussion goes, they need to clam

up. The ranker doesn’t want to go too wild with their rankings, however, because the entire group is trying to win together. Once the group has decided on the rankings, the ranker reveals their order, and the group gets points for how many they ranked correctly. You may have to remove some of the cards depending on the comfortable level of the group; it’s normally a party game, after all. The better the group knows each other, the better the discussion and the more fun they will have. It’s a great game for dealing with some stagnant relationships within the group and getting a group to truly understand each other.

My favorite board game to use during a retreat is Concept, and its more basic version Concept Kids. It is an extremely versatile game. At its core, Concept supplies a way to communicate non-verbally through a symbol board and pawn/cube tokens. I typically split up the group into two teams. One team gets a word or phrase they need to describe using the board and tokens, and the other tries to guess what they are trying to describe. If the phrase is “Sponge Bob,” the describing team may put tokens on the symbols for the color yellow, square or cube shape, TV/Movie, water, fictional character, etc. The game includes cards with many phrases of increasing difficulty, but you can also create your own. Concept is a wonderful game with much to offer for community building, leadership development, and conversation enhancement.

These aren’t the only games you can use to break the ice or build your group up. Here are a few more I would highly recommend:

Chameleon - a more appropriate version of popular deception games.

Open Relationships - find similarities between different topics.

Timeline - quick icebreaker about putting certain inventions or historical events chronologically.

Handimonium - a silly yet much cleaner version of the spoon and egg game

How Do You See The World - a good way to start deeper conversations.

Werewolf - basically Mafia or Assassins but with clear instructions and supplies.

These games can be found in more board game shops and larger department stores, as well as online. You can also find numerous instructional videos on YouTube for each of them. Worry no more about facilitating an icebreaker, these games will do it for you.

SURVIVING THE DISSERTATION PROCESS

ALICIA BATES, Ed.D.



WE'VE ALL HEARD ABOUT THE "DREADED" DISSERTATION PROCESS. How it can be the reason some people choose not to pursue a terminal degree, quit after they started, or is the cause of their current stress. As someone who has gone through the process, I agree with all the adjectives that can be used to describe it - tedious, daunting, exhausting, frustrating, stupid, and a few others we won't put in writing. In the almost two years since I have finished my dissertation, I have had quite a few conversations with folks going through or considering the process about why and how I did it, what worked for me and what didn't, and what I'm doing and/or plan to do with the degree. I'm excited to share what I learned along the way that helped me reach the other side. I hope these tips are helpful but most importantly, I hope they inspire you to figure out what you need to be successful in your own dissertation process.

Writing Tips and Strategies

While your program will give you vast amounts of information and resources, entering the dissertation process can still feel overwhelming. You may find yourself grappling with numerous questions and uncertainties - How do you manage the vast amount

of research and data? How do you organize information? How often are you supposed to be writing? How do you overcome writer's block and maintain motivation throughout the process? How often do you engage with your Chair/committee? For some of these questions, there are no right or wrong answers and may take trial and error to figure out. In addition to the traditional writing tips you may hear, here are four I learned that helped guide my journey.

Chair/Committee Expectations

My dissertation Chair had slightly different/tighter expectations from the program. She required that I turn something in every week and that we check-in biweekly. At the beginning, I thought she was crazy and that this was excessive. I know plenty of learners in the dissertation process have a vastly different experience and talk with their Chair less frequently, so why? I quickly realized that she was on to something good. As someone who is deadline driven, this was much needed. Our weekly schedule of writing and reviewing, kept me writing and provided accountability for the milestones I was looking to achieve throughout each semester. Toward the end of my dissertation, I

felt I was talking to my Chair almost every day, especially when I wanted to practice my defense. When I joked about chatting with her everyday, she reaffirmed that this was my experience and that I should get what I wanted and needed out of it. Understanding and establishing expectations with your committee early on is crucial to your ability to diligently work well throughout the process. However, don't hesitate to reestablish expectations as things change and progress.

Know Your Resources

At the beginning, it did not feel like my brain was connecting with this process so I sought out help. Meeting with others further along in the program and dissertation consultants provided the insight I needed to make initial progress and gain much needed momentum. There are many editors, consultants, tutors, etc. available to help you make it through the dissertation process. Whether it's trouble synthesizing information, proper formatting, or understanding different research methods, help can be found. Don't be shy about connecting with the folks you need and finding the ones who match your work style. Sometimes we need to hear and take the same advice we would give to our own students.

Self-awareness

Self-awareness during this process is key. If you don't have it before you start, you will certainly gain it along the way. During the writing process, I realized the importance of where and when I engaged in writing. I need a low level of noise and activity around me. I cannot write in spaces that are too quiet and isolated. Even now, as I write this, I am sitting in the Student Center (rather in my office in the Library) listening to admission tours go by, with a TV on low in my peripheral, and the sounds of the summertime lunch rush. I spent a lot of time in corners of coffee shops and local bars making great progress. I also learned (by accident) that not taking my laptop charger with me was a game changer and allowed me to be more focused and present with my writing. The time of day I wrote best ebbed and flowed throughout the dissertation process. Depending on the chapter I was writing, I would sometimes be more productive in the morning vs late at night or vice versa. It's important to take time to reflect throughout the process. A moment for self-awareness and reflection can help you maximize your productivity.

Use Your Vacation Days

We all continuously hear how important it is to take your vacation days, especially after long weeks and semesters that can be a grind. While taking vacation days are great and needed for relaxation and getaways, they can also be great for writing. This tip came from a mentor who was also in my program and was about a year ahead of me. One day, as we were discussing her dissertation process, she told me she was taking off Fridays from work to get her writing done. I remembered this as I started my dissertation and was surprised with how productive and fruitful these days were. I was already in the mindset of a workday but just using my brain in a different way. Using these days also allowed me to still enjoy my weekend activities with friends and family without feeling like I was "losing a whole day" to more work.

Motivation

Writing a dissertation is a marathon, not a sprint. It is a demanding and lengthy endeavor that requires unwavering commitment, intellectual rigor, and emotional resilience. As you embark on this challenging path, it is essential to cultivate and maintain a strong sense of motivation to navigate the inevitable obstacles and triumph over the hurdles that may arise.

Remembering Your Why

During my student activities career, I unfortunately had a not so great supervisor. Before things became not so great, we would regularly talk about whether or not we would pursue doctoral degrees, commiserate over the amount of time it would take, and how daunting the dissertation would be. As I was internally going back and forth over whether I would move forward with pursuing my degree, I had an epiphany. My supervisor and I had similar resumes with the same years of experience. If we were applying to and being considered for the same position and the only difference was that they had their doctorate degree and I didn't, I wouldn't be okay with that. I quickly pulled myself together to enroll. That's my 'why' and one of the main things that kept me going throughout the dissertation process, especially when I was at my most frustrating points. It may be the most cliché of tips, but people keep bringing it up because it's effective. What's going to be the 'why' you fall back on to keep you going?

Long Term Planning

I like options, not too many but just enough. That desire translates into my professional career as well. I received my Masters degree in Student Affairs and it has served me well. However, when it came time for me to consider my doctoral degree, I knew I wanted something that would help me excel whether I chose to stay in and work up through the ranks of student affairs or higher education leadership or explore a different path in the corporate world. So, I decided to get my doctoral degree in Organizational Leadership with an emphasis in Organizational Development. The concentration of my doctoral degree serves me well in my new role as Advisor to the Dean of Hesburgh Libraries and the University of Notre Dame Press. It has also opened my eyes to additional possibilities that I never considered at an institution. Life threw me a few curve balls so I'm no longer sure of my long term plan but I do know having this degree has made thinking of my long term plan a little more interesting.

Finding Community

I found that having a community during the dissertation process was essential to finishing. It was important that I had people in my life I could talk to about the dissertation and writing process. Most programs assign you to a cohort and that is who you go through most, if not all of your coursework with. These people can also serve as a support network as you write your dissertation. One benefit of my program is that we had a residency requirement that required us to be on campus with other learners for one week the first two years of the program. It was during this time that I met and formed a bond with additional learners who served as a support system, especially when we started writing our dissertations. I also found it helpful to connect with those who completed their dissertation. It was motivating and helpful to hear from someone who made it through the process and reached the other side. Talking to those who finished their dissertation helped validate feelings I was having about the process, work through confusion, and even understand how elated I could feel over the smallest of wins.

Facebook groups can also be an effective platform to help find community. You should research to see if groups have been created for your program. I was a member of a group specific to my program and it was helpful when I needed quick questions answered or I needed additional help. Additionally, groups such as PhinisheD/FinishEdD (Drs/Future Drs) #WhoGotNext can connect you with learners from a myriad of programs and at different stages of their dissertation.

Personal Motivation

Everyone finds motivation to keep writing in different ways. For me, it was having my nails done. I was much more motivated to sit at my computer and write when I had a fresh and fun manicure looking back at me from the keys. Also, taking time to get a manicure was part of the self-care routine that I desperately needed to provide calm and balance in my life during the dissertation process. Even if it's something as small as getting your nails done, ask yourself what's going to be the consistent thing you have or can do to keep yourself motivated to get to the finish line.

Finding Balance

It's important to strike a balance between socializing and dedicating time to your dissertation. Setting boundaries, managing your time effectively, and establishing a schedule that accommodates both work and personal life can help ensure that you make progress on your dissertation while still prioritizing the people and things you enjoy most.

Spending Time with Family and Friends

Spending time with family and friends while writing your dissertation is crucial for several reasons. Although the dissertation is an important academic and maybe personal endeavor that requires substantial time and effort, maintaining a balance between your writing and community is essential for your overall well-being and success. Time with family and friends can provide the emotional support and encouragement, mental refreshment, and social interaction that will allow you to maintain those connections, take your mind off writing, and help reduce your dissertation stress. It can be easy to get into a writing cycle and forgo many activities but it's critical that you make time for those most important to you. Time spent with those who are supporting you through the dissertation journey can be the recharge you need to keep going.

Prioritizing Rest

It's so easy for us to tell our students that they need to prioritize rest but sometimes, we have trouble following our own advice. When I'm focused, I'm good at burning the candle at both ends. I have no problem getting up early and staying up late to get things done and make 'progress'. While writing my dissertation, I quickly learned that 'tired progress' is not necessarily good progress and falling asleep in a chair while writing wreaks havoc on not just my body but my brain. Throughout my process, I learned that by a certain time of night, my brain is done and that it was okay for me to not force myself to keep working. I made more and better progress by calling it a night and going back at it when I was fresh in the morning. I also learned that a 20 minute nap can be really powerful and could sometimes be the refresher I needed to have a writing breakthrough. It is not 'wrong' or 'bad' to step away from writing and just rest.

Move Your Body

I'm a runner. I'm not a fast runner. I don't aspire to make the podium when I finish a race. I mostly only do it for the medal and/or t-shirt. Since the health benefits aren't too shabby either, I try to run a few miles a week. Sometimes running was the hard thing that I would do that made my dissertation seem a little easier.

I recognize that may only make sense to me and my grandma. However, taking those 30+ minutes to pound the pavement or treadmill provided the release I needed to get out of my head and stop overthinking the next section and/or get out of my feelings about whatever edits I was facing.

Have Fun

Writing a dissertation takes sacrifice. You won't be able to attend functions or participate in activities the way you used to. You're making those sacrifices now for a lifetime of personal and professional achievement. However, that doesn't mean you can't or shouldn't have any fun. I am a big fan of brunches, celebrations, trips, girls night, and more. I knew that I wasn't willing to give all of those things up to write, especially knowing this process was going to take me years. It was important to me to be present when I was able and have a little fun. So, if that meant getting up a little earlier to write before I met friends for brunch, then so be it. I was also not shy about traveling with my laptop and getting work done in the airport or before everyone woke up for the day on a trip.

Schedule responsibly and you'll know you deserve the break.

Survival Mode

At some point during the dissertation process, you may enter what I call 'survival mode'. This was the point where I felt overly exhausted with the process and like I was not making any progress. Most learners also know this as writing Chapter 2. It just felt like I was never going to finish. To get through this phase of the process, it is (again) important to establish routines and boundaries for yourself and recognize when/where you need to practice more self-compassion.

Writing Everyday... or Not

Some people say that you should write every day, even if only for 15 minutes. At the beginning of my dissertation process, I gave this a try. Then there would be days I would sit at my computer and just stare at the same blank screen, feeling

unmotivated and then mad at myself because x amount of time had gone by and I made no progress. I quickly learned this tip wasn't for me and trying to make it work for my work style was doing more harm than good. For me, I needed to have a day away from my dissertation. I tried to make this Sunday but depending on the time of year, level of motivation, or whatever else was going on in my life, this fluctuated and may have changed to different days in the week. However, taking a day completely away from my dissertation was the brain break I needed to be able to make real progress when I got back to it.

I also think it's important to know when you need a break altogether. I took a few breaks during the course of my dissertation writing. Working in Student Activities in August is hard. Working in Student Activities in August and trying to write your dissertation when you're exhausted and feel like you have nothing left to give at the end of the day/week/month...super hard. My program allowed me to take eight weeks off, with no penalty, from mid-July to mid-September. This allowed me the appropriate time and brain space to focus on getting through the chaos of the beginning of the academic year while also creating a more laid back writing schedule. I was able to go back into the process with more motivation, a clearer head, and much less stress and guilt.

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BUT MY BRAIN.

Cry but Don't Quit

Frustration. Writer's block. Seemingly endless edits. Researching for hours to write one sentence or paragraph. Happiness. I cried a lot during the dissertation process. It could sometimes feel like I was stuck in this never ending cycle of tedious writing and rewriting. Some days it felt like I was never going to finish, so I cried. I would get revisions that felt like I was working backwards, so I cried. I would sit at my computer and write and cry. Then I would get news I could move onto the next section/chapter or find the perfect article or have a really good call with my Chair, and I would cry. Crying is a natural human response, even for those of us who hate doing it. Let the tears flow but then get back to work because perseverance is key to successfully completing this journey.

Run Your Own Race

My dissertation focused on Facebook groups and compared different social media platforms, so fortunately/unfortunately I spent a lot of time on social media.

Depending on the day, what stage of the process I was in, and the latest round of edits I received, seeing other people advance in their own dissertation process could either be motivating or disheartening. On days where it was more disheartening than motivating, the saying of "Comparison is the thief of joy" could not feel more true. It could feel like the end of the world and that I was never going to finish. Thankfully in those moments, my support system reminded me of all of the progress that I had and was making and cheered me on to keep going. Similar to running, I had to adopt the same mindset that I take when running a race - I may not be the fastest but I will finish and get my medal (i.e. degree).

Perfect vs. Done

One phrase you will undoubtedly hear before and throughout your dissertation process is something along the lines of "You can have a perfect dissertation or you can have a done dissertation." A "perfect" dissertation can be subjective and what's perfect to you and/or one member of your committee may be just okay to another. On the other hand, a "done" dissertation refers to completing the necessary requirements to achieve a satisfactory level of writing and research. Writing my dissertation was one of the few times in my life where I really let myself be okay with "good enough." Striving for perfection can sometimes hinder progress, run you in circles, and cause you unnecessary stress. Give yourself permission to be okay with "good enough" if it means you are meeting the expectations of your program and you'll get a done dissertation.

The Other Side

It may take a while, even longer than you anticipated or would like, but eventually you reach the other side. It can feel surreal to hear the "Congratulations, Doctor" for the first time and realize that you've really done it and you're actually finished. You may even go through shellshock because you're not sure what to do next and how to fill all the time you used to devote to writing. So what can you do once you reach the other side?

Celebrate!

Once you finish, stop and take a moment to reflect on what you've done and celebrate your accomplishment. It's easy to think about all the next steps and other things you have to do but you just finished years of hard work. I defended my dissertation on a Wednesday and spent that evening toasting my celebration with friends and family, near and far. My family and I extended my graduation weekend and spent time hanging out over long meals, trips to the casino, and many laughs. I have wonderful friends who threw me an amazing graduation party. Whether it's brunch, a night out, or a party, take a moment to celebrate this major milestone and be proud of yourself for what you just accomplished.

Read for Fun

Before the dissertation process, I loved reading and the ability to get lost in a good book for a few hours or days. However, the dissertation process made reading feel like a chore. Anytime I took a break, the last thing I wanted to do was read anything. Now that I'm on the other side, books are friends again and I'm making great use of my local library card.

Watch TV... without Guilt

After I finished my dissertation, there were many days I spent laying on my couch binge watching shows, just because I could. There were so many shows and documentaries that I had to catch up on or wanted to start watching, and so I did. The nice part was that because I was finished with my dissertation, I could watch a few hours of tv guilt free and not feel like I was procrastinating or avoiding writing, researching, reading, etc. It wasn't necessarily the healthiest thing I did but after years of work, laying around binge watching brought me great pleasure.

Take a Trip

There may be some things that you gave up during the dissertation process or things you kept on the back burner to keep you working toward the end goal. For me, that was taking a trip to South Africa. One way I stayed motivated throughout the process was telling myself that once I was finished, I could finally take myself to South Africa as part of my

celebration. COVID derailed those plans for a bit but I'm excited to make this a reality soon.

Conclusion

Surviving the dissertation process is a challenging yet rewarding journey that requires perseverance, resilience, and a well-balanced approach. This has been a little insight into how I survived my dissertation journey and what worked for me. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of tips and tricks but it does include things I heard and/or did along the way. As you embark on your own journey, take the tips that work for you and leave the rest. Everyone's process is different and you have to do what helps propel you along and gets you to the Phinisd/FinishEdD line.

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DOING MORE WITH LESS

By

ALEXANDRIA BROWN

HIGHER EDUCATION CONTINUES TO BE IMPACTED BY THE NATIONAL DECLINE IN ENROLLMENT. Despite hopeful signs of stabilization post-pandemic, enrollment numbers remain below pre-pandemic records (National Student Clearinghouse, 2023). This issue affects institutions differently, resulting in outcomes such as budget cuts, increased staff turnover, and a greater demand to enrich the college student experience. Staff must plan strategically and intentionally with fewer funds, staff, and capacity. For campus activities in particular, this can be challenging when expected to balance a healthy volume of programs combined with the success we strive to reach with our programming boards. Despite this, there are ways to do more with less without reducing the quality and impact of programs.

Reassess Past Events to Determine Future Programs

Start this process by identifying staple, singular, collaboration, and recurring events. Staple events signify unique campus experiences such as welcome week, homecoming, or an annual spring concert. Campus communities mark their calendars and look forward to participating in these staple events year-to-year. Singular events are programs created based on interest or need, such as mass giveaways, holiday-themed activities, or off-campus experiences. Collaborations are programs designed and executed with campus partners, student clubs or organizations, and external parties. These programs are original events that have the potential to turn into staple events. Recurring events can also be staple events but exist as a series rather than an individual program. Recurring events include programs like film screenings, trivia nights, karaoke, and student showcases.

Once you have identified and categorized these programs, review previous expenses and event assessment data. Use this information to decide which programs are worth continuing based on preferred criteria (e.g., budget, attendance, student buy-in, time of the year, staff support). You may consider prioritizing your staple events because they are marquee programs that heighten a sense of school pride. On the other hand, you may decide to remove or modify these large-scale events due to their substantially higher cost and reallocate funds toward more cost-efficient programming. Original and recurring events may be worth repeating but think about what purpose they served and if they will continue to be meaningful for your campus.

Identify the *Why* & Prioritize the *Must-Haves*

Full-time staff and student planners put intention, time, and effort into creating impactful and memorable events for their campus communities. When asked to do more with less, it may be difficult to imagine cutting back on details or modifying past successful programs. A way to achieve this is to stick to only what is necessary to execute your event without affecting its objective. First, remember the program's initial purpose before scrapping or thinking of ways to reinvent it. The event planning process should start with a *why* or *who*: *Why is the program beneficial for our community? Why is it important to have this activity or this special guest on campus? Who are we doing this for, and why should they attend?* Once established, determine the *must-haves* or essential items that support the event's purpose.

If your office plans an outdoor film screening every year during the first week of school, start by identifying its purpose. This may include providing students with a unique on-campus experience, creating space early in the semester for students to make friends, or promoting your office's services and upcoming events. To make this event happen (at minimum), you need a license for the selected film with a DVD or streaming access, all necessary audiovisual equipment, a table, and any check-in materials. You can include some seating and encourage attendees to bring lawn chairs or blankets to sit in the grass. You can market the event on social media, in a department newsletter, and with a few

flyers around campus. Say you previously provided a concession stand with refreshments, but now it is outside your budget. Invite attendees to come with food or snacks to enjoy during the film. While a concession stand is a nice addition to the event, it does not take away from the film screening, which is the main attraction. With this approach, you maintain a planning mindset that keeps your program within reason and budget.

Leverage Campus and Community Partnerships

Your work contributes to the overall wellness of the campus community, no matter what office or department you function in. Building relationships with others who share goals and work to support students in similar ways is important as part of that larger community. It cultivates opportunities for collaboration, innovation, and greater impact. Be intentional and schedule time to connect with campus partners. Too often, campus areas compete for attendance with duplicate programs (unintentionally) simply because there is no communication between parties. Ask about their existing programs and talk about possibilities of collaborating on similar programs based on content and target audience. For

example, suppose Campus Activities and the LGBTQIA Center have ideas to implement an annual drag show for Pride Month. Combining their resources towards one event can be more cost-effective and less competitive than making two stand-alone programs. This approach allows both areas to exhibit strategic planning and unity in supporting and celebrating students.

Networking with community partners is also a great way to leverage resources and help you achieve more with less. Standing colleges and universities exist within a larger surrounding community. Create space for local businesses and companies to be a part of the magic happening on your campus. Reach out and market existing programs (e.g., welcome week, homecoming) as opportunities to promote their brand's products and services to the student body. There are mutual benefits to this type of partnership that increase their exposure while offsetting program

costs. An example would be partnering with a local ice cream parlor offering 500 scoops at the end-of-the-year block party. They get to interact with students and earn potential customers while you save money paying for ice cream out of pocket. Building and maintaining relationships with campus and community partners is helpful when programming with less.

Professional Development with Less

Securing funding for professional development can be challenging when handling budget cuts and reallocating funds. Opportunities for professional development often take a back seat on the list of priorities to support other operational needs. Here are a few options to consider when accessing and obtaining professional development with less.

You can expand your knowledge and skills through LinkedIn Learning if you have a LinkedIn account. This feature is an online educational platform that offers its users various professional growth opportunities. This resource focuses on development in

FOR EXAMPLE, SUPPOSE CAMPUS ACTIVITIES AND THE LGBTQIA CENTER HAVE IDEAS TO IMPLEMENT AN ANNUAL DRAG SHOW FOR PRIDE MONTH. COMBINING THEIR RESOURCES TOWARDS ONE EVENT CAN BE MORE COST-EFFECTIVE AND LESS COMPETITIVE THAN MAKING TWO STAND-ALONE PROGRAMS.

business, technology-related, and creative skills through expert-led course videos. There are thousands of courses to choose from, including personalized recommendations based on your experience and skill set. This platform tracks completed courses related to your field and interests. Upon completing your desired courses, you can list these and related skills on your LinkedIn profile.

More affordable professional development opportunities may be available on campus if your area has limited conference funding. Check out your school's career center or other offices dedicated to staff enrichment for workshops, training, and certification programs. Your school may also offer reduced tuition for staff interested in enrolling in courses to support continued learning.

Participating in mentorship programs is another way to engage in professional development with less. Mentorship programs function to advance professionals through engagement in meaningful conversations, achieving goals, and a shared vision that supports continuous career development and lifelong learning. Professionals early in their career development (mentees) get matched with seasoned professionals (mentors) who coach, guide and support mentees for some time during their career. Programs like this can be found on your campus, in the community, through professional associations, and online.

Takeaways

Given that we are navigating a challenging time in higher education, we must remain resourceful through reflection, intentionality, community, and development. This can be achieved when you:

1. Look back on previous programs to strategically plan for the future.
2. Remember the importance of your work and who is on the receiving end of your efforts.
3. Collaborate and optimize resources available to you and others.
4. Invest in your development to expand your knowledge and maximize contributions to the field.

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Discreet Action and Support Hotline: Implementing and Assessing Discreet Services for Nontraditional Students

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Higher education institutions cannot strive to impact an increasingly diverse and complex student population without considering how to support nontraditional college students receiving their degrees. MacAri et al. (2006) cite the National Center for Educational Statistics' definition of nontraditional as students who did not enroll in college immediately after high school, work part or full-time, are financially independent, support dependents other than a spouse, identify as single parents, or did not receive a high school diploma (p.285). Kenner and Weinerman (2011) describe how a major cause of nontraditional student attrition in higher education is an unsuccessful integration into their collegiate environment. Assuming practices and programs that are successful in increasing the retention of traditional undergraduate students apply to nontraditional students neglects the unique learning styles and life experiences that maximize nontraditional student success.

The developmental needs of nontraditional students have been understudied by higher education scholars, which has led to a continual lack of institutional efforts to engage with this population academically and programmatically. Wyatt (2011) describes this population as "prepackaged," which alludes to their increased understanding of their values, responsibilities, and learning styles. When the nontraditional student's nuanced understanding of themselves is framed as an outlier requiring correction, this population becomes the recipient of inadequate support services that unintentionally aim to remove the wealth of knowledge this population brings into the space. Consequently, a cycle is created where nontraditional students who seek higher education to impact their life trajectories are subjected to institutions that further marginalize this population.

Literature Review

In their research on nontraditional students' success and retention, Wyatt (2011) further stresses the importance of studying nontraditional students' epistemology and ways of learning. Higher education has utilized Knowles and team's (2005) Adult Learning Theory to guide interactions with nontraditional students and the andragogical model of learning utilized is a, "system of alternative sets of assumptions, a transactional model that speaks to those characteristics of the learning situation" (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 72). The andragogical model challenges power dynamics by encouraging the learner to take increasing responsibility for their learning and foundational to the Adult Learning Theory are several assumptions that explore how adults bring their non-collegiate experiences into their institution:

- 1. The need to know.** Adults must understand the rationale behind learning something before they invest their energy into the process. Allowing them to recognize the gap between their current situation and where they desire to be in the future is crucial to motivating an improvement in their current position.
- 2. The learners' self-concept.** Adults hold themselves responsible for their own decisions, which translates into a desire to be seen as self-sufficient. Feeling like someone else's will is being forced on them can discourage learning from occurring.
- 3. The role of the learners' experiences.** Adult learners bring a breadth and depth of experiences into the educational spaces in comparison to younger students. If these experiences are neglected, adult learners can feel personally rejected from the spaces.

4. Readiness to learn. Adult learners need knowledge to cope with their life experiences. Aligning the timing of learning with the proper developmental stage ensures the information is appropriate and relevant to their current experiences.

5. Orientation to learning. Adults can be described as life-centered learners as they are motivated to learn based on how convinced they are that their learning will be functional in their current lives.

6. Motivation. Adults are most responsive to intrinsic motivators like increased self-esteem and quality of life, which both serve as internal pressures to achieve.

While this theory approaches adult learning based on age-based experiences, this paper extends its scope to also include the nuanced experiences of nontraditional students as a source of knowledge. This paper additionally incorporates nontraditional students into the practical recommendations Kiely et al. (2004) provide to invite adult learners into the creation of services tailored specifically for them. Practitioners should prioritize inquiring about the experiences of this population and integrating them into their support systems is essential so that scaffolding can occur. Incorporating this knowledge also lessens the possibility of nontraditional students feeling less prepared than their traditional counterparts. Additionally, there must be an emphasis on addressing, “constraints that are situational (cost, time, life situation) or dispositional (beliefs, attitudes, confidence), as well as institutional norms, including inadequate support services, staff, computer access, and parking” (Kiely et al., 2004, p. 21). Allowing nontraditional students to categorize their barriers promotes an institutional response that includes student opinions.

The promotion of autonomy, as demonstrated in Adult Learning Theory, is crucial for this population to gain insight into their current state and what skillsets they either possess or need to develop to achieve a new mindset. For instance, for a nontraditional student who has concerns about the stigma surrounding the utilization of support services, simply providing them with the resources they need could be a response to their situational concern but does not address their dispositional concern. Not addressing the latter issue could be a barrier to this student accepting the resources and further distance them from the institution as they could view the office as not understanding their specific need.

Conceptualizing the Discreet Action and Support Hotline (D.A.S.H)

The Discreet Action and Support Hotline (D.A.S.H) is a grant-funded program meant to run continuously throughout the school year and has specific systems in place to intentionally provide discreet services to adult learners experiencing urgent situations, such as food insecurity, mental health crisis, the need for toiletries, and more. The following section will outline how students can engage with the D.A.S.H:

- Students anonymously contact the D.A.S.H. and speak with a first responder who utilizes essential questions to ensure this is not an emergency.
- The hotline operator creates a case within their system and assigns students with a randomized identification number and login information to access their resource portal.
- Students will explain their situation and the hotline operator will explore resources.
- One method this program utilizes to deliver assistance to this population is storage lockers located across campus, which serve to discreetly deliver supplies to students in plain packaging.

- If students are solely seeking resources to consider, they may retrieve the information or materials from a storage locker location, and the case will be closed. If students are seeking support services, they will organize the services needed together.

- If services require the students to share their identity, the hotline operator will explain options to the student and determine if they want to remain anonymous.

- Support services will be provided depending on the student’s privacy decision and there is a 24-hour turnaround on services, depending on the severity of the issue.

- After the support services are provided, Wellness Ambassadors, who are students working within Student Health Services, assess the effectiveness of the services and identify any needs moving forward.

The success of this program is contingent upon appropriate staffing and resource allocation within the D.A.S.H Team. The hotline will be staffed by two, full-time emergency responders, offering services during business hours and after-hours assistance. The D.A.S.H Team will also include four, full-time drivers for various services such as the purchasing and delivery of supplies to the D.A.S.H lockers, among other tasks. Both emergency responders and drivers will be on a rotation schedule to prevent burnout. In addition, there will be four to six interns who volunteer 5-15 hours a week and serve as drivers, responders, or ambassadors depending on the needs at the time. All D.A.S.H staff, including interns, will undergo onboarding and training sessions including topics such as FERPA, Green Zone, Safe Zone, and Mental Health First Aid.

Learning Outcomes

As nontraditional students utilize the services associated hotline, the program emphasizes their personal development while simultaneously providing this population with resources that promote their success and retention. After interacting with the hotline staff, these students should be able to develop a personal understanding of the support they require to achieve holistic wellness, demonstrate an increased awareness of the support available on campus, and be equipped with the language needed to advocate for themselves.

Assessing the Discreet Action and Support Hotline Population and Sample

The Discreet Action and Support Hotline is designed to target nontraditional students on college campuses and regardless of the level of engagement with the hotline, all participants will receive the opportunity to assess the program as receiving feedback on all levels of the program is crucial. Additionally, the staff members responsible for the execution of this program will have the opportunity to internally evaluate the program, its structure, and the collaborations with external partners.

Setting

After participants connect with the Discreet Action and Support Hotline, the online platform where they receive information about coordinated services utilizes their identification number to disseminate an online survey link to their inbox. Each individualized survey exists within an external website that collects the data and sends the results back to the D.A.S.H staff.

Method of Analysis
Given the discreet nature of the Discreet Action and Support Hotline, the methods utilized in the assessment plan must prioritize the anonymity of the participants. In creating anonymous assessments, Henning & Roberts (2016) stress the importance

of collecting demographic information within the initial assessment as it becomes difficult to collect post-assessment. This difficulty is partially addressed by assigning each participant an identification number that allows for participants to be contacted about the services they received. In assessing nontraditional students' experience with said services, the design focuses on combining quantitative data focused on accessibility with qualitative data focused on the impact of the services on the students' trajectory in school. The quantitative data's focus on the hotline itself, as opposed to the nontraditional students' development, is an intentional choice that allows this population to qualitatively disclose what they feel comfortable sharing instead of being forced to define their personal experiences through nominal, ordinal, interval, or ratio scales. An additional internal evaluation is needed to consider the functionality of the hotline including the partnerships with campus partners as well as the feasibility of the current staffing and the requested services.

Anticipated Problems

In the implementation of the hotline, there are some limitations in the assessment and evaluation portion of the program. These are broken down into three questions. Firstly, *will students engaging with the services complete the survey?* As mentioned before, it is known that students engaging with the D.A.S.H. may carry biases of needing, seeking, and accepting help. In this recognition, it is understood that students may just want to gather the resources they need and cut ties with the program. The second limitation anticipated is, *how accessible or user-friendly is the data collection software?* In recognition of catering to an adult learner population, it is understood that some data-collection platforms or software are not very accessible or user-friendly for some participants. Lastly, there is an anticipated limitation on *how much data can be collected without compromising the identity or discretion of the students?* The discreet nature of these services limits the amount of information that can be collected as pieces of students' stories collected in the initial intake or the post-assessment could identify participants.

Discreet Action and Support Hotline Assessment & Evaluation

The data collection will happen in two different assessments: one geared toward students, and the other one for D.A.S.H employees and interns.

Student Survey

Qualitative – Student Impact (External)

1. How did the Discreet Action and Support Hotline impact your student experience at this institution?

Quantitative – Student Reach (External)

2. How many times did you utilize the D.A.S.H Hotline in the current semester (this includes D.A.S.H Lockers)?
 - a. 1-2 times
 - b. 2-3 times
 - c. 3-4 times
 - d. 5+ times

Qualitative – Staffing Review (Internal)

3. How has the staffing of the D.A.S.H. impacted your ability to complete your assigned responsibilities?

Quantitative – Staffing Review (Internal)

1. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being Strongly Dissatisfied, and 5 being Strongly Satisfied), please rank our collaboration with each campus partner.

Assessment Implications and Future Direction

Strategies to share students' experiences after interacting with the Discreet Action and Support Hotline will differ depending on the target audience. Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook could be effective in sharing student narratives to demonstrate how prospective students could benefit from our program. When considering strategies for faculty and staff, utilizing spaces such as staff meetings and reports on a departmental, divisional, and institutional level will allow for the formal presentation of the hotline's impact.

Various campus partners collaborating with the Discreet Action and Support Hotline would also be interested in the assessment data.

In future iterations of the program, the D.A.S.H would change its primary financial source from grant funding and alumni donations to institutional funding which allows for the implementation of additional support such as creating case manager positions to provide continued support to nontraditional students. With changes that focus on the allocation of resources, opportunities to aid nontraditional students in understanding the support they need to achieve holistic wellness, increasing their awareness of campus support, and equipping them with the necessary language to advocate for themselves, the Discreet Action and Support Hotline is an opportunity for institutions to discreetly support nontraditional students. The future of higher education must begin to develop and implement these initiatives as they are vital to reintroducing nontraditional students to their institution and fostering a supportive environment that encourages personal and social development with the full recognition of how their individualized experiences have positioned them for collegiate success.

ADULT LEARNERS BRING A BREADTH AND DEPTH OF EXPERIENCES INTO THE EDUCATIONAL SPACES IN COMPARISON TO YOUNGER STUDENTS. IF THESE EXPERIENCES ARE NEGLECTED, THEY CAN FEEL PERSONALLY REJECTED...

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Practice for supervising professional staff members

In the world of campus activities, mid-level and upper management are tasked with supervision responsibilities. Oftentimes, this responsibility comes with little to no actual training or guidance on what it means to be a supervisor. To know how to advise students, execute programs, and manage events is one skillset, but to supervise others in the course of these actions is another. In order to understand how to be an effective supervisor, you must first understand yourself, and then leverage what you discover about yourself in order to build a culture of trust, advocacy, and well-being for those you supervise.

TRUST

Effective supervisors not only know how to do the work and how to coach and guide others, but they also know how to build trust and confidence amongst people along the way. In terms of supervision, trust is a currency that supervisors have to earn and expend in the process of working with others. But, in order to have a team of professionals and paraprofessionals trust you as supervisor, you

have to be able to learn to trust yourself. That trusting of yourself comes through learning yourself on another level and identifying your personal values and strengths and how you can use those to connect and find common ground. This also means that there is no “cookie-cutter” recipe to find that common ground and build trust, but through authenticity, transparency, and consistency, true trusting work relationships can be established. Supervisors must also grapple with a realization that trust in supervision can be easier to break than it is to build. Without building trust, the ability for staff members to learn and grow and the department’s efficiency will inevitably be capped.

ADVOCACY

The best supervisors learn the who, what, when, where, and why of advocacy. Obviously, you are advocating for things related to the betterment of those you supervise. Professional advocacy means that you are willing to speak and/or interject on behalf of making the work of those you supervise better. It does not always mean that you are advocating because you all are always in total agreement, but it means that you recognize that those you supervise

have a perspective that is worth validating and the work they do or are able to do brings value to the organization. Advocacy can be assisting in and supporting new program proposals or initiatives or it could be working to provide them with the necessary resources to do their work better or with more efficiency.

In terms of approach, personal advocacy can look similar to professional advocacy. However, the why can be completely different. You can support something because either you or your supervisee(s) can have a higher quality of life. Personal advocacy can be initiating opportunities for additional compensation, working to improve hybrid/remote scheduling, or supporting initiatives that may not be directly related to the department, but allow the employee to pursue personal goals or passion projects in the workplace.

Practice for supervising student staff

Higher education is not just about what a student can learn from textbooks or from the classroom; it is a holistic experience that involves academic growth, personal development, and the cultivation of various life skills. Campus activities play a pivotal role in shaping a student's journey through higher education by providing them with memorable moments, and opportunities to learn, engage, and develop as students outside of the confines of the classroom. However, developing staff in campus activities requires a structured supervision framework that ensures the safety, learning outcomes, and overall development of the students involved.

The Importance of Campus Activities

Campus activities encompass a wide range of extracurricular and co-curricular initiatives, including clubs/organizations such as a programming board. These activities serve as valuable complements to formal education, fostering a well-rounded development of students. They help students develop critical skills such as leadership, teamwork, communication, time management, and problem-solving, which are vital for success in both academic and post-graduation.

The Role of Supervision

We are not experts by any means, but we've learned over the years that supervision takes practice and there's not an all-in-one approach to supervising. Supervising in campus activities is not just about overseeing events and initiatives; it is about creating a working environment where students feel valued, can explore their interests, grow as leaders, create new ideas, and challenge themselves in a setting where they feel safe. Effective supervision achieves this by:

1. Ensuring Safety: Creating safe spaces for our students to allow their voices to be heard is important, especially in today's society. The safety of students should be paramount in any campus activity. Alongside safe spaces is the need for supervisors to assess potential risks, implement safety protocols, and be prepared to respond to emergencies.

2. Guidance and Mentorship: As supervisors, we often wear many hats. As seasoned supervisors in the field helping students navigate challenges and helping them become more informed in their decision-making creates an environment for the student to be mentored and given proper guidance.

3. Learning Objectives: Supervision ensures that each activity aligns with clear learning objectives. Whether it's painting, music, indoor/outdoor, or holiday events there should be intended outcomes that contribute to the student's growth.

4. Inclusivity: Campus activities should be inclusive and accessible to all students. Supervisors should work to create an environment where diversity is celebrated and where every student feels valued and included.

5. Conflict Resolution: In any collaborative setting, conflicts can arise. Supervisors play a role in mediating conflicts, teaching students how to resolve differences constructively, and promoting harmonious teamwork.

7. Evaluation and Improvement: Supervisors play a role in assessing the effectiveness of campus activities. Constructive feedback from supervisors helps students refine their approach, fostering a culture of continuous improvement. NACA competencies is a great resource to help create and develop assessment questions to see if students are growing from their experience.

Empowering Student Leadership

To achieve effective supervision doesn't mean you have to be in complete control of every aspect; rather, it involves empowering student leaders to take ownership and make decisions. Most of us have graduated with not one multiple degree. When students take the lead, they develop a sense of responsibility, ownership, and accountability for the success of their initiatives. Supervisors are there to guide, support, and provide a "safety net", allowing students to learn from both their successes and failures.

Conclusion

Supervision in campus activities within higher education is an art that involves patience and a supervisor having the understanding of guidance and autonomy. A well-structured supervision framework ensures that students have the opportunity to explore, learn, and grow in a safe and enriching environment. Consider what your framework is when going into a new semester or if you are having problems during a semester. Also remember that campus activities enhance students' academic experiences and contribute to their personal and professional development, preparing them to be well-rounded and capable individuals in the ever-evolving world beyond the classroom. Our job matters and is deeply important to higher education!

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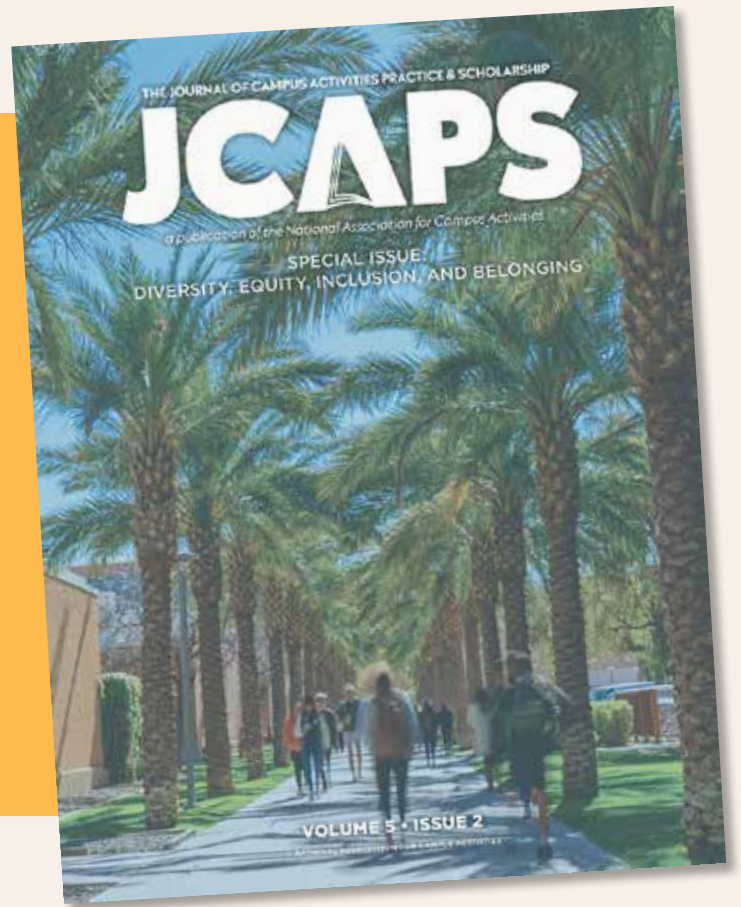


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