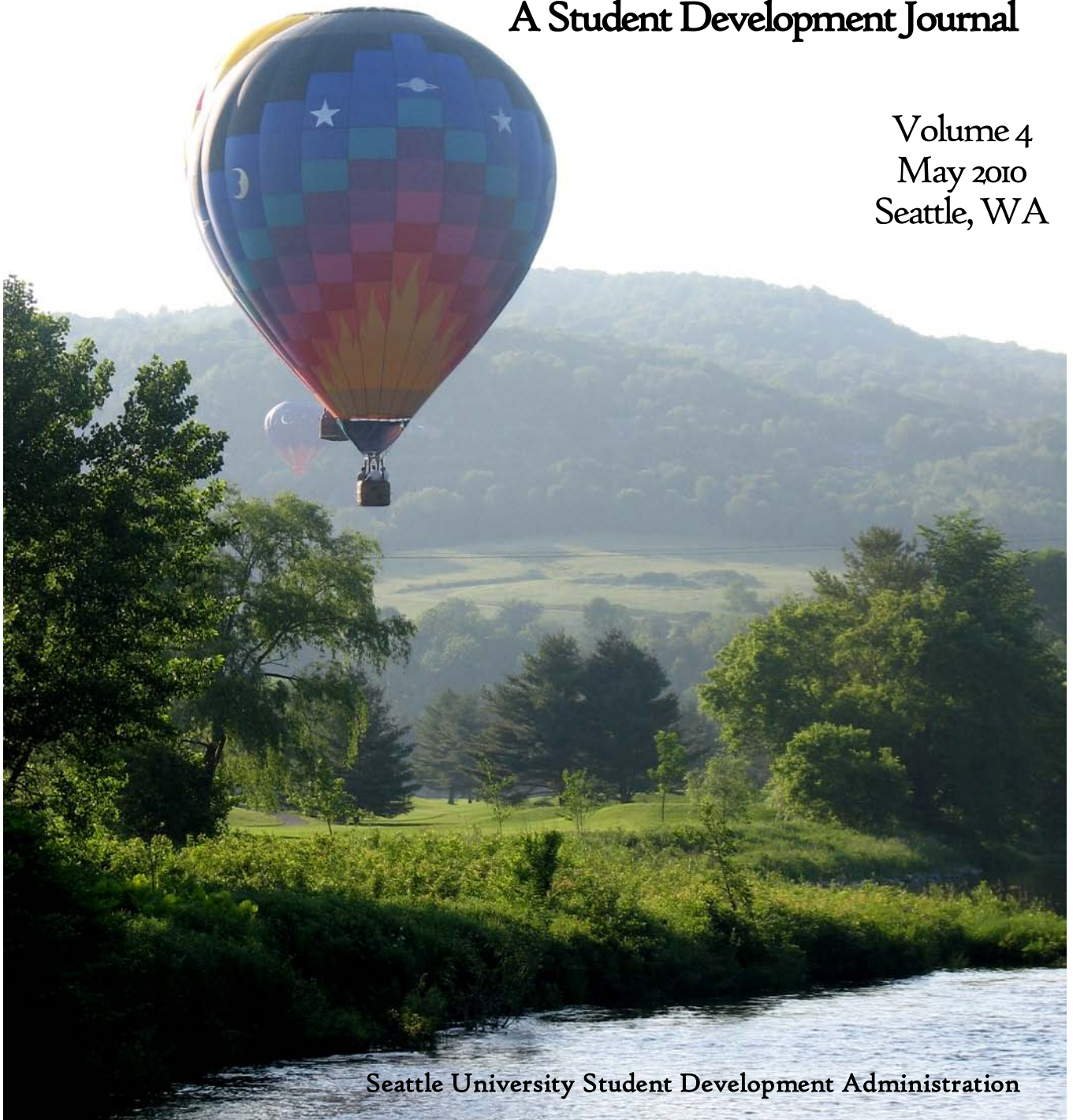


# *Magis*

A Student Development Journal

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Seattle University Student Development Administration

The mission of *Magis: A Journal of Student Development*, published by students in the Student Development Administration Program at Seattle University, is to create the premier forum in Jesuit higher education for dialogue, committed to academic excellence and integrity, on the practice of student affairs as inspired by the long tradition of Jesuit Catholic education, and directed toward creating a just and humane world through quality service in education.

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## EDITOR ' S NOTE

“Pursue some path, however narrow and crooked, in which you can walk with love and reverence.”

- Henry David Thoreau

As student affairs professionals, we are both walking in our own paths and also walking with students along theirs. Particularly as budding professionals, we are still carving out our personal paths, many of us following in the footsteps of a mentor, or delicately treading towards new horizons. A Jesuit education prepares us well for this journey: teaching us to be reflective, to discern, to live into our lives, and to seek the *Magis*, or the more. We walk with love along our paths, and with a deep respect for the process of finding one's own path to follow.

In walking with students, we have the awesome responsibility to challenge and support, to ask the tough questions that may lead students to find a path that is better suited for them, to help them gain the confidence to choose their own paths, and to sometimes walk with them.

Within this edition of *Magis: A Student Development Journal*, we are proud to bring you articles, narratives, opinions, and reflections about these pathways, both as they relate to the paths our authors have walked, and those that will help us walk more confidently with our students. Whether the pieces inside this edition resonate with you or challenge you, they all keep us moving on our path of seeking the *Magis*.

- Kelly Benkert & Luci Masredjian



MAGIS

# ARTICLES

# Navigating a Path in Higher Education: A Chicano's Narrative of Professional Meaning

Jacob Diaz, Ed.D.

*A Senior Student Affairs Officer reflects on his childhood and the moments that have influenced his philosophy of practice. Viewing his life through a social justice lens, the author's reflections draw out moments of feeling different as a result of his race and socio-economic status. These moments, coupled with the meaning made from his college experiences, has built the framework through which he practices.*

“The college experience can be delightful to some and burdensome to others. In my case, the college experience has been a constant struggle to adapt and survive in academic environments, while at the same time, longing for a return to my past; to the community I once called *home*” (Cruz, 2002, p. 6).

My career in higher education has been very much like a ship navigating a path to a destination that cannot be readily seen in the distance of the horizon. I have aspired to be a senior student affairs officer since the time I was an undergraduate transfer student at the University of California, Santa Barbara. It took me 7 years to complete my Bachelor's degree and I am proud of this accomplishment because there were many moments prior where I had given up on the prospect of ever going to college. I did not think it was for me. I really struggled in high school. I was barely passing classes. It was not for lack of interest but I repeatedly earned poor grades and over time, I grew more and more convinced that I wasn't smart, or at least smart enough to go to college. My philosophy of education and approach to professional life has been shaped along the way by many different experiences, beginning with the time I first set foot inside of a school. I will share a couple of these memories with you and offer my reflections upon what they have taught me and how they inform how I approach my work today.

I am new to the role of senior student affairs officer and find that it teaches me a lot about myself and about where I still have much work left to do. While I don't find this comfortable,

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most days I am grateful because I know that the dissonance we speak of in student development theory is when I find myself learning the most. Most important to me is that I am often reminded of why I have chosen this profession as a means for helping others navigate college life. I intend what follows to be a personal narrative; sharing with you how I have come to make sense of how a first generation, transfer, Chicano college student, from a middle class neighborhood in Southeast San Diego, California navigated a path seeking his dream of serving as a Senior Student Affairs Officer.

### **Becoming Mexican . . . American . . . Chicano in School**

I recall the moment where I felt different like it was yesterday. I was five years old and attending school for the first time. Brooklyn Elementary School was located on 33rd Street in San Diego, California. My mother and father, recently married, had moved to San Diego no more than three or four years prior. I was excited and nervous about school. The buildings seemed big and the playground so vast. I could not fathom finding my way around this overwhelming place. I liked kindergarten because we played a lot and I learned many new things.

On one fall day, the teacher had each student pair up with someone. My partner had blonde hair and deep blue eyes. The teacher informed us that we were going to be drawing ourselves on that day and that our partner would be responsible for tracing the outline of our body onto a large sheet of paper. I was excited because I loved to draw. The teacher then directed us to go to the pile of construction paper she had laid out and pick the color that matched our skin. This would be no problem for me, “I am brown,” I recall thinking. Excitedly, my partner and I walked hurriedly over to the pile and anxiously searched for our piece of paper. I thumbed through every piece of paper and could not find one that matched my skin. There was beige, crème, dark brown, light brown, and even a sandy color, but none which represented my skin color.

After a few minutes, I became frustrated. My partner had an equally difficult time finding the shade of paper that matched her skin tone. She was not White, like a sheet of paper, but almost a pink/crème color. Therefore, we both approached the teacher and I recall saying, “I can’t find paper that looks like me.” My partner chimed in and said, “Yeah, me too.” The teacher, well meaning, replied, “Well, just get a piece that is close enough to your skin color; it doesn’t matter.”



My brow furrows even today as I think about the expression I had on my face then. I just did not understand. “Close enough? What does that mean?” I remember turning around and seeing my classmates all seemingly happy with the color of their paper. I, on the contrary, was not. I had a difficult time understanding why the teacher could not meet my needs. I went along with the activity, the whole time cajoling my classmates and telling anyone that would listen about the fact that their paper was not the same color as their skin. I remember saying, “Look, you’re not yellow, you’re brown and we should have paper that looks like us!” Even the White people in the room were not white like the paper. They ranged from pink to light brown, but of course, they were all lumped into the “white” category. My classmates of color and I were lumped into brown and black groups. “Close enough,” did not make sense then, and I recall it being the first time that I felt out of place. It was as if none of whom I was mattered. I felt different and mistakenly undervalued.

My identity as a brown person meant more than the color of my skin at that time and still does today. It represents the history of my people—the soil that my grandmother and her sisters kneaded each day with their bare hands while growing up. This was the first time I felt I had to stand up for my Mexican culture.

Throughout my time in school, I learned many lessons that have shaped the way I have come to view myself as a human being. These lessons, separate from math and social studies, taught me about life. It was in school that I learned that I could succeed and fail all in the same day. My time in elementary school taught me my first lesson about class difference and access. It was the first time that I felt out of place in terms of finances and where some lingering doubts about my own academic worthiness began to seep in.

### **In Retrospect**

As my time in student development work has passed, I am continually reminded of the importance of the quality of each interaction I have with students. As an educator, I have the opportunity to leave an imprint upon the experience of college students and for this I am especially grateful. I am also clear that my calling to this work has much to do with my motivation for not re-creating social inequities on the campus I serve. Deep down, I want each and every student to feel included, on their terms. In my role I have the responsibility of doing my part to achieve this aspiration.

### Being a Fifth Grader

As a student in the fifth grade, I remember the first time that I encountered privilege, or at least an encounter with people who were better dressed, always had cool pens and pencils, and always had the cleanest and coolest pair of shoes. My mother, a huge advocate for education, discovered while I was attending our local neighborhood school, that across town they were starting up a magnet school program. She asked me if I would like to try out this new school and I figured that my Mom knew best. I felt sadness in leaving my friends, but I was also very curious about what was on the other side.

The bus picked me up on a street corner within earshot of my house. As I got on the bus, I noticed that everyone looked similar to me; we were brown, black, and even yellow. My conceptions of race were slowly forming at this time. It made me comfortable, knowing that we would all face this new place together. As we steadily picked up more and more kids, I felt the excitement grow within me. We traveled through many different neighborhoods and even went on the freeway; we were going somewhere far and we all had hopes that it was somewhere better.

As the bus driver took the exit from the freeway, I immediately noticed that the homes were bigger than I had ever seen in person. The lawns were neatly trimmed, the streets were clean, and no graffiti was on the walls. I was shocked. I noticed as we pulled up close to the curb that the school did not even have a fence around it. “Wow! I thought to myself, they must really trust these kids.” There were no fences, no barriers; just plain freedom. As we all gathered our things and exited the bus, I saw how the other kids seemed to be staring at us—this bus of outsiders entering their world. The parents of these children drove away in their shiny cars after giving their son or daughter a peck on the cheek and shooting a sobering glare in our direction. I felt like an intruder, an outsider, an unwelcome guest into this house. Nonetheless, I took a deep breath, and said to myself, “We will see what they are like during recess.” After all, any school worth its salt, in my head, had to have a kickball game going on. As we entered this beautiful school, we walked to our separate grades and classrooms.

I was in the fifth grade, so I went to Mrs. Altman’s class. She was an amazing teacher and became a close friend. I went to her class and she greeted me with a hug and a peck on the cheek. I think she could see the fear in my eyes and wanted to shield me from the curious stares that the other kids were sending my way. She then told me how her husband, the principal at my

former school, had told her all about me and that she was excited to have me there. I felt wanted and it was comforting to know that she was on my side. I took my seat and began to talk to my fellow students —foreigners in my world. They were nice; I met Adam, Mark, David, and Jesus, who was like me. He was Mexican, and from a similar neighborhood as I, so we hit it off quickly. I recall feeling lonely among new classmates of mine. The day went on and things were great. The classrooms were even air-conditioned!

Recess, the great equalizer, came and I felt at home on the field of play. These people were not any better than I was and I felt proud of that. My team won the kickball game by a huge margin. I think I had a few homeruns in that one. I recall feeling like the one needing to prove to them that I belonged there right alongside their brand new Nikes, big allowances, and parents with the BMWs. I was okay, but I wonder why I always felt like an outsider? Deep down, I think I knew that I did not belong there. I had my place in the world and it was back in southeast San Diego – I was an outsider within.

Being a fifth-grader at a school like Grant Elementary was great in many ways and difficult in some. I never felt like I quite fit, but I also never felt entirely like an outsider. I remember having access to so much more at this new school than I did before. The entire environment felt different, almost like a new culture. During lunchtime, the amount of children on the “free lunch” program stood out even more because there were so many fewer than my former school.

At that time, computers were the innovation in schools, and my new school had quite a few of them for us to use, whereas at my former school, I never even saw a video tape player or computer. The financial resources at this new school were amazing. If I needed a pencil, there was a cup filled with fresh new ones on the desk. If I needed to use the bathroom, I could go anytime as long as I asked the teacher. It seemed like there was a new ball to play with every couple of weeks. This place was so unlike my former school. I could get used to this, I thought.

Each day, us “magnet” kids would get on the bus at 2:40pm and snooze off and on as the one and-a-half hour bus ride lingered on. One of the many moments I will never forget was watching the very marked physical transitions from my new school to my neighborhood. We traveled from the manicured lawns of North Park through the industrial section of town, by several “older” neighborhoods, and then finally stopped at my neighborhood, Lomita Village, which means village on a small hill. It was a beautiful neighborhood, I thought, but so drastically

different from where I went to school each day. I was always glad to get home and be where I felt comfortable.

The many subtle differences washed over me throughout the course of my time there. The stark class differences and access to resources were very evident to me. Even the people seemed different in so many ways, I made new friends there and some always seemed to have five dollars to spend on lunch, which amazed me. Each morning, either my Mom would pack me a sandwich, chips, and a small plastic cup of juice, or when she wanted to surprise me, she would reach into her wallet and give me seventy-five cents to buy lunch. I always liked eating lunch at school because then I could be like the other kids and not be made fun of because of my lunch.

These differences stand out so much more for me now than they did then. Back then, I trusted that this was a place that would afford me a better education, yet, when I graduated from the sixth grade and the option to attend the magnet junior high school presented itself, I hurriedly turned it down. I pleaded with my Mom to let me go to Keiller Middle School because I was tired of riding the bus each day. Upon reflection, I think I wanted to be with friends from my neighborhood. I did not want to feel out of place any longer.

### **In Retrospect**

A sense of place and a sense that one matters is critically important for college students. As a Senior Student Affairs Officer I often think about this when working with colleagues on developing an initiative or making a critical decision about a policy that impacts campus life. Assisting students in finding what gives them purpose in their lives brings me quite a bit of joy in my job. Witnessing success and knowing that we may have had a part in it gives me energy and renewed purpose each day. I often think of my grandparents; and in particular, my grandmother Consuelo. She believed strongly in the value of education, though she only had an 8<sup>th</sup> grade education. Many times she would encourage me to continue working hard in school, reminding me that I had a responsibility to make the most of the privilege to attend college. I always came away humbled after speaking with her on the phone. Although she has passed on, she is often on my shoulder as I work through difficult issues or find myself faced with what appears to be a monumental task. For her I am very thankful. She reminds me that I have a place.

### **Deciding to go to College**

Most of the people I saw at the community college had brown skin like me. I did not feel racially out of place, just somewhat lost as a student. I was establishing a student identity and

actively seeking people who were just as lost as I was. There were also “grown-ups,” people with children and other responsibilities that I did not have. I liked being in class with these elders because they would always keep me on task. They did not have the luxury of wasting time or giving anything less than their best. I, on the other hand, was happy working full time as a construction inspector. For the first time in my life, I had a steady paycheck, money in my pocket and dreams of a fancy car and a big house. Academically, I had already survived two years of floundering in community college. I was lost as a student and searching for meaning where I would find none. I would enroll in five courses and drop three. The next semester would come about and I would again enroll in five courses and drop two or three. Inevitably, I would either fail one course or barely pass those I had committed myself to finishing.

I simply did not know what I wanted to do. I figured out the process of enrolling in college on my own, even course selection and choice of major—all without one bit of advice from a counselor. I thought that I had to do it on my own. After all, I was an adult right? I do not think I even knew the right questions to ask. This was the most disconcerting part of my experience. I had many questions but wasn't quite sure who to ask. All the while, I was trying to find the answers to my questions in the many different courses that I would attempt.

It was during my second year that I discovered it was possible to transfer to a university. Throughout the previous two years, I had not known that this was possible for me. The instant I discovered this, my energy was renewed. I was going to work as hard as possible over the next two years so that I could transfer to a university. Once I set my heart on this goal, everything else seemed to melt away.

It was during those first two years of community college that I also moved out of my parents' house. Contrary to their desires, I moved into an apartment in the same neighborhood, no more than a five-minute drive away. It lasted about six months before I grew frustrated with the situation. I found that I had no money, little time for myself and many bills. With my new goal, I could not think of a way to go to school full-time while still working the same hours. I did not know if I would succeed, but I had to try. I decided to enroll in school full-time and work any hours that I could in order to make ends meet. At least then I had a plan. My next step was to make it happen.

The first step was to move back home. I first asked my Father and then my Mother. Both listened to me with patience and love as I shared my new direction in life. When I finished

speaking with my Father, he said to me, “Jake, you can come live here in the house, but there will be two conditions. First, you will work. Second, you will go to school.” At first, I bristled at these conditions since I had already tasted the freedom of apartment living. I was going to have to get used to living in my parents’ home again. Deep down inside however, I was smiling because his conditions were exactly what I planned to do.

### **Southwestern Community College**

“Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems, [el mestizo] undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war . . . The coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference causes *un choque*, a cultural collision” (Anzaldua, 1999, p. 100).

With new-found energy, I threw myself into my studies. I poured over many college catalogues, dreaming of the day that I would walk the sidewalks of these fabled campuses. I dreamt of going to UC Berkeley, Harvard, Yale, and many other schools. It was as if a completely new world was open to me. It was as if I had a second chance to make things right. Some of my friends referred to Southwestern Community College as “thirteenth grade.” I never agreed with this publicly, but sometimes found myself ashamed of the fact that I was there and that this was all I had left. I needed to succeed at this or else.

One day, I decided to take an African American History course with Professor Stanley James. I will never forget him for as long as I live. Professor James would be the first person of color I knew who held a doctorate degree. He was short in stature and small in build but large in heart and in voice. He walked the halls of Southwestern Community College as if he owned the place. He was proud, and I wanted to have his confidence.

In our first class, I watched and listened intently as he gazed over the class and challenged each of us to believe that we too could go to a four-year university. He also shared that it would take a lot of work and dedication and that he was going to make us work in his class. I was amazed at his confidence and authentic way of being. “Someday,” I said to myself, “I am going to be just like him.”

I left his first class feeling uplifted and inspired. Maybe if I worked hard enough, I could achieve a doctorate someday. After completing the assigned readings for his course, I returned the next week for another round of intense discussion and soul searching. As I walked into the course, I noticed that there were a few empty seats, not many, but a few more than the week

before. As students, we had the option of dropping any class by a certain deadline. Professor James assigned a lot of reading, more than I had ever had, so in some ways it did not surprise me that there would be fewer students left. I wondered if I could keep up with all of the reading and his exams. I thought I would try my best and see what happened.

In class that day, Professor James spoke about the “archives” as a place where we as students could find out more about our lives. Specifically, he meant our own histories, not the ones taught to us by one or two perspectives. This was the first time that I seriously reflected upon the idea that the history I was taught in school was somehow incomplete. Could it be true? Had I been duped this whole time? I began to wonder where the story of my people, Mexicans, was held.

Professor James planted a seed in me that I have never forgotten. In one lecture, he pointed at each of us and said, “Each of you can go to a university and succeed if you work hard and remain determined. There are people in these universities who believe that people like you do not belong there. Do not let them get in your way!” I felt energized by Professor James’ words. I wondered where and when someone would attempt to derail me from my goal. Little did I know that it would come sooner rather than later.

Professor James inspired me each week with his candor and analysis of racism in the United States. I was excited to be learning about the history of marginalized people. I was excited to learn about people like me, whom had survived the racist system and made a life for themselves in spite of oppression. It was then that I committed myself to someday sharing similar messages with students. He did it, so just maybe I could too.

Being a student at Southwestern College was an important experience in my life. When life challenges become too difficult for me, I catch myself reflecting upon those four years. It was there that I saw myself as a student in control of his education rather than solely as a recipient.

### **Concluding Reflections**

“Beginning with a cohort of 100 students, only 55 Chicanos . . . will graduate from high school, compared with 83 White students and 72 Blacks. Of the 100, only 22 Chicanos . . . will enroll in an institution of higher education, compared with 38 Whites and 29 Blacks. Only seven Chicanos . . . out of 100 will complete college, compared with 23 Whites and 12 Blacks” (de los Santos as cited in Aguirre & Martinez, 1993, p.4).

The statistic above has proven to be the “why” behind my work to this day. Throughout my professional career I have discovered that I am deeply interested in what motivates educators’ decisions in the classroom or office. On another level, I was interested in understanding how race may affect their decisions. As a Chicano working in higher education I have come to intimately understand the socializing nature of what I was experiencing in college. In this context, as hooks (1996) pointed out, racism classism, sexism, and class elitism shape the structure of classrooms creating a lived reality of insider versus outsider that is predetermined. As I progressed in my graduate studies, the less and less I saw people of color, and the more I found myself searching for meaning from my experiences and finding few sources as a part of my curriculum.

To deny that higher education dwells within a larger system of oppression is unacceptable. To not engage this system through rigorous questioning leading to change is intolerable. To continue to perpetuate a context of elitism by passively participating is tantamount to maintaining one’s own privileged position within the institution. Knowing this keeps me grounded and reminds me that, as a student development educator, I must keep learning and allow my heart and intellect to be humbled by each day that I am fortunate enough to serve on my campus. Students are the purpose for my journey through higher education. Accompanying them on their journey is a place of honor and much responsibility.



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“Reflecting on the path  
we have chosen  
gives us far more  
than the destination itself  
ever will”

Britany Cashatt '11

# Diversity and Academic Freedom: A History of Legal Cases, Current Trends, and Implications for Student Affairs

Krystle Cobian

*As controversies regarding free speech on college campuses continue to rise, it is important for student affairs professionals to gain a stronger understanding of the legal complexities of addressing diversity. Diversity programs and curriculum will be explored in the context of academic freedom and federal law. An overview of pertinent legal cases addressing diversity, trends and current events shaping the ways in which diversity is addressed, and implications will be discussed. Good practices for avoiding violations of free speech while maintaining a strong support for diversity are offered.*

Issues of diversity at higher education institutions in the United States are viewed as a careful tightrope walk. They are valued and encouraged, yet met with debate and controversy when teetering over the boundary of academic freedom. Celebrating diversity, being inclusive, and providing a safe and respectful atmosphere for all students on a university campus have become major goals in recent decades within the student affairs profession. Over the years, these goals have shifted from a response to civil rights and affirmative action in the 1960s to taking a broader approach in 2010. The majority of recent diversity initiatives encompass a wide range of aspects, such as valuing diverse perspectives and backgrounds, addressing issues of marginalization, and focusing on global citizenship.

The spotlight on diversity has led to the creation and implementation of several programs and initiatives on college campuses addressing these topics, and consequently, to debates and backlash from organizations, parents, and students. Schools have been threatened for denying funding to perceived discriminatory groups, accused of prohibiting free speech, and criticized for the alleged indoctrination of liberal-minded thought. Institutions have come under fire in the legal arena with a number of Supreme Court cases beginning to mold the precedence for

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students' academic freedom. In particular, diversity education programs and university speech codes have been targeted by organizations advocating for free speech and first amendment rights.

With the ever-increasing push for diversity education on campus and the simultaneous pressure and protest from free speech organizations, it is crucial for student affairs professionals to gain a stronger understanding of the legal atmosphere surrounding "diversity" as a term for inclusiveness and multi-cultural understanding. This review will explore the history of academic freedom by providing an overview of pertinent legal cases addressing diversity, highlight trends and current events shaping the ways in which diversity is handled in higher education, and implications and good practice for navigating the murky waters of diversity issues on college campuses.

### **Diversity in Higher Education**

In higher education, the term "diversity" is often utilized, but vaguely defined; generally, "diversity" means the difference in multiple identities of others] (Kaplin & Lee, 2009). The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) conceptualizes diversity on their website, which states:

The concept of diversity is not new. Every few years, another word is adopted that encompasses the ideas, values, and implications around difference and identity. Examples of this trend include non-interchangeable terminology such as pluralism, inclusion, multiculturalism, intercultural communication, cross-cultural competency, diversity, and social justice. While the vocabulary may change, the concepts behind the words remain the same. These concepts include being aware of personal bias, valuing human interaction across difference, engaging in complex thinking beyond or across categories, fostering inclusive climates, assessing equitable achievement, and challenging and dismantling systemic oppression (see NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, 2009, par. 3).

Over time, the concept of diversity has broadened to encompass various ideas related to difference and multiple identities.

In the 1960s and 1970s, affirmative action and equal opportunity became issues placed at the forefront of higher education. Institutional policies were created to assemble a diverse student body of various backgrounds, perspectives, and strengths (Iverson, 2008). As affirmative action

became more narrowly defined by the courts, universities were challenged to develop ways to maintain a diverse student body, educate and promote the importance of diversity in higher education, and protect individuals from feeling marginalized on campus. According to Iverson (2008), “these laws and policies, along with changing demographics in the U.S., have contributed to the construction of diversity as a social phenomenon requiring institutional attention.” ( par. 11).

In a study on college and university mission statements, Morpew & Hartley (2006) found that the notion an institution is committed to diversity appears frequently and across various institutional type in college mission statements. National associations focusing on professional development and promoting best practices in the field of Student Affairs have played an integral role in promulgating the need for diversity on college campuses. NASPA abides by its Commitment to Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity (available at <http://www.naspa.org/about/diversity.cfm>). Describing diversity as a mix of identities, thoughts, and backgrounds, NASPA’s commitment is re-examined and updated regularly to ensure its working definition is inclusive. The organization has taken initiative in diversifying its membership through the NASPA Undergraduate Fellows Program (formerly Minority Undergraduate Fellows Program). Established in the 1989-1990, the program provides mentorship and support for underrepresented groups in Student Affairs. Additionally, NASPA sponsors an annual Multicultural Institute, hosts webinars, and seeks out presentations regarding the topic of diversity in an effort to promote multicultural competency development.

### **Diversity and the First Amendment**

Under federal law, the First Amendment protects freedom of speech, press, religion, assembly and petition (First Amendment Center, n.d.). The First Amendment—specifically the right to free speech—is cited in a majority of the lawsuits and complaints filed against universities for diversity education programs, required diversity-promoting curriculum, and any other perceived threats to students’ freedom of thought or expression.

From a legal perspective, the issue of free speech at public universities and colleges is often difficult to navigate due to shifting hot topics affecting higher education. Universities and courts have been attempting to keep up by developing policies to protect constituents. Precedence for the academic freedom of an entire institution is still emerging, and moreover,

very few cases on the academic freedom of students have been heard at the Supreme Court level (Kaplin & Lee, 2009).

### **Academic Freedom and the First Amendment**

It is necessary to be aware of the complexity of the concept of academic freedom, the history of the term especially in regard to faculty, and its relationship with the First Amendment. Both terms are often cited together in higher education lawsuits, yet are fundamentally separate concepts. Academic freedom is distinguished differently, depending on referral to its professional concept as a philosophy in academia or its legal concept for the courts (Kaplin & Lee, 2009). In law, judges use the term “academic freedom” to describe the legal rights and responsibilities of the teaching profession, with rights defined by constitutional law and contract law principles (Kaplin & Lee, 2009). Academic freedom also refers to the prerogatives and rights to students, who have filed more lawsuits and complaints against diversity education programs than faculty or college administrators combined.

### **Academic Freedom for Students**

The U.S. Supreme Court gradually began to recognize academic freedom in the 1950s. *Sweezy v. New Hampshire (1957)* was one of the earliest and most influential cases, in which the court was faced with the question of whether the Attorney General of New Hampshire could prosecute an individual for refusing to answer questions about a lecture delivered at the university on the topic of the Progressive Party of the United States. The court ruled in favor of the faculty member, giving autonomy to institutions for what may be taught. Chief Justice Earl Warren declared that “teachers and students must always remain free to inquire, to study, and to evaluate, to gain new maturity and understanding; otherwise our civilization will stagnate and die” (Kaplin & Lee, 2009).

Historically, "academic-freedom" guidelines were commonly used to protect students from disciplinary measures for campus activism (Ryter, 2004). Since the 1990s, courts have raised new questions about the status and role of academic freedom of students (Kaplin & Lee, 2009). *Rosenberger v. Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia (1995)* is one such defining Supreme Court case that used *Sweezy v. New Hampshire* to link student academic freedom to student free expression rights.

**Rosenberger v. Rector and the Visitors of the University of Virginia (1995)**

The University of Virginia refused to provide funding from student activities fees to a Christian magazine published by a student organization on campus, Wide Awake Productions (WAP). The university's guidelines for allocating student fees excluded certain types of organizations and prohibited funding of religious and political activities. Although the district and appellate court dismissed the plaintiffs' claims, the Supreme Court reversed the lower courts' decisions and reasoned that the denial of funding was "viewpoint discrimination" and thus violated the right of students' freedom of expression (Kaplin & Lee, 2009).

The case is significant not only in emphasizing freedom of expression as part of student academic freedom based on precedence set in *Sweezy*, but for the manner in which the final decision was made. In the court's 5-4 vote, noteworthy majority and concurring opinions were written by the Justices. Such a narrow decision is a testament to the difficulty of determining the line between freedom of expression and the violation of the Establishment clause—a component of the First Amendment which prohibits the establishment of a national religion or having preference of one religion over another (Kaplin & Lee, 2009). The judges argued whether freedom of speech, even in a unique forum type, trumped the Establishment Clause violation due to the state's direct financing of an evangelical magazine with student fees.

Lastly, this case set precedent that viewpoint-based restrictions, as opposed to content-based restrictions on speech, are least likely to be tolerated by the courts (Kaplin & Lee, 2009). Essentially, courts place students' rights to academic freedom over the institution's rights, and stressed students' freedom to learn as well as students' right to speak.

**Yacovelli v. Moeser**

An orientation reading program at the University of North Carolina/Chapel Hill was challenged in court in *Yacovelli v. Moeser (2004)*. Students and taxpayers claimed that an assigned reading regarding the history of the Islamic faith violated the federal Establishment clause. Additionally, the plaintiffs argued that the orientation reading program violated students' free exercise rights under the First Amendment. The Supreme Court affirmed the district court's ruling and dismissed the plaintiffs' claims (Kaplin & Lee, 2009).

Chancellor James Moeser argued that the college was merely asking new students to read the book "in a spirit of seeking understanding—not advocacy of Islam over Christianity or Judaism or any other religion. Not reading the book would be a missed opportunity for students."

(Ryter, 2004, par. 6). Although the plaintiffs argued that the summer reading assignment was one-sided indoctrination, academic courses are not legally required to give equal time to explore all sides of an issue. The court cited a previous case, *Widmar v. Vincent (1981)* where religious speech was treated as a free speech case. Justice Stevens in his concurrence in *Widmar*, stated that judgments related to curriculum should be left up to academicians and not federal judges (Levinson, 2007). Thus, for the most part, academic content is left to the discretion of the institution.

### **Free Speech and Hate Speech**

Free speech is one of the most cited sections of the First Amendment. The fate of free speech in higher education is becoming increasingly important, more controversial, and generally more supportive of openness over the course of the 20th century (O'Neill, 1997). In the early 1990s, the most contentious legal issues brought forth by students have involved the development of speech codes. These codes are designed to restrict certain kinds of speech deemed by an institution to be offensive. According to Uelman (2008), "there were approximately 75 hate speech codes in place at U.S. colleges and universities in 1990; by 1991, the number grew to over 300" (para. 3). To date, several universities have introduced speech codes in part to address "hate speech" (Hall, n.d.).

Hate speech is defined as verbal and written words, as well as symbolic acts, that convey a negative judgment of individuals or groups based on identities such as race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and disability (Kaplin & Lee, 2009). Hate speech takes many forms, and its purpose is to humiliate or wound rather than to communicate information (Kaplin & Lee, 2009).

Hate speech has been confronted in the court since the 1980s, saw a period of relative quiet in the 1990s, and reemerged following September 11, 2001, as institutions began to see response and reaction from the resulting war in Iraq as well as the Israeli/Palestinian conflict (Kaplin & Lee, 2009). Some hate speech cases are related to university speech codes, yet no case specifically involving campus hate speech has yet reached the U.S. Supreme Court.

*Doe v. University of Michigan (1989)* is a strong example of why speech codes do not fare well in courts. In this case, the university's hate speech policy was challenged for being overly vague to the point where students would not be able to discern whether their speech was a violation of policy. The court ruled that the university's speech code was unconstitutionally



overbroad, and that the university could not argue that the policy was vague because people would have to guess the meaning of the policy's language (Hudson, n.d.).

### **Speech and Political Correctness**

In an attempt to protect students, and as a response to pressure brought by advocacy groups, universities erected codes in the late 1980s and the early 1990s to eliminate harassment and discrimination. The “political correctness” trend ignited a nationwide debate about what universities could and should restrict. According to Hall (2009), “A new and left-wing form of political oppression seemed to be replacing an older, right-wing one, with the same effect: The views and voices of some were curtailed” (par. 17).

Kors & Silvergate (1998), in their book *The Shadow University*, devote an entire chapter to critiquing political correctness, stating:

What an astonishing expectation (and power) to give to students: the belief that, if they belong to a protected category, they have a right to four years of never being offended. What an extraordinary power to give to administrators and tribunals: the prerogative to punish the free speech and expression of people to whom they choose to assign the stains of guilt of historical oppression, while being free, themselves to use whatever rhetoric they wish against the bearers of such stains...it is, in fact, the silencing and punishment of belief, expression, and individuality that ought to concern yet more deeply those who care about what universities are and could be (p. 99).

The authors argue that political correctness, along with speech codes, is a double-standard because they seek to protect one group at the expense of censoring another. Indeed, much controversy exists today in higher education and in other sectors of society regarding political correctness and the role the law has in protecting people from discrimination.

### **Organizations Focused on First Amendment Advocacy**

Several organizations are springing up across the nation in response to the perception of overbearing university policies on the freedom and rights of students and faculty. In 1998, Alan Kors, a professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania, and Harvey Silvergate, a criminal defense and civil liberties law attorney, wrote the book *The Shadow University*, criticizing institutions in higher education of outlawing the freedom of thought and inquiry. Since its publication, two organizations—Students for Academic Freedom (SAF), and the Foundation for

Individual Rights in Education (FIRE)—have risen to prominence acting as political watchdogs for freedom of speech and expression on college campuses.

### **Students for Academic Freedom (SAF)**

According to their website, the goal of SAF is “to end the political abuse of the university and to restore integrity to the academic mission as a disinterested pursuit of knowledge.” Their motto is “education, not indoctrination” (Students for Academic Freedom, n.d.). The coalition is a response to the liberalization of colleges and universities in the United States, as conservative students learn they have legal recourse and can file lawsuits against liberal instructors that they believe brainwash and intimidate students who do not accept their radical philosophies (Ryter, 2004).

The group has proposed legislation to create an Academic Bill of Rights (ABOR) in 20 states. Currently, resolutions have been adopted in Georgia and Pennsylvania, and two resolutions have also been introduced in Congress. ABOR has been debated by commentators in and out of academia, mainly focusing on whether the bill may or may not endanger the academic freedom of students, faculty, or institutions (Kaplin & Lee, 2009).

### **Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE)**

According to their website, FIRE aims to address “the freedom of speech and expression; religious liberty and freedom of association; freedom of conscience; and due process and legal equality on campus” (Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, n.d.). The organization has played a role in raising awareness of events at college and university campuses where they believe freedom of speech is threatened. Recently, FIRE addressed a residential-life program focusing on diversity at the University of Delaware.

The University of Delaware’s residence-life education program was recently accused of thought reform in the fall of 2007, and as a result, Delaware’s President Patrick Harker called for its suspension to review the program (Hoover, 2007). The program—developed four years prior to being suspended in November 2007 under pressure from FIRE and the public—sought to address diversity, cultural identity, and environmentalism. According to one news article, “students said they were pressed into agreeing with a politically slanted ideology in which white people were oppressors of minorities. In one-on-one interviews with resident assistants, students were asked about their sexual awakening and racial beliefs.” (Boccella, 2007, par. 6).

FIRE cited several documents regarding the program, including one document from diversity facilitation training for resident assistants, in which the student-staff received a list of definitions of racism. On the list was the term, “racist”, which “applied to all white people, (i.e., people of European descent) living in the United States” (Hoover, 2007, par. 4). Additionally, FIRE accused the residence-life program of pressuring students to adopt ideological views on multiculturalism and the environment (Hoover, 2007).

### **Addressing Diversity at Private Institutions**

Private institutions are generally not subject to the constitutional requirements in the same way that state institutions are required to comply. Thus, students, faculty, and staff at most private universities do not have a First Amendment right to protect themselves against discipline for speech-related violations. Instead, free-speech-related rights are derived from policies adopted by the institution rather than the First Amendment (Levinson, 2007). This does not mean that private institutions are completely sovereign of constitutional law. Indeed, several private institutions have policies very similar to public institutions, granting many rights to students, staff, and faculty. *Corry v. Stanford University (1995)* is an example of a case in which speech policies at a private institution were reviewed by the Supreme Court (Kaplin & Lee, 2009). In *Corry*, students at Stanford University filed a lawsuit against the institution arguing that Stanford's speech code violated California's Leonard Law. The 1992 law had applied the First Amendment to all of California's secular private colleges and universities ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corry\\_v.\\_Stanford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corry_v._Stanford)). The courts ruled that Stanford’s speech code restricted more than just fighting words by including “insulting speech”, and was therefore illegal. Significant in limiting the autonomy of private institutions, the ruling also signifies how state laws affect freedom of speech.

### **Implications for Student Affairs**

It is good practice to know federal and state laws, as well as rights of students, faculty, and administrators. Below are some recommendations developed from the outcomes of court cases and controversial events within the recent history of higher education.

#### **Be Aware of Pertinent Laws and Trends**

Private institutions may not directly be subject to the First Amendment in its entirety, but should also be aware of the legal atmosphere surrounding diversity education programs.

Additionally, state laws and statutes should be kept in mind, as the Leonard Law in California was a significant part of the court's ruling in *Corry v. Stanford University*.

### **Be Specific**

As seen in *Doe v. Michigan (1989)*, overly broad or vague policies are not tolerated by the courts. According to Hudson (n.d) "A statute is overbroad if it prohibits a substantial amount of protected speech in its attempts to restrict unprotected speech. A statute or regulation is vague if it does not adequately inform a person what expressive conduct is prohibited and what expressive conduct is allowed, leaving a person to guess at its application." (par. 6). It is important to keep in mind that speech codes are highly targeted by First Amendment advocacy groups.

### **Stay Up-to-Date on Watchdog Organizations**

Many schools are being targeted by external organizations such as FIRE and SAF, causing a great deal of negative media attention for an institution, even if an incident does not lead to a lawsuit. Currently, FIRE is focusing on free speech issues, gun-control, and criticizing various institutions' definitions and uses of "diversity".

### **Allow Freedom of Viewpoint**

It is important to acknowledge and support students on college campuses who share diverse opinions and perspectives. From a legal lens, "viewpoint discrimination" is unconstitutional according to the First Amendment. This precept is important to keep in mind when designing policies, protocols, and programs on the subject of diversity.

### **Review Programs and Policies**

Reviewing current diversity programs to ensure they are addressing the purpose in which they were created may be helpful in preventing a media controversy similar to the University of Delaware. One year later, the institution's Faculty Senate overwhelmingly voted for its new diversity residence hall program. Changes included making events optional for residents, promoting "citizenship", and including more professional staff oversight and consultation from professionals. Some of the major questions that came up during debates and intense discussions about the program include, "Where is the line between education and indoctrination? What is the proper definition of 'citizenship'?" (Hoover, 2008, par. 14).

As court decisions regarding student academic freedom begin to lay established boundaries, universities continue to navigate through legal issues related to the ever-fluctuating

concept of diversity. It seems that the difference between education and indoctrination, and the alleged double-standard of speech codes is at the heart of the latest court cases and lawsuit threats. As universities continue to develop practices to promote diversity, and more and more organizations such as FIRE and SAF come into existence, higher education will most likely be frequently facing legal and social action in the future. Staying current with trends in diversity education, speech policies, and legal battles can contribute to staying clear of legal action while still demonstrating a commitment to promoting tenets of diversity and supporting student success.

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## Essay Review: TRIO Programs

Olivia Heath

*The development of TRIO programs in higher education represented an important era when the U.S. began to recognize diversity needs on college campuses. In higher education, the creation of the TRIO programs symbolized a progressive conclusion that issues of access could no longer be ignored. TRIO programs are a product of the federal Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, and are designed to provide opportunities in post-secondary education for first-generation, low-income, minority, and disabled students. Three articles are reviewed, providing a comprehensive portrayal of some of the various components that are important in understanding the history and impact of TRIO programs in U.S. higher education. The history of TRIO program origins and documented success of how they have grown through the years validate their purpose and necessity in higher education.*

The development of TRIO programs in higher education represents an important era when the U.S. began to recognize diversity needs and issues on college campuses. The 1960s were an active time filled with political unrest. The civil rights movement brought attention to the unequal civil liberties that existed depending on the color of a person's skin. In higher education, the creation of the TRIO programs symbolized a progressive conclusion that issues of access could no longer be ignored.

TRIO programs were designed to provide opportunities in post-secondary education for first-generation, low-income, minority, and disabled students. The programs were a product of the federal Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. The original three programs (hence, the name "TRIO") were: Upward Bound, Educational Talent Search (which was created in 1965 as a part of the Higher Education Act), and Student Support Services (created in 1968). Additional programs that have since been created as TRIO programs are: Educational Opportunity Centers, Staff and Leadership Training Authority, the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, and the Math/Science/Veterans Upward Bound Programs.

There are over 2,000 TRIO programs operating nationwide at various public and private

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institutions. Researchers Dawn Wallace, Becky Ropers-Huilman, and Ron Abel (2004) state that the goal of the TRIO programs is to:

Increase postsecondary academic success, retention, and graduation of first-generation, low-income students and students with disabilities. One of the key methods to accomplish this goal is through an integrated, intrusive, and comprehensive academic preparation and advising system. (p. 574)

In 2003, the U.S Department of Education reported that through the support of TRIO programs, approximately 2 million students have graduated from college.

The following provides brief descriptions of the various TRIO programs:

*Upward Bound* is a multi-year program preparing students for college outside of a classroom setting. It usually concludes in a residential summer program hosted by participating institutions the summer before a student begins college. *Educational Talent Search* supports high school students and dropouts with academic, career, and financial counseling. *Student Support Services* provides tutoring and counseling services to students during college to help promote retention and graduation. *Educational Opportunity Centers* work with TRIO-eligible adults who want to begin or continue a college education, providing counseling and information about admissions and financial aid. *Staff and Leadership Training Authority* provides training and support for TRIO staff members. The *Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program* helps students who want to pursue advanced education up to the doctoral level. The *Upward Bound Math and Science Program* works to specifically fortify math and science skills for TRIO-qualified high school students. The *Veterans Upward Bound Program* is designed for U.S. military veterans, and provides assistance in areas of college admissions, financial aid, and career counseling (US Department of Education, 2009)

The various articles that I considered for this review address different aspects of these historically monumental programs. I will evaluate each article independently, discussing themes within the literature as well as my own conclusions and opinions. Ultimately, the articles that I explored can be synthesized within a context of commonality as they all represent social justice issues in higher education via the creation of TRIO programs.

In the article, *TRIO and Upward Bound: History, Programs, and Issues- Past, Present, and Future*, authors Edward McElroy and Maria Armesto (1998) examine the history of the

TRIO and Upward Bound programs. To be eligible for TRIO programs, a student must be first-generation college student and/or low-income. The authors note the importance of this distinction due to the fact that student disadvantage in higher education is not always financial, but may be significantly impacted by family academic background.

McElroy and Armesto address the philosophical debate regarding the definition of “educational disadvantage” (p. 374), and they present three contending attempts to define this classification. The Research Triangle Institute defines educationally disadvantaged individuals as “groups that have been underrepresented in higher education and that are below national averages on educational indices” (p. 374). A second definition states that educationally disadvantaged students:

Lack the home and community resources that enable them to succeed. . . . Due to poverty, racial/ethnic and cultural distinctions... [They] have been shown to have low academic achievement and/or drop out of the educational pipeline at high rates and at early stages. (p. 374)

A final definition claims that the educationally disadvantaged are “the products of a culture that has not provided them with the motivation, opportunity, experiences, that will enhance their chances of competing successfully with their fellow citizens” (p. 374). To classify this population of students is difficult because it seems to create a dichotomous definition with both quantifying and qualifying variables. When the TRIO program was initiated, it captured multiple specific populations of people that, when combined, create a comprehensive definition of the educationally disadvantaged. Therefore, the eligibility requirements of the programs became: first-generation, low income, minority, and disabled students (also including veterans and non-traditional students).

This article also makes a strong plea toward the training and development of qualified teachers. The authors recognize that teachers play a significant role in student success whether they participate in the TRIO programs or not. The plight for equality in educational opportunity does not solely remain in the background of the student. They state:

Without professional development, school reform will not happen. National leaders can adopt rigorous standards, set forth a visionary scenario, compile the best research about how students learn, change the nature of textbooks and assessment, promote teaching

strategies that have been successful with a wide range of students, and change all of the other elements involved in systematic reform, but unless the classroom teacher understands and is committed to reform and knows how to make it happen, those dreams will come to naught. (p. 378)

A report compiled in 1991 by the National Commission on Teaching and the Nation's Future found that "the least qualified teachers were most likely to be found in schools with higher poverty rates and larger number of minority students" (p. 378). Consequently, these are also typically the schools that derive the most Upward Bound eligible population of students. The teachers at these schools need to be willing and able to support educational reform, and they need to be provided with the skills and the tools to be successful in doing so.

Looking ahead, the authors also consider future implications of TRIO and Upward Bound programs. The largest concern addresses the fact that not all eligible students receive the support of this type of programming. They suggest a greater collaborative effort between elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education to ensure that more students are being reached. I agree that these programs are largely beneficial to the aggregate population they serve; however, many students still go unreached, uninspired, and unsupported. As a society, we are only as strong as our weakest citizen, and like McElroy and Armesto assert, "[TRIO programs] intervene in the lives of underachieving low-income high school students by uplifting and developing their academic and socio-cultural strengths to the maximum while minimizing their academic and socio-cultural weaknesses" (p. 379).

To further understand the impact of TRIO programs, researchers Dawn Wallace, Ron Abel, and Becky Ropers-Huilman study the student perspective from those that have participated in these programs in the article *Clearing a Path for Success: Deconstructing Borders Through Undergraduate Mentoring* (2000). They refer to the relationship between the student and the TRIO staff as a "formal mentorship" since the relationship was assigned to the student enrolling in the TRIO program. In their study, Wallace et al. (2000) focus specifically on the Student Support Services, Educational Opportunity Centers, and Veterans Upward Bound programs. To help facilitate meaningful relationships, TRIO staff members usually represent similar backgrounds as the students they serve. The authors found that most of the staff members from their study previously participated in TRIO programs themselves.

Combining critical theory with previous research on mentoring, the authors constructed two questions for which to form their study. The questions were:

1. How do students in TRIO programs understand their relationships with mentors?
2. How did students in TRIO programs perceive that race and gender affected their mentoring relationships? (p. 92)

The authors interviewed 20 students; all students were involved in the TRIO programs mentioned above.

Involvement with TRIO advisors began before the college experience, and many of the students regarded this stage of the mentoring relationship as valuable in understanding the complex processes involved in college choice and enrollment. Persistence and retention are a goal of the TRIO programs. In the interviews, students more than once referred to their mentors as being like “family” (p. 95). This motivation and sense of commitment that students felt towards their mentors as being like family members increased their motivation to persist.

As I read this article, I wondered if the mentor relationships were ever helpful to a fault in preventing a sense of independence for the student. TRIO participants sang praises of how much the mentors helped them from application paperwork and financial aid documents, to help with course scheduling and determining a major. A quote from a student in one of the interviews helped to clarify that while the mentor relationships were helpful, they were more so a catalyst in helping the student learn to be confident, knowledgeable and independent. The student specifically stated, “It’s more like training wheels. You put the wheels on so that you can learn to ride. Eventually you learn to ride the bike and can take the training wheels off and be just like everyone else” (p. 96).

The relationships that students make with TRIO mentors are critical to program success. Students refer to these relationships as being helpful in making the college application and financial aid process understandable and manageable. The relationships with their mentors build confidence, motivation, and a sense of dedication and commitment to persist and graduate. The authors recognize that the results of their study are not inclusive of all TRIO program participants, as students will construct interpretations of their college experiences differently. However, based on the success of TRIO programs, complemented by personal testimony of students, the authors and readers of this article can conclude that TRIO programs are effective at

closing gaps in educational opportunity for otherwise disadvantaged students. They effectively develop a sense of self-efficacy that students in various TRIO programs may otherwise not possess without the resources and support that these programs provide.

The final article I considered for this essay review quantitatively uncovered student outcomes and perceptions in areas such as: persistence, degree attainment, success, and satisfaction. In *Fulfilling Private Dreams, Serving Public Priorities: An Analysis of TRIO Students' Success at Independent Colleges and Universities*, Frank Balz and Melanie Esten (1998) are specifically interested in the TRIO programs at private colleges and universities. They begin by calculating the representative numbers, describing that there are approximately 1,600 private colleges and universities in the U.S that enroll more than 2.3 million students; over 50-percent of these students have at least one qualifying characteristic of TRIO program eligibility. Citing the Council for Opportunity in Education study, over 1,900 TRIO programs were of service to almost 700,000 students at 1,200 colleges and universities (p. 334). Similar to the Wallace et al. article, these authors state:

TRIO programs help them to overcome the social and cultural barriers to higher education. Key components of TRIO's success include highly targeted programs that focus on early intervention and the creation of lasting relationships with students. (p. 334)

Private institutions in higher education serve many students involved in TRIO programs. The data used in the first part of this study was gathered from the 1989-90 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (p. 335). These data were used to generate statistics regarding student completion, persistence, and degree-attainment among students with TRIO qualifications, but who were not TRIO participants. The second part of the study employed data from the High School and Beyond study that was conducted in 1995 by the National Center for Education Statistics (p. 335). The second part looks specifically at TRIO participants to uncover information about degree-attainment success and satisfaction.

To summarize the first part of the study, the authors examined first-generation, low-income students in regard to persistence, completion and degree attainment by institutional type. Students at private institutions had the highest percentages in all three of these areas when attending four-year private institutions as opposed to students who attended public two-year and

four-year institutions. The authors conclude with a recommendation stating, “access to all types of institutions of postsecondary institutions is critical for at-risk or TRIO populations of students. . . . first-generation college students are persisting and obtaining degrees faster and at higher rates at the nation’s four year [private institutions]” (p. 340). The fact that this population of students has been so successful in private education is noteworthy and deserves recognition. However, this is not representative of the aggregate population of these students in all types of institutions. Focusing only on the success of private education discounts a large percentage of TRIO-eligible students.

To summarize the second part of the study, the authors specifically compare TRIO-eligible non-participant students to TRIO participants. Greater than 80 percent of TRIO participants stated that they were satisfied with course curriculum, development of work skills, and intellectual growth. Regarding counseling or job placement, the satisfaction levels of TRIO participants were lower, but still claimed the highest levels at private institutions. Many TRIO students also continued graduate and professional education, as compared to their TRIO-eligible non-participant peers.

This article sought to address the differences between private and public education regarding academic persistence and completion. The authors correlate the achievement of programs like TRIO with the missions of private colleges, stating that, “like the TRIO programs, many private colleges and universities find success through encouraging and cementing personal relationships backed by strong institutional missions” (p. 345). While the authors praise the success and necessity of TRIO programs, they also highlight that there is still a great population of students that are underserved in higher education. The TRIO programs have provided opportunity to a marginalized population of students that may otherwise not pursue higher education.

These three articles provide a comprehensive portrayal of some of the various components that are important in understanding the history and impact of TRIO programs in U.S. higher education. Questions regarding social justice and its implications are prevalent in these issues of access and equity in higher education. The TRIO programs were created as a part of a movement that brought to light a societal demand to address the needs of students that represented minority, first-generation, and low-income populations. Increases in diverse populations in the United States inevitably lead to increases in diversity within higher education.

Support programs like TRIO were critical to ensure the development of opportunity and creation of new initiatives for traditionally under-represented groups.

TRIO programs could not have been accomplished without federal legislative support as well as the support of the college administrators and TRIO staff members. There is much that still needs to be done to increase the coverage of marginalized students whom these programs serve. The continued commitment of politicians, faculty, administrators, program staff members, and TRIO participants are all essential in ensuring a strong future for the various TRIO programs. These programs create confident students that are educated to become accomplished alumni; these alumni become productive, contributing members of society. This is the fundamental purpose of higher education, and it is an opportunity that should not be denied to anyone. The history of TRIO program origins and the documented success of how they have grown through the years validate their purpose and necessity in higher education.

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# Spiritual Development for the Non-Spiritual: Supporting Atheist Students' Exploration for Meaning and Purpose

Adam Serafin

*The renewed focus on the inner development of college students (Love & Talbot, 1999) has the potential to isolate and alienate non-religious students if we fail to approach spiritual development holistically and support all students as they search for purpose and meaning. Twenty five percent of traditional college age students (ages 18-29) identify as religiously unaffiliated, 3% of which identify as atheist (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2008). Atheists are the least trusted segment of the American population, largely attributed to the American connotation between religion and morality (Edgell et al., 2006). Atheophobia is present on college campuses, further marginalizing, isolating, and making atheist students invisible in their identity (Nash, 2003). Higher education must create a safe and welcoming environment for atheist students to fully be themselves and must include atheists in the holistic approach to education.*

In stark contrast to the separation of church and state defined by the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, “*In God We Trust*” and “*One nation, under God*” are represented on our legal tender and in our pledge of allegiance, closely tying religious affiliation to American identity. Despite the historical bond, American higher education must provide equal opportunities for the holistic development of all students, regardless of religious affiliation.

The U.S. Religious Landscape Survey identified 16.1% of American adults as unaffiliated with any particular faith (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2008). The unaffiliated category is comprised of adults that identify as atheist (1.6%), agnostic (2.4%), and nothing in particular (12.1%). One in four traditional age college students (ages 18-29), identifies as unaffiliated (atheist – 3%, agnostic – 4%, nothing in particular – 18%). Additional research conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute (2004) found that 17% of college students indicate “none”

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as their religious preference.

Since its inception, student affairs has been dedicated to the holistic education of all students (American Council on Education Studies, 1937, 1949) and recent literature calls for a renewed focus on the spiritual development of college students (Love & Talbot, 1999). Parks (2000) defines spirituality as a search for meaning and purpose, while faith is a process of meaning making. Despite attempts to distinguish spirituality from religion, campus programs and services aimed at encouraging spiritual development often overlook or disregard students that identify as non-religious. In an effort to be inclusive of all students, Seifert and Holman-Harmon (2009) propose the term inner development (for the remainder of the article inner development will be used in the place of spiritual development).

Of the non-religious population, atheists are the minority (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2008). Atheists are the least trusted segment of the American population, ranking below Muslims, recent immigrants, and the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) community (Edgell, Gerteis, & Hartman, 2006). No research exists on the experience of atheist college students, but anecdotal evidence shows that atheist students are invisible, stigmatized, and marginalized (Nash, 2003). Much of this can be attributed to what Nash (2003) defines as atheophobia, “the fear and loathing of atheists that permeate American culture” (p. 4).

Student affairs professionals are tasked with providing opportunities for the inner development of all students, not simply the religiously affiliated. Campus chaplains, interfaith councils, and the observance of religious holidays are rarely, if ever, representative of non-religious students. How then, do we positively alter campus climate, normalize the atheist perspective, and provide support for the inner development of atheist students?

This article will explore the effects of religious privilege and morality on attitudes toward atheists, discuss pertinent student development theory, and consider the implications for student affairs.

### **Religious privilege – Atheists as the “other”**

Converse (2003) defines atheism as the absence of belief in a god or gods and the denial of anything supernatural. Converse (2003) differentiates between three types of atheists, including: accepting that god does not exist, but not giving much thought to it; accepting that god does not exist and being able to articulate that position; and accepting that god does not exist, articulating that position, taking a public stand, and structuring life around atheism.

The Establishment Clause of the First Amendment states that public institutions may not favor one religion over another, religion over non-religion, or non-religion over religion (Lowery, 2005). However, private institutions may implement programs as they see fit, within the boundaries of their founding charter (Revell, 2008). The recent focus on inner development of college students corresponds with a broad renewal of faith-based institutions' identity as a religious affiliate. Arthur (2008) calls for religious affiliated institutions to look to their sponsoring religious body or faith as the source of identity. For example, the *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (1990), issued by Pope John Paul II, called for Catholic universities to renew their identities as both universities and as Catholic institutions.

Staff and faculty at religiously affiliated institutions are familiar with inner development and are often able to talk about it fluently (Revell, 2008). However, Revell's (2008) research revealed that while staff clearly distinguished between religion and inner development, they all assumed inner development related to the religion affiliated with their institution, exposing issues of religious norms and privilege.

Based on McIntosh's (1989) exploration of white and male privilege, Christian privilege represents the most dominant and influential forms of religious privilege in the United States (Blumenfeld, 2006; Fairchild, 2009; Fried, 2007; Seifert, 2007). Blumenfeld (2006) defines Christian privilege as "constituting a seemingly invisible, unearned, and largely unacknowledged array of benefits accorded to Christians... This system of benefits confers dominance on Christians while subordinating members of other faith communities as well as non-believers" (p. 195). Examples of Christian privilege include marking time as measured by the birth of Jesus and the five-day work week (Blumenfeld, 2006). Examples of Christian privilege within education include the structure of the academic calendar, time off for Christian holidays and celebrations, necessity to request special accommodations for non-Christian religious observances, food offerings at campus dining halls, physical space for religious practice, and commencement or other ceremonies that incorporate invocations or benedictions (Blumenfeld, 2006; Seifert, 2007). Christian cultural markers, such as a cross or a chapel, have the potential to further alienate non-Christian or non-religious students (Seifert, 2007). This alienation is further intensified at religious affiliated institutions where religion, faith, and inner development are incorporated through institutional values, departments, and curriculum.

In America there exists a strong psychological connection between religion, morality, and trustworthiness, and as such, affirming a religious identity is considered important to sharing a common American identity (Edgell et al., 2006). Edgell et al.'s (2006) research used a standard measure of group prejudice, the reluctance to accept intermarriage with one's child, as a way of measuring underlying intolerance toward atheists, Muslims, immigrants, and the LGB community. Asking respondents if they would approve or disapprove of their child marrying an individual from each of these communities, Americans were least likely to accept intermarriage with atheists (Edgell et al., 2006). Atheophobia, in combination with the increased attention to the inner development of college students, social stigmas attached to atheism, and religious illiteracy, contribute to the invisibility and marginalization of atheist students on campus (Goodman & Mueller, 2009; Nash, 2007).

The invisibility of an atheist identity created through an unsupportive and unwelcoming environment, both knowingly and unknowingly, has created a campus experience for atheist students similar to that of LGB students. Atheists choose to whom and when they reveal their atheist identity and may be marginalized by Christian and religious privilege, stigmatized by atheophobia, and isolated from or lack community connection. Although many institutions have created diversity policies to welcome and protect LGB students, policy that supports students with different or no religious affiliation, specifically at religiously affiliated institutions, is rarely found (McCarty, 2009).

### **Best practices in atheist student services**

Student development, both cognitive and affective, is largely shaped by environmental context and influences (Salter & Persuad, 2003; Wolf-Wendel, Toma, & Morpew, 2001). All students, regardless of religious affiliation, deserve to be comfortable, safe, and confident in the learning environment (Gilley, 2005). Institutions can positively alter campus climate to be inclusive of non-religious students by learning about and understanding atheism, assessing Christian and religious privilege, normalizing the atheist perspective through inclusive language, creating opportunities for community among atheist students, providing atheist ally training, and including atheist students in programming and interfaith efforts (Goodman & Mueller, 2009). Many institutions have recognized campus clubs and organizations dedicated to creating community for atheist students, further exploring individual beliefs and worldviews, and educating the campus community. Creation and maintenance of these clubs and organizations is

largely student-led and may vary in levels of involvement depending on student interest. The Center for Inquiry (<http://www.centerforinquiry.net>) serves as a resource for non-religious clubs and organizations. Some institutions, such as Princeton University, provide additional opportunities for non-religious student voice through interfaith and religious life councils (<http://www.princeton.edu/~rlc/index.html>)

Three religious faiths, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, provide chaplaincies and religious associations in the majority of the world's secular universities and colleges and all provide and sponsor their own institutions of higher education (Arthur, 2008). In contrast, only three institutions in America provide a humanist chaplain, namely Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Adelphi University (Kolowich, 2009). Harvard's Humanist Chaplain Greg Epstein believes institutions should be doing more to support non-religious students,

Right now, higher education is failing miserably to provide a place on campus where non-religious students can find purpose, compassion, and community. A lot of students come to campus knowing they're not religious, but also not knowing what they do believe. The opportunities for discussion, meditation, and service that grow out of chaplaincy help them learn more about the positive aspects of their identity, not just what they don't believe in. (Kolowich, 2009, para. 11).

### **Inner development of atheist students – Pertinent student development theory**

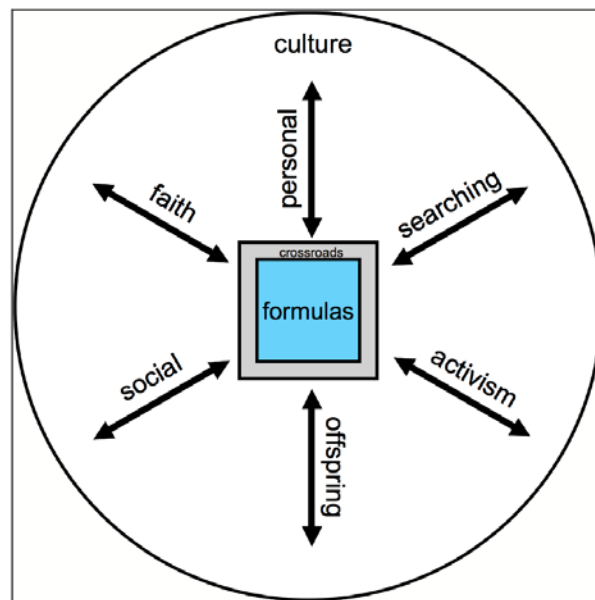
Parks' (2000) work on young adult faith development is highly regarded as the foundational theory for college students' inner development. Parks (2000) defines spirituality as a search for meaning and purpose, while faith is a process of meaning-making with four interacting levels: self, other, world, and "God." "God" may represent the supreme being or simply the idea, but "God" is the center of power and value for the individual. Parks (2000) contends that despite denying the existence of the supernatural, non-believers still live with confidence in some center of value, which could be science, reason, and/or logic. In assisting young adults as they develop faith, Parks (2000) argues for the creation of mentoring communities to challenge, support, and guide students as they make meaning from new experiences.

The similarities between atheist and LGB students' experience suggests a connection to D'Augelli's (1998) model of lesbian, gay, and bisexual development. D'Augelli (1998) identified the social invisibility of sexual orientation and the social and legal penalties associated

with LGB expression as two barriers to self-definition as LGB. As a result of atheophobia and religious privilege, atheist students are largely invisible, stigmatized, and marginalized (Nash, 2003).

Devaney, Fama, and Hara's (2007) atheist identity development model is framed by D'Augelli's model of LGB development, Baxter Magolda's theory of self authorship, and Cass' model of homosexual identity formation. Conducting ethnographic interviews with nine students at a large public university in the Midwest, Devaney et al. (2007) recruited participants through a freethinker student organization and compared interview themes to the three developmental models to create the atheist identity development model.

### Atheist Identity Development Model



Adapted from *A forgotten population: An informal model of atheist identity formation* by K. Devaney, G. Fama, and M. Hara, 2007, ACPA/NASPA Joint Meeting, Orlando, FL.

Atheists begin in the formula box, following religious beliefs of family and society and hit a crossroads through an epiphany or gradual process in which they question the existence of a god, moving them outside of the formulas box. Atheists begin development on six identity domains, with the ability to progress or regress, all within the broader context of culture. The six identity domains include: searching (evidence of a god/meaning), personal (internalization/accepting self), social (finding community), offspring (disclosing identity to

family and redeveloping positive relationship), activism (forwarding atheist ideals and breaking down stereotypes), and faith (developing faith in self and humanity) (Devaney et al., 2007).

### **Implications for student affairs**

Support for atheist students has two primary foci. First, and most importantly, atheist and non-religious students should be encouraged to explore their inner development, including individual and collective purpose, while creating authentic community. The second focus is normalizing the atheist perspective and working to create an inclusive campus community.

It is essential for institutions to provide structured opportunities for atheist students to delve deeper into their exploration for meaning and purpose while building a peer support system. Peer groups are the strongest single source of influence on the cognitive and affective development of college students (Astin, 1999; Kuh, 1993). Peers can also positively affect attitudes, behaviors and lifestyle through formal or informal mentorship and education. Peer mentoring presents additional opportunities for atheist students to challenge and support each other as they make meaning from new experiences and explore, challenge, and affirm their values and beliefs (Parks, 2000).

In order to positively alter the campus climate, institutions should provide the larger campus community with opportunities to learn and engage in dialogue around atheism, creating an inclusive community that welcomes and respects all religious and non-religious beliefs. Potential events and services include: a “Difficult Discussions” series designed to create dialogue around controversial topics such as God, evolution, American religious history, and religious institutions, to challenge students’ ways of knowing and foster cognitive development (Baxter Magolda, 1998); atheist ally training, to create a supportive and inclusive campus; Christian/religious privilege workshops, as environments that are privilege-affirming can be limiting to the identity development of members in the dominant group and serve to further alienate the minority group as the “other” (Davis, 2002; Hoffman, 2004); holiday events and celebrations for the non-religious; inviting prominent atheist speakers to campus; film screenings; speakers bureau; and peer advising. Additional support, whether financial- or staff-based, from a campus ministry or religious studies department, reaffirms the institutional commitment to the inner development of all students and an inclusive approach to interfaith efforts. Finally, Seifert and Holman-Harmon (2009) suggest that professionals must be willing to

engage in their own inner development in preparation to adequately accompany students on their journey.

### **Conclusion**

The renewed focus on the inner development of college students (Love & Talbot, 1999) has the potential to isolate and alienate non-religious students if we fail to approach inner development holistically and support all students as they search for purpose and meaning. Twenty five percent of traditional college-age students (ages 18-29) identify as religiously unaffiliated, 3% of which identify as atheist (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2008). Atheists are the least trusted segment of the American population, largely attributed to the American connotation between religion and morality (Edgell et al., 2006). Atheophobia is present on college campuses, further marginalizing, isolating, and making atheist students invisible in their identity (Nash, 2003). Higher education must create a safe and welcoming environment for atheist students to be fully themselves and include atheists in the holistic approach to education.

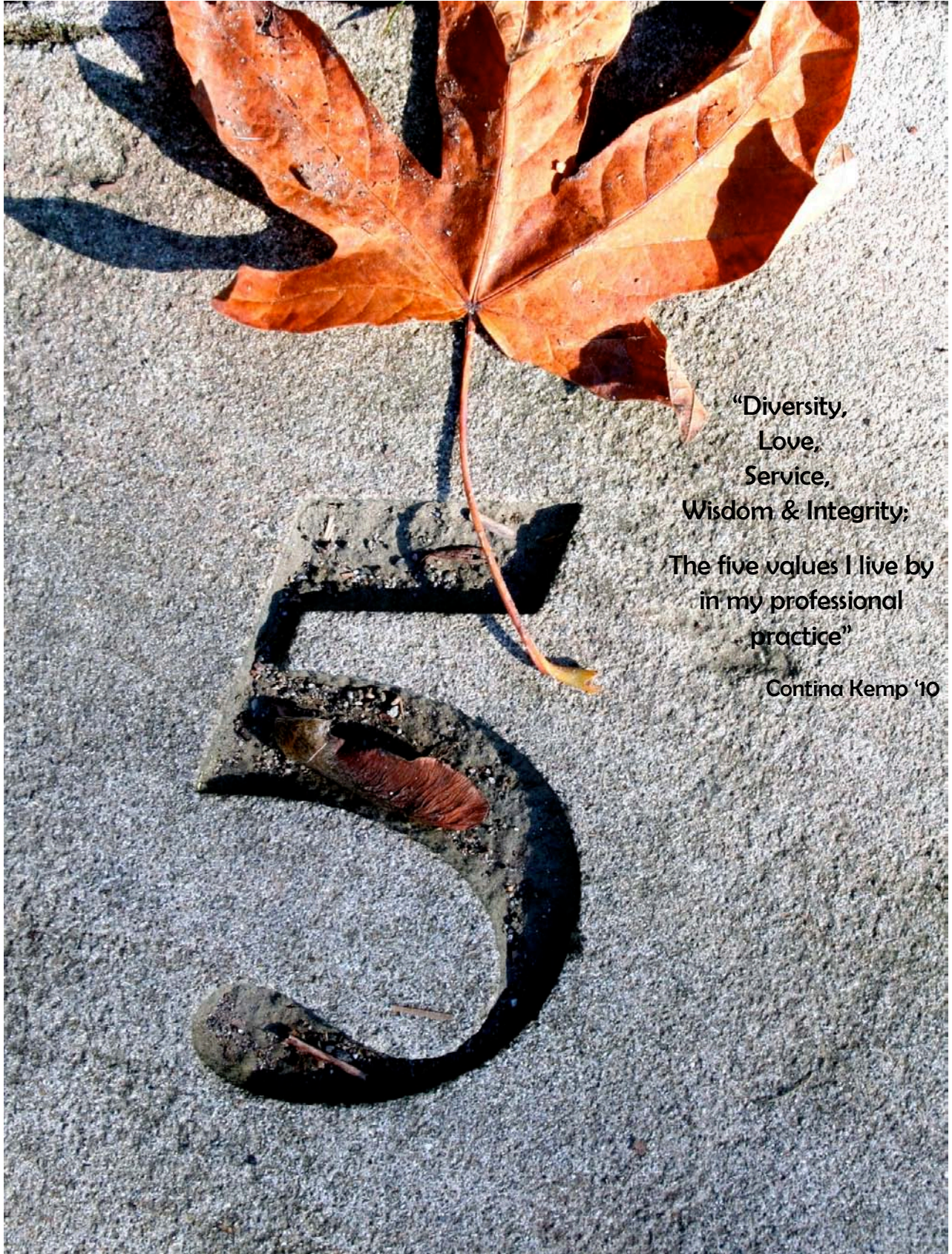


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“Diversity,  
Love,  
Service,  
Wisdom & Integrity;

The five values I live by  
in my professional  
practice”

Contina Kemp '10

## Timely Advice from a Higher Ed Pariah: Non-Profit Colleges & Universities, Get Your Act Together!

Elizabeth Hammond

*For-profit higher education is big business in the United States, and millions of students are choosing to attend for-profit institutions instead of traditional non-profit colleges and universities. If our institutions of non-profit higher education want to remain popular, viable, and financially solvent with today's difficult economy and rapidly changing demographics, they should take a look at what their for-profit competitors are doing well – and wake up to the reality of today's educational landscape.*

*“Wow, this university is a model of efficiency!” “Can you believe how convenient it is to obtain a Bachelor's degree here?” “This college is remarkably innovative and forward thinking!”*

Listen up, traditional non-profit colleges and universities: these accolades are not aimed at you. Yes, you have always been well respected and sought after in the wide world of higher education, but now look at you. Your enrollment is shrinking. Your economic, racial, and cultural diversity is lacking, and you cannot seem to make your balance sheet work without hiking tuition at a greater rate than inflation. Let's face it, non-profits—with few exceptions you are stuck in a rut: it is hurting your financial state, not to mention your exalted goals of serving diverse student populations and developing a strong and intellectual workforce. Meanwhile, your competitors in the other sector of higher education—the historically maligned for-profits—are growing rapidly, serving a wide variety of students, and making money in the process. Non-profits, isn't it time that you take a good look at yourself and make some adjustments to the status quo?

You might be saying something like, “One cannot compare the two types of institutions! They are like apples and oranges!” or “For-profits are all online; real learning happens in a classroom!” or even “A degree from a for-profit is virtually useless; no one will respect it!” In some cases, these opinions might be justified, yet there are equally convincing counter

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arguments to each of these views.

First of all, most of the major for-profits are accredited by the very same organizations that certify non-profit colleges and universities. There are no special exceptions given to for-profits in an accreditation process, so they are held responsible for the same educational standards as traditional non-profits. Also the perception that for-profits educate via an online-only platform is errant. For example, the University of Phoenix has over 200 locations in North America; at these sites real classes are taught by real people and attended by almost 400,000 real students (Bartlett, 2009). Many people believe that no one respects a degree from a for-profit institution. That notion may be the most damaging argument to this sector, yet the tide of opinion seems to be changing.

For-profits have suffered from many instances of bad publicity and image; however, they are enrolling more students than ever. According to a recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, over a one year period “among 10 of the largest for-profit college companies...most companies saw their enrollment increase by at least 20 percent” and some saw enrollment increase by over 100 percent (Hendry, 2009). Looking at these enrollment figures, in combination with the impressive job placement rate boasted by many for-profits, (up to 95% at DeVry); it is hard to justify the view that a for-profit degree is useless (Morey, 2004).

I do not disagree that these are different types of institutions with strengths and weaknesses in each model. In order to contextualize my suggestions, it is useful to reflect on the main differences between for-profits and non-profits. According to Ruch (2001), some major distinctions are that for-profits have investors instead of donors, use private investment capital as opposed to endowment funds, answer to stockholders rather than stakeholders, and run their institutions using traditional management practices instead of shared governance. The mission statements of for-profit universities often include a dedication to serving working adults and a focus on career development or job placement (Ruch, 2001, p. 26). Training and assessments are provided in a routine, systematic manner which allows for consistent quality management (Seiden, 2009). Additionally, for-profits are market-driven. Therefore, they must respond to changes in the marketplace rapidly and ensure that their customers (the students) are satisfied or risk financial insolvency.

One of the most exceptional and important distinctions of for-profits is their focus on customer (student) power versus faculty power. For-profits tend to rely on a part-time

“practitioner” faculty model, meaning that work experience within a particular industry or sector is more desirable than traditional academic experience in teaching or research (Berg, 2005). Although faculty members have no tenure and hold little institutional power at for-profits, they spend most of their time teaching, not researching or held up in committees. There are clear financial benefits to this arrangement in terms of cost savings and flexibility.

For-profits excel at delivering higher education with efficiency, flexibility, and a well-groomed program assortment. The areas in which for-profits do extremely well are clear opportunities for many non-profits. Improvements in efficiency and agility could be made without negatively impacting a non-profit’s institutional mission. In fact, overall outcomes may benefit from an overhaul in these key areas. It will take hard work and dedication to change, yet in the increasingly competitive and economically volatile world of higher education, the challenges of modifying the way non-profits do business will not outweigh the benefits.

The most obvious element to improve is economic efficiency. Though some of the cost-cutting methods used by for-profits would appall many traditionalists, it is useful to consider some of their strategies. Key practices for reducing costs include using part-time faculty, uniform course materials, and maximizing use of classrooms and other facilities (Morey, 2004). Many for-profits use textbooks and software packages from major publishers. This is cost saving for the institution, as well as for the students (Ruffins, 2007). For-profit universities make decisions regarding course offerings, marketing efforts, faculty hiring, and other facets of their institutions with the goal of improving operational efficiencies and exploiting cost advantages related to the expansion of a university’s size. The absence of tenure contributes to low labor costs, but it also allows for exceptional flexibility in eliminating outdated or under-used programs and ineffective teachers. The lack of athletic programs and residence halls, as well as the common use of leasing commercial space for classrooms, offer additional ways for-profits can reduce the average cost of educating their students (Morey, 2004).

Although the low-overhead methods used by for-profits would not match the capital intensive focus of most non-profits, there are inefficiencies that have been tolerated for too long. For example, university facilities are often underused, particularly during the slow summer months, and obsolete programming is allowed to persist long after student interest fades. In addition, many institutions continue to interpret tenure as guaranteed job security instead of its intended purpose, the protection of academic freedom. One of the major problems for non-profit

universities and colleges is the hesitation to innovate. New ideas are often met with long periods of discussion and debate which hinders institutional and departmental flexibility and dramatically slows down the process of change.

Flexibility for students is a key benefit offered by the for-profits. By allowing their students to take classes in the evenings, on weekends, during the summer, and in classrooms or online, these universities reach a huge market of non-traditional students. For-profits have attracted impressive numbers of underserved students through targeted marketing, placement of facilities in metropolitan areas with large minority populations, convenient financial aid counseling, and concentrating on providing great customer service to all students (Berg, 2005). The type and format of education provided by for-profits appeals to adult students because they are able to incorporate work experience into the classroom and maintain a strong focus on meeting well-defined learning objectives.

Non-profits need to do a better job at addressing subjects relevant in the real world. The relevancy and utility of required coursework is a major reason many prospective college students chose for-profit option. Non-profits need to ensure that their students receive practical knowledge for job searches and real-world responsibilities. Course offerings should be consistently evaluated for relevance and outcomes, and those that do not merit continuation should be eliminated. There is great potential to add for-profit programs to the portfolio of educational offerings. In particular, some universities are finding new revenue streams from the sale of curriculum packages and the creation of for-profit online, lifestyle, and vocational certificate courses. These types of programs allow traditional non-profit colleges and universities to have a robust relationship with members of the community such as working parents, individuals without high school or college degrees, and the unemployed, all of whom may not otherwise get involved with these institutions of higher education.

For the large crowd that believes that the concept of educating people for profit is reprehensible, it is important to note that a profit-driven business model and the provision of social good are not mutually exclusive. According to Berg (2005), “you can simultaneously make a profit and ‘do good,’ by... providing increased access to higher education for historically underserved populations” (p. 30). Institutions of higher education can also ‘do good’ by offering relevant and useful coursework in addition to a traditional liberal arts overview.



The shape of higher education is evolving due to many factors, including globalization, changing demographics, and economic and social expectations. For-profit universities may not be able to offer every type of experience sought by prospective students, but they offer a viable choice for post-secondary education that works for millions of students every year. For-profits strike a balance between academic quality and financial success, while satisfying the demands of their student customers. This unique environment is a natural impetus to innovate and tackle challenging institutional problems. In order to compete for enrollment and viability in today's market, non-profits need to improve their efficiency, flexibility, and program assortment. Non-profits, the reality is this: you could stand to learn a lot from your for-profit competitors. You cannot ignore this sector any longer. Will you take advantage of this opportunity? Or would you prefer to ruminate and discuss the situation for a few years? Whether or not you think a traditional business model belongs in education, the time has come for you to snap out of your slow-moving state and get your act together!

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# Uncorking the Drinking Age Debate: A Second Call to University Presidents

Caitlin McClain

*Underage drinking and binge drinking on college campuses have long been a concern of university leaders and society alike. In 2008, the Amethyst Initiative was launched to encourage discussion about these issues in the context of the minimum legal drinking age in the United States. A total of 135 college presidents signed a statement by the organization demonstrating their support for an engaged and enlightened debate. Two years later the movement has faded into the background of the current landscape of higher education. The purpose of this paper is to reexamine the tenets of the Amethyst Initiative and put forth a call for educational leaders to recommit to the continuing pandemic of alcohol abuse on college campuses.*

The Amethyst Initiative was introduced in July 2008 in an effort by university presidents and leaders to open and encourage a public discussion regarding the legal drinking age. Emanating from a concern about rampant alcohol abuse on college campuses, the statement by the organization highlights the incongruity of the 21 minimum legal drinking age and other lower minimums such as military service, voting, and jury duty. It also calls into question a 1984 law that penalizes states that uphold lower drinking ages with a 10% decrease in annual federal highway aid. Following a flurry of initial media coverage and campus debates, a year and half later only 135 colleges and universities have demonstrated their support by signing the statement. Where are the other 4,000 institutions on this issue? What has happened to the “informed and unimpeded debate on the 21 year-old drinking age” (Amethyst Initiative: Rethink the Drinking Age, 2008)? Conjecture leads to a number of possibilities; namely, fear, politics, and the economy. However, as assumed leaders of intellectual, cultural, and ethical development, American colleges and universities cannot turn their back on this debate or fail to take a strong stance. In doing so, they potentially risk the degradation of the institution and ultimately, progress as a society.

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### **The Opposition**

If the Amethyst Initiative has inspired anything, it has certainly emboldened the status quo. Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), a powerful and well respected organization, has become one of the strongest oppositions to the Amethyst Initiative's attempt for open-minded deliberation. MADD and its many supporters make a number of compelling yet largely one-sided arguments. The first, and perhaps most convincing, is the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism's statistic that since the passage of the National Minimum Drinking Age Act in 1984, alcohol related traffic fatalities for 16-20 year olds declined by 60% (Mothers Against Drunk Driving, 2009). Another study by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration cited that 21,887 lives were saved by the law (Choose Responsibility, 2008). These statistics have been used by many educational and political leaders as the rationale for maintaining the current law. However, Choose Responsibility, an organization linked to the Amethyst Initiative, referenced research that shows that as alcohol-related driving fatalities have decreased in the 16-20 age group, they have increased for 21-24 year olds. This suggests that the 21 minimum legal drinking age may simply postpone death. Furthermore, the statistics concerning non-traffic, alcohol-related deaths revealed an additional 1,000 18-20 year old lives lost per year. Thus, the contention that the 21 law saves lives is not without scrutiny and begs the point that "first-time legal drinkers are more likely to get in trouble at whatever age; thus, we need to address the risks and behaviors of first-time legal drinkers at any age in a better way" (Choose Responsibility, 2008).

### **Cultural Norms**

It is common knowledge that what was once a privilege for a small, elite segment of society has now become a possibility and reality for a far greater percentage of the American population. Since 1970, enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions has nearly doubled and the number of high school graduates enrolling the fall after commencement has stabilized in the mid-60 percentile (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Going to college is becoming a cultural norm. With that brings a host of other cultural norms, some positive and others detrimental. In the current climate, perhaps most questionable and antithetical to the mission of higher education is the custom of underage and binge drinking on college campuses, not to mention the antics and poor decisions that often accompany them. While there are myriad factors that have led to the prevalence of alcohol abuse by college students, it is

perhaps the intersection of the lack of parental authority and illegality that has had the greatest impact. In other words, as young adults leave the shelter and supervision of their parents and community, they will inevitably experiment and test the boundaries of their new found freedoms. Furthermore, in order to avoid the *other* authority, the law, they often do it underground and do it in excess. This situation is compounded by the fact that because drinking before the age of 21 is illegal, it is stigmatized and often not properly dealt with by parents or high schools. Thus, underage college students are ill-prepared for their own reactions to alcohol. They are also less likely to recognize when help is needed or contact authorities in alcohol-related emergencies.

### **In Loco Parentis: Who is Responsible for Alcohol Education?**

Prior to the 1960s, colleges and universities operated under a common law doctrine of “in loco parentis,” or in place of a parent. This meant that as young adults pursued their education beyond their homes and communities, it was expected that the institution would uphold the social norms and mores, such as prohibiting cohabitation and regulating interaction between genders among other things. However, with the student activism of the 1960s came the erosion of “in loco parentis” in higher education. Students became aware of their rights and demanded their ability to exercise them. In addition to this shifting role for the college, student populations were becoming more diverse and the accepted values of society less clear. Therefore, by 1984 when the national minimum legal drinking age of 21 was enacted, the university was suddenly placed in an unpracticed position of supervision and enforcement. Furthermore, this change was met with a student population with varying degrees of exposure to, experience with, and education about alcohol. Twenty-five years later the situation is no better. In fact, it may be even worse. As suggested in a *60 Minutes* segment on the Amethyst Initiative, the more college administrators and local authorities have tried to enforce the law, the more enigmatic and dangerous underage and binge drinking have become. Not only do many underage college students hide the ways they use and abuse alcohol, but also, as in the case of Gordie Bailey at the University of Colorado Boulder, when a party or initiation gets out of hand, they may not call for help out of fear of legal repercussions. After a fraternity initiation, Bailey was left alone, unconscious on the couch of his fraternity house. The next morning he was pronounced dead of alcohol poisoning. His parents believe that if the drinking age was lower and thus, not illegal, his friends would have called for medical help (*60 Minutes*, 2008).

Tragedies like that of Gordie Bailey pose the question of how to educate young adults about safe and responsible drinking. Who is best to deliver the message and what environment is most conducive to learning? While student affairs departments and professionals work to address issues of underage and binge drinking on campus, their efforts are often thwarted by the unintended consequences of the 21 minimum legal drinking age. Students are arriving on campus with varying degrees of experience with and knowledge about alcohol. They are placed in completely new social settings without a support network of friends, family, and mentors who know and care about them. Finally, their burgeoning adulthood is castrated by an isolated law that states they are not mature enough to drink alcohol. As in many parallel situations, they devolve into underdeveloped, irresponsible individuals.

The responsibility of alcohol education must not fall solely upon the colleges and universities. They cannot be expected to cure the epidemic of binge drinking without the support of society. Lowering the drinking age will shift some of the burden of responsibility of education to the parents and high schools, while providing colleges a safe and open environment for dealing with alcohol misuse and abuse. It is as unrealistic to expect college students to call authorities when drinking has gotten out of hand as it is to expect a college student to abstain from alcohol use until their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. The two messages simply do not coincide. If the drinking age were lowered, then at least university administrators could institute practices and policies that do not conflict with the self-interests of the students.

As demonstrated by MADD, the mention of rethinking the drinking age has led to outcries of opposition that warn of unwarranted deaths and fear that the lower the legal drinking age, the younger underage drinking will occur. While this may be true, it is no worse than the current situation. A family who loses their 21 year old son or daughter to an alcohol-related incident suffers just as much as one that loses an 18 or 16 year old. The potential benefit of lowering the legal drinking age is to shift a young adult's early experiences with alcohol to an environment and community where people are readily available to support them, as opposed to his or her first week of classes 100-1,000 miles from home. Furthermore, as no age brings with it unbridled maturity and wisdom, lowering the drinking age is not a solution in and of itself. Founder of the Amethyst Initiative and former president of Middlebury College, John McCardell, envisions a licensure system where after undergoing "drinker's ed" (a play on driver's ed) a young adult receives a license to purchase and drink alcohol. Another possibility

could be incorporating alcohol education into driver's education since much of MADD's concerns center around drunk driving. Or, if high schools added alcohol courses to their curriculum then a high school diploma could be a requirement for alcohol consumption.

This problem needs creative solutions such as those mentioned above and an open mind to consider them. Yet, before our society will be ready to embrace the debate, the 21 minimum legal drinking age and the federal highway aid penalty associated with it must be relaxed. With the Amethyst Initiative, some university presidents started the movement by leveraging their positions of power and standing behind the organization's statement. Neither the signature of some nor a statement is enough, however. With the risk of this debate falling flat or fizzling out, university presidents must refocus and reassert themselves as leaders in society. They need to harness their political power and coalition building skills to involve more participants including faculty, staff, and students to uncork this debate and lobby politicians for action. After all, what campus would not rally behind its leader on an issue so close to its experience?

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# Student of

Britany Cashatt

*This poem is in reflection to the work done by all professionals in higher education. It is a calling for us to acknowledge the needs and potentials of the students we are working with. To remember in the slow changing systems of higher education we have as much to learn, if not more, as we have to teach.*

Student of

why established

what purpose

who it serves

Agents of enculturation

Millennials

techno-savvy, pressured, future driven, special

inclusive conflict resolution

outside the classroom

Learning

not receptacles to fill

not loving control in the act of stifling contemplation; ending deliberation

challenging what we, they, you know

progression

inclusion

interaction, faculty staff peers

connection, involvement

to think

outside of self

what if: students share perspectives

professors reflect on

own view

not receptacles to fill

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Never Stop Learning

Not they – Academia

stronger student engagement

committed to collaboration

supporting student success

challenge entitlement mentality

shape, be shaped by environment

Health – not only physical

but intellectual, emotional, environmental, social, spiritual

What comes from drugs and drinking?

Approach to stigmatization of

Could lead to sex assault,

depression, missed opportunities,

missed connections

lower age? raise? stay the same?

Problem not the age range

Society's approach to our students; our children

How to change

need for treatment teams self care

ability to provide and encourage Honesty

Accessibility, Affordability, Accountability, Assessment

student voice matters

participant, not instructor, administrator

what affects and influences can have

as our "institutions are slow to change – glacially"

"in multiple voices – speak"

to give others the

opportunity

to do things well

to aspire

to inspire

through our aspirations

grow knowledge grow learning

of students

# Raising Heterosexual Consciousness and Engaging with our Privileged Identities

Andrew McGeehan

*This piece details an interview the author did with a fellow graduate student at Seattle University. In the interview, the author interviews the student about her experiences as a heterosexual woman, using question commonly asked of LGBT folks. Through this interview experience, she was able to more clearly identify and examine her privilege as a heterosexual and became more conscious of how it plays out in her daily life.*

An area of research that is becoming more visible and important in Higher Education is the examination of privileged identities, oppressed identities, and the impact those identities have on students. Researchers are creating identity development models that address Whiteness and Maleness, and recently Heterosexuality has begun to be addressed as well. With the increase in diversity across our college campuses, it is important that in discussing sexual orientation, it is clear sexual orientation does not just mean being LGBT—it includes heterosexuality as well. Once that concept is understood, students can begin deconstructing what it means to be straight in today's society. For the purpose of a class assignment, I was asked to interview someone who identified in ways unlike me. Though the intention was to interview someone from a minority group, I decided to interview someone from a majority group, but who was still different from me. Being gay man, I chose to interview a heterosexual woman. I was interested in exploring the unexamined privileges that come with being heterosexual. I thought this interview would give that person a chance to be faced with some of the questions that marginalized people often deal with on a daily basis. In that way, my interviewee was able to examine her own privilege and reflect on its benefits.

I interviewed Ashley Gonzalez, a fellow graduate student in the Student Development Administration program. I chose her because she exhibits a level of multicultural competency that I felt was necessary for this interview. Since the interview had the potential to be uncomfortable and disconcerting, I wanted to make sure I conducted it with someone who

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*Andrew McGeehan is a current graduate student at Seattle University, studying Student Development. He works in Housing and Residence Life and is interested in advocating for social justice and queer issues.*

already had a baseline knowledge of privilege and oppression and what that means for marginalized groups. I explained to her the reasoning behind conducting the interview, so that she wouldn't be offended by some of the questions I asked. Although Ashley is a Latina woman, and part of a marginalized group, our interview focused on an aspect of her privilege—heterosexuality. Straight culture is the dominant culture when it comes to sexuality, and though I am surrounded by it daily, I am not a part of it. I was hoping to learn more about straight culture, but also was interested in asking those questions that LGBT people are constantly called upon to answer to see how they were responded to by someone in the dominant culture. I also think it is assumed that everyone knows straight culture because it is ubiquitous, but no one talks about what it really entails. Through this interview, I was hoping to be able to provide words to what is seen in everyday life.

At present, Ashley is a single, heterosexual, 23 year old, second year graduate student at Seattle University, studying Student Development Administration and working as a program coordinator in the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Ashley is originally from the Central Valley of California, in a small town called Dinuba which she describes as, “very agricultural, majority Mexican and Mexican American, few white people, few Asians, and those who were white usually had money.” Ashley is a third generation Mexican American. Her parents divorced when she was two years old, and her mother remarried and opened up a restaurant with her new husband. The restaurant served as a surrogate day care for Ashley when she was growing up and she used her time in the restaurant to form a deep connection with her mother. She states, “we would spend hours and hours talking about all these issues—boys, love life, her marriage, and we really bonded a lot and then as I saw my mom kind of building her strength against my stepdad, because he was very abusive, I felt like I helped her find her strength in a way and in turn, she also helped me find my strength as a woman.” As she got older, Ashley knew she wanted to get out of the Central Valley. She went to the University of San Francisco and earned a degree in Sociology with a minor in Latin American studies. After that, she made her way to Seattle University to pursue her Master's degree in Student Development.

I asked Ashley to describe heterosexual culture at large. Ashley generally sees heterosexual culture as being very concerned with the gender roles that define what it means to be a “man” or a “woman.” Growing up, she stated that this seemed intensified in the Latino community:

Where the female is the one who cooks, cleans and takes care of the kids and always looks pretty and put together, has her nails done, so it's not just what you do but how you look. I grew up with the idea of machismo, where the men were strong, they were tough, they put women in their place. And if that meant they had to slap them around that's fine. This really shows the intersection of different co-cultures, in this case heterosexual culture and Latino culture.

Ashley also discussed the general focus of heterosexual culture seems to be reproduction, and that many examples of pop culture have "reproductive undertones" to them. She stated that the question women seem to ask is "does this man have the status and money to get me what I need?" and the man asks "is this woman hot enough to bear my child?" This obviously is distinctly different from LGBT culture, in which reproduction is generally not an option, and not an expectation.

I then moved into a portion of the interview where I challenged Ashley to answer questions that LGBT people are frequently asked to explain about themselves. I started by asking her when she first knew she was heterosexual. She explained that she was first interested in a boy at five years old, but she never knew that it was called "being straight" until she met someone who identified as gay. What Ashley was saying was that she was more readily able to identify herself once someone else identified themselves as something different. Ashley continued, "I didn't realize how normal it was until someone was being stigmatized for being gay...I was able to verify I was normal because someone else wasn't normal." This was a very interesting part of the interview for me. As someone who does identify as gay, I was able to define myself very early on because I knew I wasn't "normal." One difference between our two cultures is that Ashley defined her normality after seeing someone who was different, and I defined my difference after realizing I didn't fit the "normal" heterosexual mold. Essentially, I defined myself against the norm and Ashley defined herself against the difference.

We also discussed Ashley's "coming out" process to her family as heterosexual. She confided that there was no process, "there was never a need to state my sexuality, it was always assumed. There was no surprise." This obviously is a major cultural difference between straight and gay culture. There is no coming out process for a straight person. Most parents and family members assume heterosexuality. For LGBT people, coming out is a lifelong process. One must initially come out to oneself, and then, if one so chooses, family, friends, co-workers, and the

population at large. This process can happen many times over the course of a person's life as they move from place to place or from job to job. This is one of the largest differences between straight culture and gay culture. Another large difference is centered around safety. Ashley indicated that she has never been verbally or physically harassed for being straight, nor has she ever encountered any difficulties in the workplace. She mentioned a time in the workplace where she had to defend her "straightness" and she expressed the idea that when you are straight and "kind of get close to the line," you are often called upon to defend your straightness. I asked her if, from her perception, she thought that LGBT people ever had to defend their gayness. She said that maybe if a man didn't "look" gay, people might perceive him as straight and he would have to convince them that he actually is gay. Both straight and LGBT people get called upon to defend their sexual orientation, which can be a very frustrating and isolating experience, especially if it happens repeatedly.

Next, I asked Ashley what it was like to be heterosexual, in terms of being able to meet people, having access and hospitality, benefits at work, and other similar privileges. She summed it up pretty succinctly with her comment, "I don't have to worry about what people are going to think ever." She did realize what a privilege this is and discussed the ability to marry and the rights that come along with that. One interesting note that she made was that in being heterosexual, "it's not just that nothing happens, but the fact that there is a reward [to being straight]." The reward being all the privileges, rights, and social acceptance that come along with straightness. One cultural difference Ashley then noted was that in general, she finds LGBT culture to be more welcoming to people of other orientations than straight culture. She notes that, "when in queer communities or clubs, I feel like I am seen as more of a person and my womanhood is celebrated. I do feel more welcomed."

I wanted to examine the challenges and benefits of being heterosexual, so I posed the question to Ashley. In terms of benefits, she thought that the social acceptance was the most important one; as she puts it, "not having to worry." She also discussed the fact that straight people are catered to in mainstream media. She points out that billboards, advertisements, and TV shows are all generally geared towards straight culture. There is always someone that she can relate to when she turns on the TV. This is not true in gay culture. It is difficult to find gay characters on TV, and if they are present, they tend to merely reinforce stereotypes. Ashley noted that "the majority of mainstream media and all that, say that's what's right [heterosexuality] and

that I'm following the plan and everything is set in motion for me to succeed." When questioned about the challenges of being straight, Ashley hesitated for quite awhile, and then commented, "The fact that I have to think about it says a lot. I can't think of anything that's bad with being straight."

Ashley and I then discussed the media's portrayal of heterosexuals. She commented that "a lot of it is intertwined with whiteness, and with having money," clearly demonstrating that several co-cultures are being combined by the media to present a "perfect" image of a family. The media image of heterosexuality is damaging not only to the LGBT community, but also to the straight community. It sets up expectations about what relationships are supposed to look like and reinforces stereotyped gender roles. Ashley discussed some of the issues that can arise:

To perpetuate this [media] image of heterosexuality is perpetuating the image of what a man looks like or what a woman looks like or that there is a man and a woman and nothing in between. And I remember as soon as I started to examine myself in that sense my boyfriend at the time was like "are you lesbian, what's wrong with you" because I was looking outside the box, peeking outside the box, like what else is outside this feminine woman box? But I really do believe that it's not just heterosexuality, it's all intertwined with male dominance and whiteness.

This media portrayal of what a family is supposed to look like and what gender roles are supposed to be has troubled Ashley. She has many connections to the queer community, and considers herself to be immersed in the community both physically and emotionally. She stated that "once I could say that I truly loved someone who is part of that community, then you start to permeate the wall of difference and start seeing commonalities with each other."

On that positive note, I ended the formal interview with Ashley and discussed how she felt about the interview in general and if she had any final thoughts. She and I discussed issues of privilege and she expressed that it hurts everyone to give certain people benefits and privileges based on something they have no control over, in this case sexual orientation. She also eloquently stated, "Once you perpetuate what one image of right is supposed to look like then you have this other thing about what wrong looks like and then you stigmatize what wrong looks like and it's not good for anyone." Though we were talking about sexual orientation, this quote could epitomize many types of discrimination, whether it is racial, ethnic, religious, gender, or many others. Ashley described it as a "cycle of inequality."

I conducted this investigation because I wanted to examine privilege—something that people don't often take the time to examine in their own lives. Ashley proclaimed that she enjoyed the interview because she was able to examine her membership in a dominant group. She discussed how she might actually use this exercise to help her in the future: "There are a lot of things you asked me that I never thought about and so yeah next time I feel frustrated with a white person or a man or whatever I can think back to 'ok well when I am asked those questions about being straight or in my straight experience' I can refer to that." She ended our time together by remarking that more people should be asked to question their dominance and privilege.

I think this interview was beneficial for me because I was able to see that there are straight allies out there. I think it can be very easy to fall into a trap of thinking that you have no allies in the world. Speaking with Ashley helped me to remember that there are people who care about what happens to LGBT people, even if they aren't directly a part of that community. I think she also helped me to see where the intersections of heterosexuality, whiteness, and affluence converge. This can definitely help me in my interactions with students and staff as I continue on the field of higher education. I can see more clearly how cultures collide with each other, and converge to form a whole that is larger than its parts. In that sense, this exploration of heterosexuality was helpful for both my professional and personal development. Developing cultural competency is something that is important to me in both those areas of my life, and should be important for all student affairs professionals.

I was able to see in this interview that there are similarities between Ashley's culture and my own. One interesting facet is that we both participate in the others' culture. I have no choice but to participate in heterosexual culture, since it is ubiquitous and Ashley chooses to participate in LGBT culture. Our cultures are also similar in that they both get stereotyped unfairly, especially in regards to media. We are different in several ways, many of which I have already discussed throughout this paper. I think a few main differences include the ease in meeting others who are in your group, readily seeing members of your group on TV, being able to receive legal and social benefits, and less concern about safety and privacy.

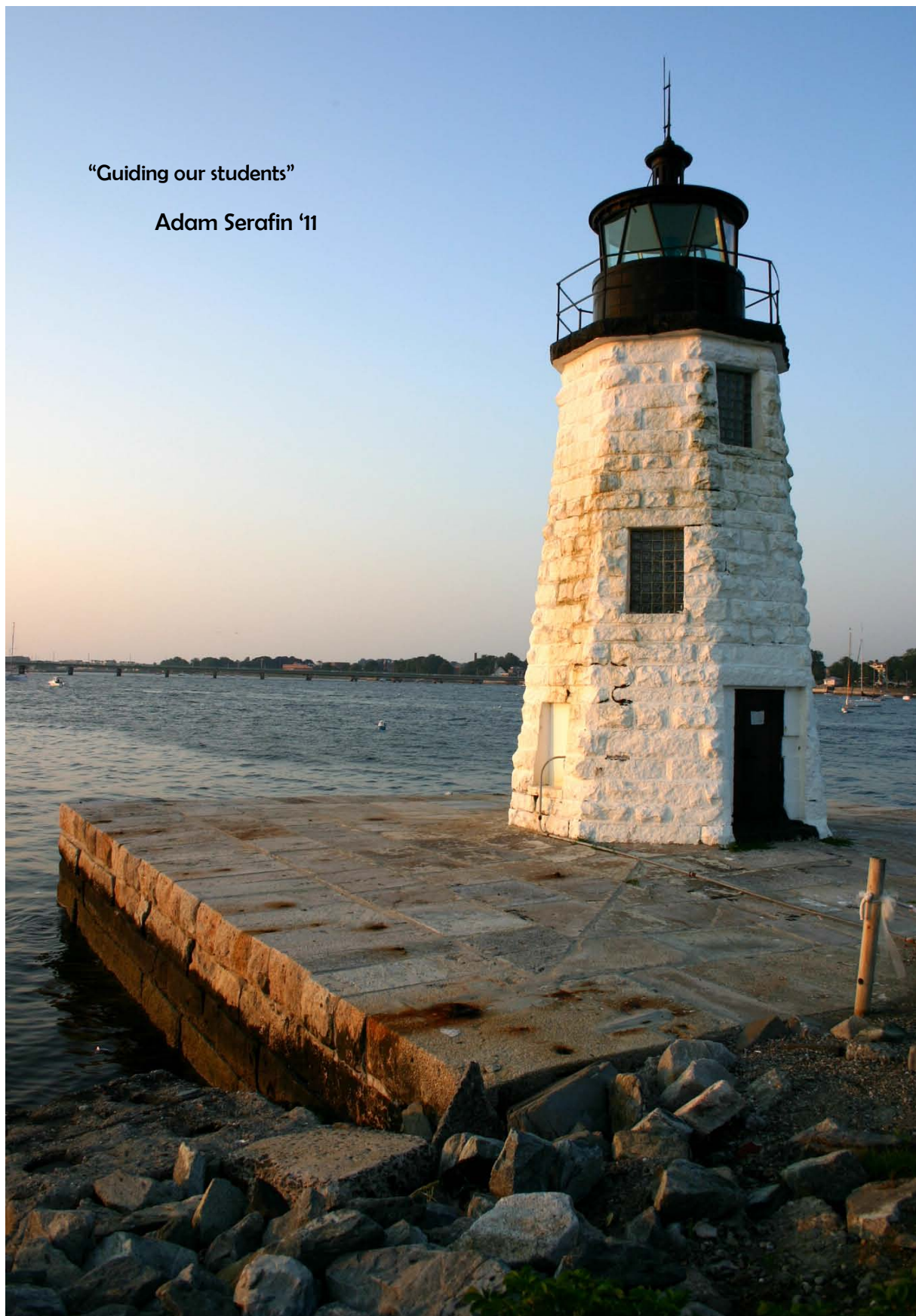
Both Ashley and I gained perspective from this interview. I enjoyed the time I spent with her and it allowed me to really examine my own possible bias against heterosexual people. She was able to examine one of her dominant identities and question her own privilege. Her story is



one of interest to me, and I know that she and I will continue having these conversations. I might even ask more heterosexual people these questions, so that I can more fully flesh out what it means to be straight, and they can begin to understand the constant questioning that many LGBT people face on an almost daily basis. Because of this interview, Ashley and I can both start understanding more fully different cultural groups, and can also continue our own work of questioning our own privilege.

**“Guiding our students”**

**Adam Serafin ‘11**



# A Journey to Zambia...A Journey Into Myself

Alison Greenwood

*After returning from a service trip to Zambia, Africa during the summer of 2009, Alison was inspired to take time for herself and to reflect on her experiences abroad. She enrolled in an independent study with Jake Diaz, Vice President for Student Development at Seattle University, which afforded her the opportunity to look at her own development in graduate school and begin a journey of self-discovery. As part of her independent study, Alison created a lengthy Scholarly Personal Narrative and she has taken pieces from that narrative to create this publication for Magis. The following paper draws on experiences from Alison's trip to Zambia and how those moments helped inspire her to think about her own growth in student affairs.*

During my first year of graduate school in the Student Development Administration program at Seattle University, questions about my identity and my sense of self began to surface. I found that I was asking myself tough questions like, "What can I contribute to student affairs?" "Why am I drawn to study abroad?" "Who am I meant to be and what makes me tick?" I sat with these questions and came to the conclusion that if I am questioning these aspects of my life then undergraduate students surely are, too. Thus, I was hoping for a chance to engage with undergraduate students about their sense of identity and their discernment process in college.

So, when an opportunity to go to Zambia, Africa for a service trip during the summer of 2009 presented itself, I jumped at the chance. I not only saw the trip as an opportunity to expand my knowledge of other cultures, but also as the perfect occasion to apply the developmental skills I was learning as a graduate student to a real life situation abroad. Because I was working toward a Masters in student development, I decided this trip would be ideal for creating a survey for the undergraduate students going to Zambia; I wanted to design a survey that would explore the discernment process that happened to the students while they were in Zambia and how the students were transformed after their experience abroad.

When I shared my idea with one of my mentors in my graduate program, she smiled and

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asked me if I had thought about my *own* process of development in regard to my goals for going abroad. The answer was no. I had not allowed myself the space to answer those tough questions like “Who am I meant to be and what makes me tick?” The wheels in my head started to turn and I realized that I needed to take time for myself and look at my own development before thinking about the development of undergraduate students. After all, how can I guide students through a process that I have not yet explored for myself? Below, I will share with you stories of people and experiences from my trip to Zambia that inspired me and provided me with the space to think about my own growth in student affairs.

### **Background Information**

*Professionals Without Boundaries (PWOB)* – PWOB is the organization I went to Zambia with in the summer of 2009. In 2007, a group of Seattle University professionals established PWOB as a way to empower the campus community to engage in and lead sustainable service projects to help people in need both locally and globally. Some of the projects PWOB has worked on include: restoration of the plumbing at a school in Merida, Mexico, installation of new showers for a homeless shelter in Tacoma, Washington, and establishing a partnership between the Peer Health and Wellness Programs at Seattle University and the University of Zambia, a project I will coordinate in the summer of 2010.

*Munali School* – The Munali School is the campus PWOB worked with on our service trip. The Munali School, located in Lusaka, Zambia, is comprised of the Munali Boys School, Munali Girls School, and Munali School for the Blind and Deaf. We spent most of our time working with the Munali School for the Blind and Deaf helping to install a water pump in the ablution block, which is a shower and toilet facility.

### **Mrs. Sumbwa**

On our first day in Lusaka we immediately headed to the Munali School to assess the work to be done on the ablution block in the days to come. Mrs. Sumbwa, the headmaster of the Munali School for the Blind and Deaf greeted us. She was wearing a traditional style Zambian dress, with an elaborate peach and silver motif. She was striking. I could see the years of hard work and time on her face and the whites of her eyes popped against the darkness of her skin. It was a strong face; a powerful and confident face.

Mrs. Sumbwa took us on a tour of the Munali School campus; we ended at the ablution block where we were to be working in the days to come. There was no roof on the cement

structure. There were no doors. There were old locks and gates to keep intruders (who were often times the students at the Munali School themselves) from entering and stealing the pumps, handles, and seat covers from the toilets. The smell of rotten water, rusty pipes, and human waste permeated the air. There were toilets and showers, but they were not to be used. The water pressure on campus was not strong enough to reach the toilets and showers. Over 200 young children were using the same spigot to do their bathing and laundry. It was a drastic comparison to the restroom facilities that Mrs. Sumbwa told us we could use; it seemed unfair. The restrooms we used while we were on campus were inside a building that only the teachers were allowed to use. They were clean and tidy with running water. We thanked Mrs. Sumbwa for offering us the space.

At the ablution block, Mrs. Sumbwa explained in her deep and commanding voice, "What you have in your minds may not actually be what you see." She was referring to the old infrastructure on the ablution block. Mrs. Sumbwa was under the impression that the group had a great deal of labor to do. She was warning us that our expectations of the work ahead may not actually be realistic.

Mrs. Sumbwa's words set the stage for me to think about my own expectations. Expectations are funny. We all have them, and chances are we have all been disappointed by them. We have expectations about what things are going to be like. We might expect to go to Africa and take photos of lions and elephants. We might expect to see poverty and villages of huts. Or perhaps we think we might see beautiful people and beautiful places. We have a notion of what we *think* something is going to be like.

I yearned to go to Zambia because I thought I would get answers to those questions "Who am I?" "What makes me tick?" and "How do I fit into this great big world?" I *expected* to get answers. It did not work like that. My expectations changed in Zambia. They even changed when I came back from Zambia. That is the one thing I have learned and I am trying to come to terms with – my expectations are going to change, and they should change...but, then that means *I* have to change. That is the challenge.

### **“Finding Peace in the Storms Within Us”**

When I walked into the University of Zambia's Sunday morning mass, I could have sworn I was at a reggae concert. The beating of the drums, the colorful voices, and the clapping from the crowd lifted my spirits more than any other Mass I had attended. I think the priest

leading the sermon felt the same way I did. Fr. Declan, an Irishman, is the Chaplain of the Catholic Ministry at the University of Zambia (UNZA). He had just returned from some time away from Zambia. He had been in Europe for work but he told the congregation, full of university students and community members, that while he was away, he left his heart in Zambia. He was so happy to return. "The choir hasn't gotten rusty, and the drums and guitar haven't gotten dusty," Fr. Declan opened his sermon. I listened to him and could immediately tell that I liked him. Perhaps it was his soft voice mixed with his smooth Irish accent that resonated with me. That was certainly a part of it. Eventually I found myself looking around the church at all of the people there. I think they were doing the same to us. We were clearly not "regulars" at this Church and they were curious why we were there. "We must find the peace in the storms within us," Fr. Declan's words shook me out of my daydream. They were louder than the drums, the voices, and the clapping combined. They hit my core.

On this day, Fr. Declan was leading the sermon for the new first-year students, who I came to later know as "fresh," to welcome them to the University of Zambia. He was encouraging the new students to find the peace within them during this time of transition. Classes were to start the following week and Fr. Declan wanted the new students to be prepared for a time that can feel overwhelming and extremely challenging. But, he said, "Remember to find the peace in the storms within us and hold on to your faith."

What Fr. Declan seemed to be saying that day was – listen. For me, listening is essential. I think with listening comes patience. Finding calm in the storms is about coming to terms with and understanding the internal feelings we may have. Before I left for Zambia, I wrote a letter to one of my mentors telling him that I was going to Zambia to listen. I was going to listen hard and I was going to find answers to those questions about myself that I was so desperately seeking. I was going to be in Zambia and "poof," it would come to me. Maybe it would come to me when I saw the lions and the elephants or it would come to me when I was working at the Munali School. However it came to me, I wanted it to come.

I planned that Zambia was going to be my place to listen to my heart and mind. However, it did not work like that. No answers came. There was no "poof" moment. Sure, I listened, but my listening came more in terms of listening to others. I listened to others' stories, their experiences, and their struggles. I was listening hard to others in hopes of making meaning for myself. I discovered the importance of inter-cultural dialogue in Zambia. I also discovered the

importance of finding the calm within the storm of my own life, and learning to just be present with myself.

### **Fr. Michele Crugnola**

Days have passed. We visited Victoria Falls. We saw elephants, giraffes, and lions on our overnight safari in Chobe National Park. We have been living the life of every great tourist and the sights we have seen have been amazing. We came back to the Munali School to say goodbye and see the progress on the shower and toilet facility while we had been away. We also drove to Chirundu, a small town on the Zambezi River, to check in with another group of Seattle University students. This group of students was assisting with the design and implementation of a waterwheel pump for use on the Zambezi River. The goal of their project was to move the water up a hill, away from the water's shore, to make it safer for women washing clothes. In Africa, crocodiles can pose devastating problems at the water's edge.

I was extremely impressed by the group's work. One of the students from Seattle University introduced me to Fr. Michele Crugnola. She had come to love him in her short days there. Fr. Michele lived on the same compound that the Seattle University students were staying at during their visit. Originally from Varsase, Italy, Fr. Michele has lived in Africa for years. When I spoke with him, I could hear his passion for the relationships between men and women in Africa. He was very aware and very realistic about the AIDS epidemic. When I asked him to reflect on his role in this crisis, he told me: "It's simply about life."

With his thick Italian accent he told me "problems never come by one, they are tangled together." Fr. Michele explained to me that HIV/AIDS in Africa is a societal problem. "We need to study the types of relationships between men and women." A woman who says she does not want kids, but cannot say no to her husband when he comes home drunk leads to problems (such as babies or the spread of HIV). "A knife in my side was when I met a woman with a husband and children. She told me she didn't know what love was," Fr. Michele sighed.

Fr. Michele's words make me think of darkness; a place many of us go and a place many of us are very fearful to go. I think about how I have known love in my life and I know I am privileged. I do not ever want to take that for granted. Oftentimes when we allow ourselves to go on a journey of self-discovery and ask ourselves questions about who we *really* are, we make realizations and bring things to life that perhaps we would sooner forget or gloss over. I discovered that it can be hard to look critically at yourself, but I am learning to be okay with all

parts of myself, after all, they make up me. I own all of it – I do not get to just pick and choose the parts I want. As Fr. Michele said, things do not just come one by one. Everything affects everything else. My experiences and identities are tangled together by *all* aspects of me.

### **Conclusion**

I have told some of my stories from Zambia. More importantly I have tried to open up parts of myself that I am discovering and that are challenging me. I have become more insightful and I am trying to make meaning from my experiences and the decisions I make. Upon reflection, I came to realize that very often, as student affairs professionals, we yearn to help students on their path of self-discovery and development and forget about our own. It was because of the conversation with one of my graduate school mentors that I was fortunate enough to determine that I needed to take time to engage and reflect with myself. I saw my trip to Zambia as that opportunity.

While I still may not have answers to questions about my identities, I have learned the importance of asking myself the "why" of things. Going through my own process of self-assessment has been crucial for my growth as a student affairs professional getting ready to enter the field. I have begun the journey of self-discovery and I have learned that I would do myself and my profession an injustice if I ignored my own developmental process. By taking this time, I believe I have enhanced my ability to mentor students through similar developmental processes. It may not be any easier engaging deeply and thoughtfully with oneself, but it makes life that much more meaningful.



## GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

*Magis: A Student Development Journal* welcomes traditional or non-traditional scholarly submissions addressing issues in higher education and student affairs. The Editorial Board specifically seeks manuscripts presenting new programming ideas, original research, and those that explore current events, issues, and concerns in the field.

### *Style Guidelines & Submission Instructions*

Submissions should be thought-provoking with well-organized, developed ideas, and include an abstract. The current version of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* should be followed in regards to citation and reference styles and general guidelines.

- Research-based submissions should be no longer than approximately 3,000 words totaling fifteen (15) double-spaced pages. Shorter articles are accepted and encouraged.
- Original research and creative material that is applicable to higher education and student affairs is encouraged.
- Due to the anonymous nature of the editing process, submissions should not contain any clues to the author's identity – biographical information and other identifying details will be requested if the submission is chosen for publication.
- Double-space all material, including references, quotations, etc. Margins should be set at one-inch on all sides.
- Authors are responsible for the accuracy of all references, quotations, figures, etc. Submissions with incomplete or incorrect information are not accepted.
- Manuscripts that are currently under consideration for publication elsewhere should not be submitted.
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