

Professional Knowledge Evaluation

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I. INTRODUCTION

As I reflect on my graduate school experiences, including time spent in the classroom, in internships, in practica, and with students and peers, I recognize a noticeable addition to the wealth of skills and knowledge that I possess. Through my experiences, I have acquired knowledge on graduate and professional students and admission processes, international and study abroad programs, effective models and strategies in residence life, building inclusive communities, and sustainable practices in higher education.

Through my own personal experience, coupled with my internship experience this year, I have learned how to guide and support graduate students as they navigate the transition to graduate studies, internships, and work-life balance. I have learned that success in these areas starts in the search process, and that a self-awareness of optimal institutional and positional fit play significant roles in that process. Furthermore, I have learned what systems of graduate and admissions programs exist, and how to share that knowledge in ways that aid potential graduate students.

With experience both studying abroad and advising interested students in studying abroad, I know the benefits that stem from a study abroad experience. I know that studying abroad provides a greater level of autonomy and self-empowerment to students, due to the rigors and challenges faced in navigating a foreign country and culture. I know the increases in multicultural competence that comes from managing culture shock and reaching new levels of cultural understanding and appreciation.

I know how residence life experiences help develop interpersonal relationship skills, foster autonomy, and push students toward relativist patterns of thinking. I know

that possessing the knowledge and abilities to conduct effective confrontations with roommates and peers as students leads to more mature and professional adults. I know that taking ownership for ones decisions, and knowing why that is important, helps to create independent thinkers. Finally, I know that students who develop and knowledge and ability of relativism become more confident, values based, and willing to learn- all of which are crucial in an ever-more polarized and vitriolic society.

The importance of inclusive communities continues to rise, as our global outreach continues to grow and our interaction with people not like ourselves becomes ever more prevalent. Knowing about systems of privilege and oppression, identity development, and fostering community is crucial in building healthy, welcoming environments. Knowing that students will be challenged outside of academia with new environments and people creates a greater need for systems of education and acceptance while in the university setting.

Finally, knowing about innovative means of creating sustainable institutions and practices is essential for the future of higher education. As costs rise across the field, finding ways to reduce those costs, as well as the footprint and impact on the environment is essential for institutions of higher education. Knowing about modern sustainable trends and practices, and knowing the importance of implementing those practices, is a critical component of operating a modern college and university.

II. PRIMARY SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE

While accruing knowledge is a basic expectation of any graduate program, knowledge that is based off theory and research creates potent and dangerous professionals. The areas of which I have acquired knowledge these last two years have

been informed through various forms of learning, including experiential learning, formal academic learning, and mentor-led education.

The primary sources of knowledge that have influenced and shaped my own insights and knowledge of graduate students and admissions processes are my own experiences as a graduate student. Though my experience is limited to my own lens, my knowledge of what the expectations and requirements for the academic piece of graduate school are still valuable. As the intern for the College Student Personnel (CSP) program, I have firsthand experience working with and improving the admissions process for the program. By representing the program, I have gained a knowledge base regarding common experiences and paths of graduate students.

In addition to my own experience, I have refined my knowledge base of graduate student programs and admissions through conversations with the faculty of the program. In those conversations, I have gathered information and experience discussing graduate student and program cultures, academic expectations, and common career trajectories. Besides these personal communications, I have been given several documents for my own personal and professional development this year, including Young's (n.d.) "Learning in student affairs master's programs." This document addresses how the implementation of the CAS standards, the emphasis on assessment, evaluation, and research, and the importance of the culminating experience are significant in the development of a graduate student.

Having this knowledge, in conjunction with my knowledge of the importance of finding program and internship fit, and that fit being a key component to work-life harmony, will play significant roles in my professional success. The experiences I have

gained in my graduate career have incredible transferrable capabilities, whether it be aiding students in announcing passions, working with faculty members in general, or providing best practices of managing time and expectations. As an aspiring faculty member of higher education, my knowledge and experiences with graduate students and admissions will prove to be truly valuable.

My knowledge of study abroad programs has been influenced by several primary sources. Again, my experience studying abroad serves as the greatest influence to my lens and approach to study abroad programs. Aside from my own experience abroad, I have been influenced by the Forum on Education Abroad's (2011) "Standards of good practice for education abroad", Millora's (2011) "This is how life can be different: How U.S. student experiences in international education programs facilitate civic and global engagement", and Rowan-Kenyon and Niehaus' (2011) "One year later: The influence of short-term study abroad experiences on students." These publications have greatly shaped my knowledge and practice in study abroad advising and consultation. My knowledge has been influenced by the training and information I received through the transition document and narratives left for me by my internship predecessor (Feeney, 2011). Additionally, I gained knowledge and experience of study abroad practices and policies through conversations with my internship supervisor.

There are several ways in which this knowledge may contribute to my professional success. First and foremost, the best practices and knowledge I gained in advising students interested in studying abroad have direct impacts to any position I will hold. Additionally, knowing the field and administrative processes to studying abroad will be invaluable, as I aspire to lead study tours and seminars in the future. Knowing the

best practices, requirements, and processes to developing and leading a safe and effective study tour is essential for any aspiring leader.

My knowledge of residence life is again impacted by experience and literature. As a resident assistant, hall director, and Greek house director, I have a significant amount of informal theory and formal experience that constitutes my knowledge base of residence life, including the Baldwin-Wallace College (2011) Hall Director Manual. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) described, among other things, how residence life contributes to learning within the institution. Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt (2010) contributed to my knowledge base by providing examples of what practices the DEEP (Documenting Effective Education Practices) schools do to support their residence life programs, and in turn their students. This document is, perhaps the greatest source of innovative knowledge I have found regarding best practices in residence life. The CAS standards (2012) contributed to my insights as to what the industry standards for residence life programs entail.

Being as I am searching almost exclusively for residence life live-in positions, all of the information and knowledge I have gathered in my graduate studies, and before, will play a crucial role in my professional success. I have already begun using these sources of knowledge to inform my job search, and envision myself continuing to utilize these sources to inform my practice for as long as I remain in the field. Specifically, I envision applying this knowledge base to managing my resident assistant staff, creating an effective and healthy hall environment, implementing innovative practices, and encouraging learning and development in the halls.

Crucial to the effective management of a residence hall community is the ability to create inclusive communities, which is another area that I have gained knowledge in during graduate school. Broido's (n.d.) compilation of community building strategies contributed to my knowledge of how to build communities centered on learning. Kuh et. al (2010) provide best practices of institutions in building inclusive, healthy communities. Kuh and Whitt (1988) described the significance of culture in campus communities. Magolda (2001) contributed to my insight of the role that rituals and values play in developing community. Similarly, Cheng (2004) noted how students contribute to campus community. Pope, Reynolds, Mueller, and Cheatham (2004) contributed perhaps the most important insights to creating inclusive communities, as they chronicled ways that professionals continue to develop critical knowledge, skills, and awareness in their multicultural competence. Additionally, it provides examples of practices and interventions to guide and assist practitioners in developing inclusive, competent communities.

This knowledge base will contribute significantly to my professional success, as I will be tasked with creating and maintaining communities for the duration of my professional career. Even more important is the notion that developing multicultural competence through the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and awareness is essential to success in any field of work or study in modern society. Thus, creating these communities provides a model of support and reference for all students who encounter inclusivity and competence.

The sources of knowledge that have contributed most to my insights of sustainable practices in higher education are again influenced by experience and

literature. In *Mindfully Green*, I learned the value of personalizing your approach to sustainability. Knowing about sustainable practices, and then knowing what practices you are passionate about helps to foster a greater passion and commitment for sustainability. Friendland and Lawn (2007) provided practices and approaches for institutions to become greener, adding to my knowledge base for higher education practices. ACPA (n.d.) contributed to my knowledge of identifying ways institutions can develop sustainably. Atherton and Giurco (2011) added to those concepts of sustainable development by considering institutional changes to climates, transportation systems, and paper use. My own experience advising a sustainability-focused student group, living in a geothermal residence hall, and sitting on the campus green fund committee have all impacted my knowledge base in sustainability.

Besides residence life, the field I am primarily searching in, the field of sustainability is my second-most passionate field. The knowledge I have gained from Dunkel (2009) and Whiteman (2009) on creating sustainable residence halls and communities will be essential to my work in residence life. Thompson and Hammond Creighton's (2007) work regarding institutional environments, and the importance of using metrics to propose and support sustainable practices at an institution, will be invaluable. As the need for institutions to reduce waste and cost continues to grow, having a knowledge base on effective sustainable practices in higher education, regardless of position or functional area, will be necessary for the betterment of the institution as a whole.

As someone who believes in holistic development and education, I contest that no one area of knowledge is more important than another. These five areas come together

with the full range of knowledge, skills, and experiences that I have accrued in graduate school, and life, to influence how I use the resources I currently have, as well as identifying and fostering new resources to continue my development as a person and professional. As I look forward to my career, I recognize that I still have much to learn about sustainable development and practices in and out of higher education. I recognize that my own multicultural competence will continue to grow and develop as time goes by and I seek ways to challenge my privilege and beliefs. Finally, I am aware that the types and needs of students will continue to change over time, forcing residence life and the field of higher education to continue to change and adapt to those students. After all, just as learning is a lifelong process devoid of a true end, so too is my own personal and professional development.

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