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CAMPUS ACTIVITIES Programming®

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR CAMPUS ACTIVITIES



TAKE THE STAGE

THE 2015 NATIONAL CONVENTION IN PICTURES

Planning Recruitment for Next Year

Roadmap to Retreat Planning

Achieving Student-Life Balance

Paying It Forward on Campus

When Cultural and Late-Night Programming Collide

The Awkward Threesome: Sex, Alcohol and Consent

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PLEASE, GO AWAY!

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Say, "Yes"

By Glenn Farr



AS I EDIT THE ARTICLES you read in *Campus Activities Programming*®, I often learn something new or am called upon to reflect more deeply about a topic I've already explored. For example, I have long felt self-awareness is crucial in all areas of life and anyone who does not regularly assess themselves and their abilities, or draw upon someone else to offer such assessment, misses the opportunity to grow in any number of positive ways.

I was reminded of this while editing Tolulope Taiwo's article, "Planning Recruitment for Next Year" (p. 8). She shares the concept of "shoulder tapping," in which an advisor calls on a student to take on a new position, responsibility or other challenge as part of serving on a programming board. The concept resonated with me because it's happened to me, and I've done it to others. Most recently, the shoulder-taps I've given or received have occurred in conjunction with my local theatrical pursuits.

A few years ago, a local company staged a production of *The Homecoming*, a play based on the same book that led to the TV show *The Waltons*. The director, a friend of mine, suggested I audition for the role of the father, Clay Spencer. "Are you out of your mind?" I asked. "Does he wear a tuxedo, speak with a British accent or drink a martini?" In spite of the fact I grew up in the rural South, never heard a British accent until I saw Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music*, and my parents were teetotalers, the character I described had become my stock in trade on stage.

Nevertheless, I auditioned, and as I was reading Clay Spencer's lines, I realized I had heard his "voice" before – coming from virtually every adult man I knew growing up. Ultimately, I was cast and to the surprise of many, including

me, I received one of the best critical notices of my 40 years of stage performance.

Before that, though, I did some shoulder tapping of my own. I was casting a show, a little known family comedy, and I called in two actors who had auditioned for me before, but whom I had not cast. The "fit" had not been there before, but I saw it with each of them with regard to roles in the new show.

The young woman gratefully accepted the role, but said, "I hope you're not giving me this part just because you don't have anyone else." I assured her it was because she was right for it. She didn't seem to believe me, but during the weeks of rehearsal to follow, her confidence grew, and during the performances, audiences responded warmly to the "forgotten daughter" persona she so well embraced.

With the young man, it took some convincing to get him to take the role. However, he also was very effective in his performance as the self-centered son and after the run, he said, "I know you had to twist my arm to get me to do this, but I've had the best time I've ever had on stage."

It's not always easy to know what we're capable of accomplishing, or that we might actually enjoy pursuing the new challenge at hand. Sometimes, it does take someone else to point out our undeveloped strengths and encourage us to move forward.

So, go tap a few shoulders, and if someone taps yours, say, "Yes."

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An Exciting Year Ahead for NACA: Will You Join Me?

By **Brian Gardner** @stl_bg



I AM THRILLED TO BE SERVING as the Chair of the Board of Directors of your Association as we enter a new year. I am humbled by the trust our members have placed in me. The road ahead is bright and I find that exciting; but it's important you know this is a year about continuing to build upon the foundation that has been developed during the past year as we continue to strive for an excellent NACA. When I became Chair-Elect in February 2014, Ken Brill and I sat down to map out the next two years for NACA under our leadership. Welcome to Year Two.

Many of you were able to join us recently in Minneapolis for our annual Volunteer Reception and heard the vision I cast for FY 2016. I'd like to share those remarks as a reminder for those who heard them in February and to enlighten those not able to attend. So, here is what 2015-2016 looks like:

These are truly exciting times for our Association. We have made a great deal of positive progress over the past couple of years, all in the name of value for our members. It is that meaningful change we must continue to experience and leverage for the betterment of NACA and, therefore, the campus activities field.

We must remain steadfast in our focus on the big picture. In a 1983 keynote address, C. Shaw Smith, one of NACA's Founders, told this story:

"Three people were working and somebody said, 'What are you doing?' The first man said, 'I'm moving bricks from here to there.' The second man said, 'I'm earning \$3.60 an hour.' The last man said, 'Me? I'm building a cathedral.'"

We don't produce seven regional conferences and a National Convention; we don't host a festival and a series of summer Institutes. No, we teach, we educate ... we are the HOW-TO people. We teach our students how to bring entertainment to their campuses and learn all along the way. We teach our professionals how to engage their students in campus activities. We teach our associates how to connect with the college market. It is with this value as our central focus that we charge ahead to the next year.

I've been told by those who've come before me this is the time people ask the Chair-Elect, "What are you going to do for YOUR year as Chair." Most simply, I say, "Nothing." This is not about me; this is not MY time to shine – it is NACA's time to shine. It is NACA's time to flourish. It...is...NACA's time ...

I am here to facilitate the process the Board of Directors will pursue to continue making the Association everything it can be to best serve its members. We will feverishly work to accomplish the goals outlined in the Association's Strategic Plan. Specifically, for 2015-2016:

- We will continue to focus on excellence in the management of the Association.
- We will provide opportunities for Executive Director Toby Cummings to lead the Office in providing the highest level of customer service to all members in all settings.
- We will finish the recommendations developed at the Volunteer Experience Summit. The hard work and dedication of that group of volunteers must be honored, as their work is essential to ensuring a meaningful volunteer experience.
- We will continue to develop business opportunities for our members in Block Booking while expanding opportunities in corporate sponsorships to ensure we are providing our members the greatest value, with a watchful eye on costs.
- Most importantly, however, *we will grow school membership*. We offer an amazing product through NACA; focusing on growing our membership provides us a terrific opportunity to carry our brand to more schools and have an impact on their campuses. In turn, this will provide greater opportunities for our current school members to interact with a more diverse membership and our associate members to experience an expanded campus marketplace audience.

These are exciting times, indeed. And, as C. Shaw Smith closed his 1983 keynote address, "I think we should get on with it."

So, let's get on with it. Let's get on with another exciting year for NACA. Will you join me?

Have You Ever Thought about Pursuing a Career in Student Affairs?

By
KRISTI NIRO
University of South Carolina

A career in student affairs is not for everyone, but it is a fantastic option for people who want to positively impact the lives of college students.

YOU CERTAINLY HAVE BEEN BUSY SINCE YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR —

setting and achieving academic goals, volunteering in the community, becoming a leader in one or more student organizations, studying abroad and/or participating in summer internships. As you near the end of your undergraduate career, you might be wondering what you will do next. Post-graduation options include getting a job, joining the Peace Corps or Teach for America, or continuing your education in graduate school.

Making the decision to go to graduate school is big. “Grad school is a life-changing commitment: less like taking a new job and more like moving, for the entirety of your twenties, to a new country” (Rothman, 2013, para. 13). You may be considering pursuing a graduate degree in your undergraduate academic area, but given your involvement as a student leader, have you ever considered pursuing a master’s degree in student affairs administration? If you haven’t, I would like to introduce you to the field of student affairs, help you decide whether it is something you should consider, and provide helpful advice if you do decide to pursue a master’s degree in student affairs administration.

What Is Student Affairs?

“The work done by Student Affairs professionals helps students begin a lifetime journey of growth and self-exploration. Student learning doesn’t just happen in a classroom. Opportunities for teaching and development exist



everywhere and at all times on campus” (NASPA, Jan. 1, 2014, para. 2). Student affairs administrators manage admissions, orientation, academic advising, financial aid, residence life, student activities, Greek life, disability services, and study abroad and leadership programs, just to name a few. They encourage an understanding and respect for diversity, a belief in the worth of individuals, and support students in all of their needs (NASPA, 2014). Student affairs professionals are “the people behind the curtain” who help students make the most of their college experiences.

Is Student Affairs for You?

A career in student affairs can be extremely rewarding and fun! Pursuing a career in the field will allow you to work with students, enjoy the college or university environment, gain planning, communication and leadership skills, and take on responsibilities such as facility management, human resources functions, budget development and/or assessment. But most importantly, student affairs administrators have the chance to positively impact the lives of college students (ACUI, Jan. 1, 2014).

The perks associated with a career in student affairs are plentiful, but the field also has challenges. Some jobs in the field require employees to be available outside of the typical 9-5 office hours. A residence hall director, for example, may need to be “on call” 24/7 for periods of time. Many of the most successful and well-loved people in the profession are such because they put in extra hours and effort. But, hours can be unpredictable. For example, when campus emergencies arise, student affairs professionals are expected to work extra hours. Furthermore, they must be flexible and willing to take on “other duties as assigned.” People looking to make six-figure salaries will want to pursue an MBA, law or medical degree, if their main objective is to make a lot of money. You won’t starve as a student affairs employee, but you will not make as much money as you might in some other fields.

Another thing to consider as you decide if pursuing a master’s degree in student affairs is for you, is whether you can afford to go to graduate school. Are you willing to incur more debt from student loans?

Also, consider whether you are mentally ready to embark upon another degree or if you need a break from school. Additionally, you will need to decide whether you are passionate about helping students

to succeed. In order to be truly successful in the world of student affairs, you must love higher education and working with students. The job is really about helping students optimize their educational experiences. It is crucial to ask yourself why you want to pursue this career.

Applying to Graduate School

If, after reflecting on your answers to these questions, you decide to pursue a master’s degree program in student affairs administration, you need to explore the steps involved in the application process. Begin by talking to your student affairs mentors (Smith, 2008). Make a list of the professionals who most impacted your undergraduate experience. Consider student life professionals, academic and/or fraternity/sorority advisors, or a faculty member who advised an organization in which you were active. Ask to schedule a meeting with them and be prepared to ask specific questions about the field. How did they decide on a career in student affairs? What do they love and loathe about their jobs? What graduate programs would they suggest? What advice do they have for you on pursuing a career in the field? Student affairs professionals generally love engaging with students who are interested in following in their footsteps.

Next, you need to research student affairs graduate programs. There are two major graduate program listings: one provided by NASPA (<https://www.naspa.org/careers/graduate/graduate-program-directory>) and one provided by ACPA (<http://www.acpa.nche.edu/commission-professional-preparation-directory-graduate-programs>). Everyone’s priorities are different, but here are a few factors to consider as you examine programs:

- **Program Length:** Typical student affairs graduate programs are two years in length, although some may be shorter or longer, depending on the school and how many hours a week you plan to work.
- **Assistantship Opportunities:** One thing employers are seeking in graduates of student affairs master’s degree programs is hands-on experience in the field. One of the best ways to acquire significant experience is to work as a graduate assistant (typically 20 hours per week) while pursuing your graduate degree.
- **Other Hands-On Learning Opportunities:** Graduate assistantships are not the only way to acquire experience while enrolled in a graduate program. Many programs offer opportunities to participate in internships and practicum experiences.
- **In-person vs. Online Classes:** Both of these options have pros and cons. For example, attending class in person is ideal for the student who wants to get to know the professors and other students in their cohort. On the other hand, online classes can be more convenient for someone who works full time or needs to care for children.
- **Cohort Size:** Are you comfortable in an environment where you are one of many students? Or do you prefer a more intimate cohort, which may allow you to get to know your fellow students more easily?
- **Faculty:** The faculty within a program will play an

extremely important role in your experience in graduate school. Look into the backgrounds of the professors in the programs you are considering. Do some of them have interests similar to yours?

- **Leadership Opportunities:** When seeking a job in student affairs administration, having leadership experience on your résumé can be very influential in your appeal to potential employers. Seek out graduate programs that have successful student organizations and promote leaders.
- **Placement Rates:** Ask each program's director about the percentage of graduates from the past year who were able to obtain a job in the field.
- **Location:** Is proximity to your family important to you? What other geographical considerations do you have?
- **Financing Your Education:** Some programs offer fellowships, scholarships and/or graduate assistantships available to help finance your graduate education. Be on the lookout for programs that partially or fully waive tuition if you have a fellowship or a graduate assistantship.

Once you find programs of interest, carefully follow the admissions requirements for each program. Feel free to contact the program director for each of the programs you are considering to ask questions not covered on the program's website. Pay close attention to application deadlines. Most programs require applicants to submit letters of recommendation, so be sure to give former professors, advisors, mentors and employers two to four weeks to write and submit letters of recommendation by the deadlines set by each program. The majority of student affairs master's degree programs require applicants to submit their Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores, so consider taking a GRE prep course if you have struggled with standardized tests in the past.

Programs also typically require candidates to submit a résumé and a personal statement. Please do not feel obligated to limit your résumé to one page, but do make sure to have mentors edit it, as well as your personal statement. Your personal statement offers a great opportunity to highlight how you learned about the student affairs profession, why you want to join the field, your specific interest in each program, your career aspirations, and the unique characteristics and leadership skills you would bring to the program.

Before embarking upon the admissions process, please be sure you do not owe any money to your current institution. You want to be sure the institution will be willing to send your transcripts to the schools to which you are applying. The application process can be costly, so it is a good idea to create a budget. Typical costs include: transcripts to send to schools, GRE prep courses and exams, application costs at individual institutions, and travel costs to attend campus interview days, etc.

Most graduate programs will schedule an interview weekend. For some programs, the interview weekend involves interviewing for admission, while other schools' interview weekends are designed for people who have been admitted to the program to come interview for graduate assistantships.

A Fantastic Option

A career in student affairs is not for everyone, but it is a fantastic option for people who want to positively impact the lives of college students. While I have highlighted points to consider when deciding to pursue a master's degree in student affairs, as well as the application process for these programs, please be aware that applying to graduate school is only the beginning. As a student affairs professional, you will have the unique opportunity to share your passion for higher education, enrich the college experience, and truly make a difference in the lives of those seeking to expand their knowledge. You will be given the chance to work in one of the most rewarding fields available, and through this, you may even change the world.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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NACA® Leadership Fellows Program

Becoming a Leadership Fellow is an opportunity for full-time professional staff (those who have been in the field three years or less) of underrepresented ethnicities to become familiar with NACA governance, programs and professional development opportunities at both the regional and national levels. Opportunities for full-time professional staff (who have been in the field five years or more) to become Mentors are also available.

Benefits for Leadership Fellows:


- Complimentary registration to the NACA® National Convention and one NACA® Regional Conference; Professional Development Luncheon ticket for each event and Diversity Dinner ticket for the NACA® National Convention
- Present at least one educational session at each event.
- Write an article for *Campus Activities Programming*® magazine
- Assist with NACA® diversity initiatives at the National Convention and regional conferences
- Serve as a member of the NACA® Diversity Activities Group

For more information
or to apply, contact/vist
[https://www.naca.org/Volunteer/
Pages/NationalPositions.aspx](https://www.naca.org/Volunteer/Pages/NationalPositions.aspx)
Apply for positions by June 30.



PLANNING RECRUITMENT FOR NEXT YEAR

By
TOLULOPE TAIWO
Colorado State University



AS THE SCHOOL YEAR BEGINS TO WIND DOWN, we often think about the year and making plans for recruitment. As a student affairs professional, I've had the privilege of recruiting staff and helping students recruit organization members. Although each school and student organization is different when it comes to recruitment, there are some general practices we advisors and supervisors can use to recruit the best possible students to serve on our staffs.

Recruiting for Your Staff

Use your campus connections

Often, student affairs professionals want diversity on our staffs, and a great way to accomplish this goal is to reach out to every single office on campus. Many times, we only think to ask departments in which we work, or the few departments with which we work closely, but reaching out to areas that are usually populated by many students – such as diversity and social justice offices, the student center, the recreational center, health offices – is an easy way to recruit different types of students.

As a member of a 20-person student affairs graduate cohort, I often find myself asking fellow graduate students to announce position openings for our department and I return the favor by announcing their staff openings during my meetings. Because collectively we all work in most of the offices on campus, I am able to get the word out about positions to students I would have never met, otherwise. And as a bonus, I get to create partnerships with different student affairs practitioners. It's a win-win for everyone.

Focus on what motivates students individually

The easiest way to pull a student into interview for a position or to join an organization is to speak to them individually. Obviously, payment is an easy motivator to get students to apply for a job, but besides that, different students are interested in positions for various reasons. Our job is to tap into personal goals and interests, and use that to sell positions or organizations to students.

When I was recruiting for students to serve as peer academic mentors, I had the opportunity to talk with each of the candidates even before they started interviewing for the position. Because of my one-on-one recruitment approach, I got to know the students personally. One really loved helping others, and I related her caring nature to the benefits of using mentoring skills to help first-year students transition smoothly into the campus community. One student was slightly struggling in her current academic classes, so I explained how motivating others to study and re-teaching other students academic concepts would actually drive her to improve in school. (I was right). By talking to these students as individuals instead of simply giving them the elevator speech, I was able to recruit students who were really excited about the positions available.

This idea of focusing on what motivates a student is what worked on me when I was an undergraduate student and got me to join our programming board. Because I was a self-proclaimed event planner who missed her high school student homecoming community and had seemingly endless time on my hands for extracurricular activities, my advisors were able to convince me to join the programming board by simply telling me it would be like planning events in high school, but better. They were able to speak to my program-planning soul and roped me in for a full four years with the programming board.

Make sure marketing tools are appealing

We may not have time to individually talk to a student one-on-one, and they will probably learn about position openings via our websites or posters. That's perfectly fine if our marketing tools are on point. A confusing website will turn away even the most technically savvy student, and anyone who is frustrated with finding the information and gets lost trying to read the job description is probably not going to apply or join the team. Additionally, a confusing poster with 20,000 items and 50,000 words on it (yes, I'm exaggerating, but you get the point) will not be the best recruiting tool for the student who's quickly passing by the student center before class.

Sometimes, we're lucky enough to have a marketing person for the department, and we can order a poster or put an advertisement on the website. (If you have an in-house marketing person, make sure to tell them how awesome they are!) Sometimes, though, we need to make marketing materials ourselves. Regardless of whether this is the easiest thing in the world for us or if it takes three hours to make a poster (I typically fall into this camp), a good rule of thumb is to have someone outside the organization – a co-worker in

the department, or even someone outside the department – review the website or posters. Ask them if it's easily navigable, catchy and enticing. If it is, you're in business. If not, you may want to tweak some things.

Additionally, make sure the marketing materials are inclusive to all students. This might mean including text right after posters embedded in a recruitment email. This may also mean making the poster gender neutral and devoid of all stereotypes that turn students away or make them feel unsafe. Asking various professional staff members to look at marketing materials with these issues in mind is also a good idea.

When Students Do the Recruiting

Sometimes we advisors don't have the opportunity to recruit for our student staffs because they are elected or are chosen through a student-driven interview decision processes. Unless

we have super-executive-advisor privileges, we do not have voting rights and selection privileges and, therefore, need to rely on our students to choose teammates. This often means the recruiting process falls heavily on them. Often, for some organizations, anyone can be a general member, and recruitment looks like inviting everyone and anyone to join the group.

Although we may not get the opportunity to directly choose our team, we still may have a hand in the recruiting processes. As staff members of the organization, we can help students recruit new students, while emphasizing professional development skills, particularly in marketing.

Understand that shoulder tapping is key

As an advisor of the National Residence Hall Honorary and former advisor for our Residence Hall Association, I watch students elect new cabinet members (executive members) for organizations. Although I love the self-authorship of student-led democracy, I often see students who would be perfect for certain positions who are not being selected and wish I could vote, as well. Therefore, shoulder tapping is one of my favorite things to do because it allows me the opportunity to convince these students to run for positions. This doesn't mean I actively try to overthrow the election process or root against certain students. Rather, I want to give all students a chance to shine. Plus, I was shoulder-tapped as an undergraduate student for a couple of positions, and I know how much it means to a student with

WE MAY NOT HAVE TIME TO INDIVIDUALLY TALK TO A STUDENT ONE-ON-ONE, AND THEY WILL PROBABLY LEARN ABOUT POSITION OPENINGS VIA OUR WEBSITES OR POSTERS. THAT'S PERFECTLY FINE IF OUR MARKETING TOOLS ARE ON POINT.

minimal confidence to hear from a staff member that they would do well as a leader or as a new member of the team.

Encourage students to use every event as a recruiting tool and create events as recruitment tools

There's a big concert tonight? Encourage your students to put posters by the door and have students talk up the organization afterward. The speaker your programming board wants to bring will attract over 1,000 students? Suggest that members talk about how to apply for a position before the main event. Every single event is an opportunity to draw in new students.

Sometimes, I even advise students to create events just to recruit new students. Last year, a student planned our "giveaway days" on the plaza once a month, and would use that solely as a recruitment tool for the Residence Hall Association. Because the free tumblers and T-shirts attracted college students (realistically, when has free swag failed to draw students attention?), she was able to get a couple of students to join the organization.

Sometimes, programming boards don't have the funds to constantly give out free stuff. In that event, social media contests can also be a cool way to get students' attention and recruit new members. One clever marketing tool used is a social media photo scavenger hunt. Our marketing chair tweeted clues for students, and they would try to take pictures with the object or campus statue involved. The winners would then be recognized via tweet, and one student would also win a small prize. Students who won would often

be curious about the organization, and many of them ended up joining as general members. Advising students to use social media, and other venues, for continuous recruitment, will bring in new staff members.

Teach These Skills to Your Students

The reason I know these things work, besides my experience as a professional, is because I was taught them as a student. Cheers for leadership development! I encourage you all to share these recruiting tips with your students, as well, in order to enhance professional development skills. I am not the master of recruitment, of course, so feel free to share with me which practices worked and others you use in your day-to-day process (tegg206@gmail.com). Good luck in recruiting season and have a great rest of the semester!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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**How to Achieve
Student-Life Balance**

By

PAUL ARTALE

University of Michigan-Flint

**'Twas the night before finals and all through the dorm,
Your social media feeds are binging,
Your temperature is quite warm.
With so many meetings and deadlines you just want to shout:
"Why do I let this always happen? No wonder I freak out!"**

Ever have a situation like this? At some point, every student leader has. Being a leader on campus means being involved and having a ton of responsibilities. And you like responsibility, right? It helps you develop as a leader, enhances your résumé, allows you to give back to your campus, and gives you a platform to establish yourself as an important player in the campus and student life worlds. All awesome stuff, right?

Well ... sorta.

Having responsibilities can be rewarding, but it often comes with the burden of actually having to follow through. And that inevitably leads to multiple deadlines, duties, and places you have to be and, for some reason, those things typically always pile on top of each other at the same time, forcing you into fight or flight mode. You either fight to get it all done (adrenaline junkies love this) or you run away and let things collapse around you. Neither is really good, as the results tend to not be as stellar as you had hoped.

In addition to these issues, school and life demand your attention, too.

You remember school, right? The reason you attend a college or university? Professors may think it's cool you are part of the tennis team, president of the Anime Club, vice-president of the Campus Activities Board, and in two different honors societies, but your 12-page paper on the impact of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points is still due by 8 am on Friday.

Finally, there is life; and not just your social life (although that is important, too!). There are family commitments and happenings, your health and wellness, your job(s) and, dare I say, things you do for fun that are not work/school/club related.

As someone who has a passion for work-life issues, I am often asked, "How do I balance work and life?" Over the past few years, students are the ones asking me that question more and more. The problem is, there is no one magic pill or formula that will fix all your balance issues. It is unrealistic to expect we need to get to a 50-50 balance; things just don't work that way. Our needs are all different, as well as our commitments. What I can offer are four simple questions and one action step that can steer you in a better direction and help you achieve a better student-life balance.

Question 1: What do you want your life to look like?

Being stressed out about everything going on in your life means there is a disconnect between the way you are living and the way you want to live. You can't balance yourself until you know what you want your life to look like as a student. If you could diagram or talk about your ideal college experience, what would it look like? Does it involve a lot of meetings? More time at the gym? More classes? Fewer classes?

We have all heard the expression, "You have too much on your plate." I think the plate is a great analogy for student-life balance. We all have a plate and we fill it with food. We each put a different amount of food on that plate based on our interests and situations. Some of us separate the food so that the peas don't touch the carrots and the mashed potatoes, and others just slop it all together. Of course, if we want the peas to be separate but they start touching other foods, we become annoyed and frustrated. When this happens with

respect to our activities and responsibilities, we may feel that our freedom and creativity are restricted and we don't have a sense of boundaries. A student-life imbalance means your boundaries are being crossed and this leads to stress, anger and frustration.

No matter whether you separate or integrate, the number one habit you need to break is taking food off your plate only to fill it back up almost immediately with more food. In some cases, you put more food on the plate than you had in the first place. This becomes a vicious cycle that makes it difficult to achieve any form of balance.

Until you know what you want your life to look like, all your other efforts won't get you closer to balance because you won't know what to say yes or no to. Remember that achieving student-life balance is a process that takes hard work and dedication. It requires a game plan, so make one and take your first steps towards the life you want to live.

Question 2: What are you passionate about?

Maybe you don't quite know what your game plan should look like or where you should start. Ask yourself, "What am I passionate about? What makes me get out of bed in the morning and energizes me for the day?" A few years ago, while I was working on some courses for my doctorate, I was involved in clubs that I loved, as well as others that just felt more and more like work to me. I reflected on this and realized I wasn't passionate about the groups that felt like work. So, I finished my terms in those groups and stepped away. Since then, I have put my efforts into a charity I love and the stress from over commitment has gone away.

Aligning your plan towards your passions will make things easier and more enjoyable in terms of academics, as well. Take electives and courses in which you have an interest. Sometimes, this is difficult because of prerequisites, but every program has some wiggle room. My friend "Gary" told me he took electives that mostly were in human resources. If he couldn't find a good human resources course, he would take a course in English literature (his major). By the time he graduated, Gary had so many English courses that they spilled over and counted as electives, too. Extreme? Perhaps. But, you know what? Gary enjoyed going to class because, as much as possible, he surrounded himself with subject matter he loved.

Question 3: Do you get help?

A great thing about being in a collegiate environment is that there are a number of resources at your disposal – counselors, educators, peer mentors, advisors, health team staff, student life staff, professors and more. There are so many people on campus who can help you along your journey. Take advantage of them. They are there to help and, in many cases, it is their job to help! Use campus resources to build your skillset and strengthen some areas that may be of concern to you, such as dealing with stress and time management. The student-life journey isn't one taken alone, so recruit your team so you can better execute your game plan.

Question 4: Do you analyze your time?

If you do nothing else, YOU MUST DO THIS. It is simple, but very powerful. Data lovers will love this activity. Make a list of EVERYTHING you do in a week and how much time you spend doing it. Put it all into a simple chart like Figure 1.

Figure 1

ACTIVITY	How I spend my time (in hours)	% OF TIME*
Sleeping	42	25%
Social Media	28	16.6%
Homework	3	1.7%
Exercise	3	1.7%
Anime Club	2	1%
Campus Activities Board	15	9%
Tennis	10	5%

*To get your percentage simply divide the hours spent by 168 (number of hours in a week).

Try to do this exercise during a typical week (or one that is as close to a normal week for you as possible). Analyzing your time will really show you where you spend time well and where you do not. You will quickly notice that you spend too much time in some areas and not enough in others. Once you have completed the analysis, ask yourself how you ACTUALLY want to spend your time.

Figure 2

ACTIVITY	How I spend my time (in hours)	How I WANT to spend my time (in hours)
Sleeping	42	56
Social Media	28	14
Homework	3	10
Exercise	3	7
Anime Club	2	0
Campus Activities Board	15	10
Tennis	10	10

Notice how in Figure 2 our “student” adjusted his/her time. Some activities were increased, others decreased, and others stayed the same. Notice how one activity (the Anime Club) was eliminated altogether. This leads to the one action step that is essential for student-life balance.

Action Step: Cut stuff out!

If you are doing too much (which is the case in most student-life imbalances), then you need to cut stuff out. Having many jobs and being a part of multiple organizations won't do you much good in the long run and is the very cause of your stress. For those who believe being part of several clubs makes your résumé stand out, you are correct. It does. Unfortunately, many employers may interpret the long list of involvement as résumé padding or as not having deep leadership experience in any one area.

Make the cut. Focus on one or two organizations that you are passionate about and can handle. Likewise, evaluate your course load and ask yourself if you are taking too many classes. Overloading on classes (taking 16 or more credit hours in a semester) might look like a great idea on paper and it could lead to graduating earlier if you do it consistently, but it can decrease your academic performance and take away from all the other things that reduce stress and increase happiness, such as socializing, spending time with family, health and wellness, etc.

It's Up to You

Calibrating your student-life balance is tough, but is essential to your long-term success. Your ability to master it will serve you well, not only during your college days but in your professional career, as well. It is hard work, but by understanding what you want your life to look like, identifying your passions, getting assistance from experts, and analyzing your time, you can come up with a solid game plan. Above all else, remember that bringing balance in your life requires that you make cuts and adjustments. Something must come off the plate (and stay off). Ultimately, it is up to you to create your plate and monitor what gets put on it and what comes off. This can be difficult at first, but in the long run, you will be happier, less stressed, and ready to take on the world.

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Paul Artale is Director of Student Activities and Leadership Programs at the **University of Michigan-Flint**, as well as a professional speaker (www.paulartale.com). Originally from Toronto, Canada, Artale was born with short forearms and missing fingers on both hands. Because he was raised by people who never treated him as

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you make
me
☺

Infusing the Paying It Forward Mentality on Your Campus

At James Madison University (VA), balloons bearing affirming messages were shared with students as a Pay It Forward project.

By
DREW SAVAGE
University of South Carolina

While it is important to repay the kindnesses that have been shown to us, it may have more impact if we share those kindnesses with others, paying them forward.

None of us would be where we are today without people believing in us and lending a helping hand. From the parents who changed our diapers to the teachers who wrote our letters of recommendation, many have supported us and shown us acts of kindness. Although it is important to thank the people who have helped us along the way, the best way to pay them back is actually to pay these actions forward. When we do, the kindness continues to spread.

Part of my undergraduate experience was joining a student-run Pay It Forward group. However, the Pay It Forward mission can be infused into any student organization to create a sense of community on campus and to improve the campus climate. I would like to share the history of the Pay It Forward movement, as well as ideas about how to infuse the Pay It Forward philosophy into any organization.

History of the Movement

The Pay It Forward mindset has been around for centuries. Origins of the idea can be traced back to the actions of Benjamin Franklin and Ralph Waldo Emerson, but most recently, a book written by Catherine Hyde (2000) helped breathe new life into the mission. The book was so successful that a movie, titled *Pay It Forward*, was released in 2002. In that film, Kevin Spacey plays a history teacher who challenges his class to develop an idea to make the world a better place and then put it into action.

Some students proposed recycling projects, but one young boy, Trevor, played by Hayley Joel Osment, decided to pay good deeds forward instead of back by performing three acts of kindness for three people. In return, he asked them to do the same for three other people. The ripple effect that resulted was nothing short of amazing. His acts spread beyond his hometown and brought a diverse group of people together from across the country. Trevor's idea to fix what needed fixing and help people who needed help ended up making the world a better place one act of kindness at a time.

Incorporating Pay It Forward

Given that students today want to make a difference and are seeking rewarding work (Schullery, 2013, p. 261), the Pay It Forward movement is an excellent way to engage them. One easy first step for infusing the movement into your organization is to educate students about it and encourage them to pay it forward by performing acts of kindness. Following are some specific ideas from James Madison University's (VA) Pay It Forward organization, as well as other institutions, for incorporating Pay It Forward into your organizations.

Getting Started

One way to raise awareness of the movement and to jumpstart the mission on campus is to partner with the campus programming board to sponsor a viewing of the movie *Pay it Forward*. At the showing, feature resources for students to learn more about the mission and goals of the movement. Pay It Forward wristbands are available for purchase from the Pay It Forward Foundation at <http://www.payitforwardfoundation.org/shop>. The purpose of the bracelets is for the wearer to do something nice for someone and then hand the bracelet to the person for whom they performed the kind act and encourage them to pay it forward.

Project Suggestions

One way to share the Pay It Forward message and the #PIF hashtag is to start a quarter campaign. This involves a student group collecting quarters and on one side placing a sticker with #PIF written on it, then placing the quarters in vending machines around campus. This can also be done with pennies by putting the hashtag on the back and leaving the pennies face up for good luck.

A simple and relatively low-cost idea is starting a sticky note campaign. For instance, JMU students wrote 200 sticky notes with random inspirational messages and spread them throughout campus. The key is to place the messages

across campus and include locations that faculty and staff frequent. Another idea is to stick the notes on random tables around campus – from libraries to dining facilities. These notes help remind students that people care about them. Building a supportive community of students is very critical and these small acts can ignite a fire in students to spread the kindness further.

One of JMU's most popular projects involved creating study bags for students during finals week. Each bag may contain a variety of school supplies and snacks. A sample bag may contain donated highlighters, pens, paper clips, an energy bar, crackers and a water bottle. It is always a good idea to include a quote that encourages recipients to pay it forward. The bags can be delivered to students studying in the library or in a high-traffic area on campus. As students are handed the bags, they are encouraged to pay it forward by performing an act of kindness for someone else.

Another JMU project involved distributing balloons with inspirational messages to random students around campus. Acquiring a helium tank and balloons and writing inspirational messages like "You Matter" or "Be YOURself" can help students smile during particularly difficult times in the semester like midterms and final exams. At JMU, the campus shined brighter when the balloons were tied to students' backpacks. At the smallest level of impact, students were smiling at the messages to relieve stress in an otherwise busy time in the semester. (A video about JMU's Pay It Forward project may be accessed at <https://vimeo.com/40753008>.)

A huge part of higher education culture focuses on events for students. Whether it's Greek life or the student programming board, countless groups provide valuable events for students to attend. Each of these events requires volunteers to take tickets or keep the crowd under control. Consequently, sometimes members may miss out on the event they helped plan to ensure its success. One way to remedy this is to partner with other organizations to help out at the event so that internal volunteers can enjoy it. Students deserve to see their hard work materialize and if each organization can dedicate itself to helping other organizations, a campus culture of support can be created. Such a simple act can make a world of difference.

National Pay It Forward Day is the last Thursday of April and is the officially designated day when the mission is recognized around the world. At JMU, group members started a chain of kindness and added links any time an act of kindness was performed. This helped to visibly demonstrate how small acts of kindness added up to making the campus a happier place. Consider contacting other campus organizations to work together to make this a campus-wide event.

One of the goals of the Pay It Forward mission for college students is to contribute to the campus, city and the world at large. Some ways of paying it forward in local activities include having students decorate pots and add plants for delivery to local nursing homes. Another option is writing letters to soldiers overseas. At JMU, students created Halloween bags full of candy to give to local bus drivers to thank them for their good work. Find out what your

members are passionate about and encourage them to come up with their own ideas. There may be a local animal shelter that needs assistance or a Habitat for Humanity group that could use extra volunteers. Empower members to brainstorm opportunities to express a culture of care.

Spreading the Word

Social media can be a powerful format for spreading the word about #PIF. Consider creating a Twitter or Facebook page for your campus to spread inspirational quotes and remind people they matter. Encourage people to use the #PIF hashtag during and after events. At those events or opportunities, take pictures and use Instagram to spread the word.

Another way to help spread the word is through campus publications. An idea from a student at James Madison was to reach out to the campus newspaper. Every week, the paper would publish “Darts” and “Pats” that students around campus submitted. A Dart was something negative that happened and a Pat was something positive about a student’s week. Students always enjoyed reading the Darts and Pats and submitting one is now even considered a campus tradition. The student also had an idea to eliminate the Darts for one week and focus only on the Pats. Not only did the paper love the idea, but it was continued the following year and the student response was positive overall.

Bringing It Together

Research has demonstrated that students who engage in charity or social change groups have reported “greater satisfaction with their college experience” as a result of being involved with the organizations that align with their values (Moely, 2008, p. 45). I have highlighted a few ideas for infusing the Pay It Forward movement into your organization to improve your campus climate. However, it’s crucial to empower your members to think creatively about other ways to embody the Pay It Forward mission. Because we all have been the recipients of good deeds in our lives, it simply feels good when we can repay those kindnesses by sharing them with others. By paying it forward, we can make a difference, one good deed at a time.

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ONE EASY FIRST STEP FOR INFUSING THE MOVEMENT INTO YOUR ORGANIZATION IS TO EDUCATE STUDENTS ABOUT IT AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO PAY IT FORWARD BY PERFORMING ACTS OF KINDNESS.



Potting plants and sharing them with local nursing home residents is just one of many ways to Pay It Forward.

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Drew Savage is a Graduate Assistant at the **University of South Carolina**, where he is pursuing a master’s degree in higher education in student affairs. He holds a bachelor’s degree in communication studies from James Madison University (VA). In the fall of 2013 and spring of 2014, he worked as an Admissions Administrative Assistant at Stratford University (VA).

REFOCUSING LATE-NIGHT PROGRAMMING



To have late-night programming that achieves its goals, it's important to focus on the needs of your specific campus community, utilize existing resources, and review your program board structure in order to create diverse and intentional late-night programs.

Students are drawn to live late-night entertainment at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

By

AMY CORRON

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (NY)

Photos courtesy of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

LATE-NIGHT PROGRAMMING has become an established practice on university campuses to reduce high-risk drinking behaviors and provide entertainment and engagement for students in the late evening weekend hours. The Center for Substance Abuse Prevention defines late-night programming as “activities that are free of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs for which participation is voluntary” (2001, p. 4). Late-night events focus on combining fun activities and peer engagement opportunities in a campus environment without the pressure to consume alcohol.

At many institutions, late-night programming aims to target multiple student populations and social groups. The purpose of the activities is to provide on-campus weekend entertainment for non-drinking students AND retain student drinkers on campus in non-alcoholic events in order to reduce high-risk drinking behavior. This programming, therefore, becomes a two-fold exercise, often attempting to attract multiple populations of students over a variety of developmental areas.

Without focus and creativity, the dual purpose of late-night programming can lead to poorly attended and unsuccessful events. It is important to focus on the needs of your specific campus community, utilize existing resources, and review your program board structure in order to create diverse and intentional late-night programs. Do not get stuck in the weekend movie reel rut! It’s time to take a close look at your campus culture and late-night programming needs.

Examine Your Campus Culture

Successful late-night programs are targeted towards fulfilling the needs of the campus community and student culture. It is important to identify the root purpose of your late-night programs and your target audience. Are you looking to attract students who drink alcohol in order to reduce high-risk drinking behavior and change drinking culture on campus? Do you primarily need to provide entertainment and engagement for non-drinkers on weekend evenings? Does your programming need to address multiple student populations and subcultures, including these or those specific to your campus environment?

In focusing on a target audience, you can begin to craft attractive programming targeted to those students specifically. For example, high-risk drinkers often hold sensation-seeking personality traits, creating a desire for intense and novel experiences. Sensation-seeking students exhibit higher rates of extraversion, impulsivity, and aggression and have a low inhibitory control (Kuntsche et al, 2006). They are attracted to risk-taking behavior and enjoy activities where they can be physically active or experience some type of adrenaline thrill.

Weekend late-night programming that is passive in nature, such as movie showings, is most likely not going to attract sensation-seeking students away from high-risk drinking behaviors. Programs focused on physical activities, such as a Night at the Recreation Center, or programs that provide novel experiences are more likely to generate buy-in and attendance from high-risk drinkers.

My undergraduate institution ran a successful late-night

program that engaged students in an audio scavenger hunt where everyone could choose their own adventure in a race to complete a storyline. The experience was unique to any other programming endeavor on campus and brought together a wide variety of people for an active and exciting nighttime event.

As a student activities professional, successful late-night programs I have been a part of have included on-campus zip lines, turning the student union into a circus, and open mic events that garner a wide variety of student performances. These programs provided novel experiences and remained open to all, successfully attracting both sensation-seeking students and non-drinkers

Utilize Existing Resources

Creating, executing and maintaining large-scale late-night programs for an entire campus community can be an overwhelming endeavor. Sourcing campus and community partners provides additional programming support and helps create a universal message regarding substance abuse prevention programs and alternative weekend events for students. At my current institution, late-night programming is a divisional endeavor produced by students through partnerships between the Student Union, Office of Residence Life, Student Experience, and Health Education staff. The diverse set of staff and students involved produces new and interesting event ideas and ensures that no one individual or specific office experiences burnout and a lack of innovation.

It is also important to evaluate events already happening on your campus that can fulfill late-night programming needs without recreating the wheel or producing unnecessary competing events. Do you have student organizations regularly hosting non-alcohol events on weekend evenings? Partner with these organizations and advise them on effective program planning and marketing to create a successful late-night event that attracts a large set of the campus community. Use your student organization advising expertise to bolster an already existing event in conjunction with your late-night programming endeavors.

I currently work with a very academically motivated student population, and, therefore, involved students often host their student organization programs during their free weekend evenings. Our staff partners with students to plan organization events such as all-night video game tournaments, performing arts group performances like improv and a cappella shows, and school spirit programs after evening athletic events. Our program board also elects to do their major events on weekend evenings and draw large crowds to comedy and concert performances throughout the semester. Additionally, the cinema branch of the programming board has three films showings every Friday and Saturday night from 7 pm until 2 am.

Through creative advertising and high-quality program production, they are able to draw hundreds of students to their events on a regular basis. Working closely with students towards the success of already existing student organization programs has ensured student investment in successful events that provide alternative activity choices on campus.



A game showcase offers interactive fun for students at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Reviewing Your Programming Board Structure

At my graduate school institution, we were struggling to create buy-in for our late-night programming. The pressure to increase our preventative measures for student substance use was rising, and few of our programming board students were interested in taking on late-night programming. The dominant student culture revolved around off-campus house parties and the local bar scene and that is what many of our students wanted to be doing on the weekends. Our programming board students did not see the need for late-night programs, as they expected all of their peers to be at parties and they did not want to put in the effort to create programs they believed would be inherently unsuccessful.

In order to create widespread buy-in and add more diversity to our late-night programming, we had the entire programming board participate in alternative programming endeavors. We began the process with group education about alcohol use on campus, the dangers of high-risk drinking, and the prevalence of students who chose not to drink despite the campus community social norms. We also shared current trends in successful late-night programming and discussed the need to create active and interactive late-night events on our campus. Through these educational sessions, students were able to jointly articulate the need for late-night programs and creatively brainstorm new events for our campus.

Structurally, the board was comprised of five committees based on programming themes and each committee was responsible for planning a marquee late-night event each semester and show films for a weekend. With five events and movie showing weekends a semester, we were able to refocus our late-night programming to be more intentional in purpose and use our resources for much larger scale events that aimed to attract sensation-seeking students. Some examples include a life-size board game night and seasonal outdoor movie showings of cult classics.

Having all programming board students involved ensured that the students were producing new and different events every semester with a wealth of creative minds taking part in the program planning and execution process. It also assisted with preventing burnout, as each committee had to be responsible for programming only two weekends a semester. Sharing late-night programming responsibilities generated its own buy-in within the programming board, which spread to the campus community as we continued to revitalize on-campus weekend events.

Is the same group of students planning late-night events on your campus? Are your late-night programs repetitive in theme or activity type? Do they target only specific student populations or subcultures and fail to reach a wider campus community, including high-risk drinkers? Reviewing your programming board structure and investigating possible

changes in order to make late-night programming a program board-wide initiative, or at least one where multiple program board committees can collaborate, is a great method to increase student buy-in and creativity in your programs. If instigating a change process, be sure to be student-centered in your execution and include program board students in conversations about the need for change in late-night programs. Asking for student input will assist in their positive adoption of change and they will most likely bring new and different ideas that will only improve your late-night programming plan.

ONGOING REVIEW OF LATE-NIGHT PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES AND EXECUTION OF IMPROVEMENTS WILL CONTINUE TO REVITALIZE LATE-NIGHT EVENTS AND WORK TOWARDS PROVIDING A SAFE AND HEALTHY CAMPUS COMMUNITY.

Ongoing Evaluation and Improvement

Reducing high-risk drinking is an ongoing enterprise for student affairs educators and higher education administrators. The binge-drinking rate among college students has consistently remained around 40% for 20 years and drinking has become a central cultural attribute to a student's college experience (McMurtrie, 2014). Consistent assessment of preventative and educational measures to combat high-risk drinking is imperative in order to gauge the effectiveness of these programs and be at the forefront of student drinking culture on your campus.

Equally as important is the implementation of evaluation results. Are you meeting the outcomes of late-night programming for your campus community? Are you targeting the correct student populations with your programming in order to reduce high-risk drinking and provide weekend social engagement? If not, what changes need to be made in your late-night programming approach? What is your plan to make these changes sustainable and measurable? Ongoing review of late-night programming strategies and execution of improvements will continue to revitalize late-night events and work towards providing a safe and healthy campus community.

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Students enjoy food at an RPI Union After Dark event.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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WHEN CULTURAL AND LATE-NIGHT PROGRAMMING COLLIDE:

Bringing It
All Together

By

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Cultural late-night programming may not be the answer to making sure our students are culturally competent, but it does offer a platform to start having dialogues about what it means to be culturally competent and working with people different than you.

DO YOU HAVE THAT ONE STUDENT who doesn't seem interested in diversity? Maybe you know a student who is not very interested in cultural awareness? We all have these types of students on our campuses and the question we are often asking is, "How do we get our non-multicultural students to get involved?" What type of programs can we host to get them to learn about a different culture or something exciting about the student in their class who is different from them?

One way to diversify the college student experience is to host programs students naturally would attend, but with a cultural twist. Changing the delivery of cultural competencies is the key to engaging students who would typically ignore diversity programming. Many of our campuses have started to see the importance of late-night programming and why it is needed to keep our students engaged and involved on our campuses. Take advantage of the need to include all students in cultural programming and have an interesting late-night program centered on a different culture.

Student Interest

When it comes to planning a successful cultural late-night program, you must first understand the campus population your institution serves. Many universities already host programs centered on Black, Native American, Asian American, and Hispanic Heritage Month celebrations. With these celebrations, there is already a natural group of students who have interest in these types of celebrations. So how do we get everyone else involved? It is important to ask students a number of questions to assess what types of programs would be good for your campus.

- Is your campus in a rural area or a major city?
- Does your campus have a diverse student population with students from different areas?
- Do students have the opportunity to interact and meet people different from them from other states or from other countries?
- Does your campus have a large commuter population?
- Does your campus have a large number of cultural groups on campus?

These are all important questions to ask when deciding what type of program you want to host. Remember, you want students to come out and explore different cultural experiences, so you must have something that will attract them.

Focus Group

It is important to understand your campus climate. A focus group is an effective way of gathering information on students who will attend your programs. This group should consist of a mixture of student leaders and new students with a particular interest in cultural programming. In addition, include the multicultural organizations on your campus to ensure you have a core group of students with whom to work. Some questions you may wish to ask include:

- What types of programs would you like to see on campus?
- What types of cultural programs are most appealing to

you?

- How often should these programs take place?
- Are there cultures you feel the campus should be highlighting?
- What times/locations work best for our student population?

Overall, you should make sure these students are a part of the planning process and provide a student perspective to your campus programming. Work with this group to come up with goals for the programs from their perspective. Give them ideas on how to develop their overall vision and allow the focus group to become a platform for the students to plan the event.

Collaboration

Collaboration. Collaboration. Collaboration. These types of programs are meant to be fun, not only for the students who will be attending, but also for the staff who are planning these programs. Seek out new and exciting relationships with faculty and staff members from around your campus and encourage them to assist you with planning. We student affairs professionals often seek ways to teach students the importance of diversity, cultural competence and social justice. Why not include these topics in our everyday programming? This could be a way to form new relationships with departments that may not always work together.

For example, if you are planning a late-night program around Hispanic Heritage Month, include your campus wellness department and ask them if they will teach a class focused on a type of dance class or exercise class featuring Hispanic music. Take time to see what your campus community does for programming. Maybe there is a new twist you can add to their program.

If there is already a campus culture of attending a certain program, look for ways to incorporate your idea for cultural late-night programming in it. By adding new ideas to an existing program, you will provide your students with a new option for enjoying a program with which they are already familiar. In addition to allowing you to work with a different office, this would provide more students for your program to target. Depending on with whom you are collaborating, this will introduce your office to students who may not always attend your program.

Assessment

After the program is over, it is important to follow up with those who attended the program, as well as the participants of your focus group. Your assessment tool should be used to not only determine overall satisfaction with the program, but it should be based on your learning programs. Some suggestions for your assessment include:

- Classification of the student,
- Topics of discussion,
- Logistics of the program,
- Suggestions for improvement,

- Learning outcomes, and
- Overall satisfaction with the program.

There are several different ways to collect information from your program. Some coordinators choose to use online instruments like Student Voice or Survey Monkey, some prefer paper and pencil, and others like to use social media like Twitter to collect information throughout the event. Be innovative and try something exciting to increase your responses. Post a question at the event and award prizes for responses on Twitter or other social media platforms to engage students in completing assessment.

Moving Forward

It is our job as student affairs professionals to ensure students leave our campuses with the basic ideas of what it means to be culturally competent. In order to make sure our students are ready for the job market and to survive in a global society, we must make sure they are able to interact and work with people who are different than them. Cultural late-night programming may not be the answer to making sure our students are culturally competent, but it does offer a platform to start having dialogues about what it means to be culturally competent and working with people different than you.

ONE WAY TO DIVERSIFY THE COLLEGE STUDENT EXPERIENCE IS TO HOST PROGRAMS STUDENTS NATURALLY WOULD ATTEND, BUT WITH A CULTURAL TWIST. CHANGING THE DELIVERY OF CULTURAL COMPETENCIES IS THE KEY TO ENGAGING STUDENTS WHO WOULD TYPICALLY IGNORE DIVERSITY PROGRAMMING.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR STUDENTS ON THE SPECTRUM

By **PAMELA WEISS**, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
and **INGRID WEISS**, Indiana University-Bloomington

While transitions to college life for students on the autism spectrum can be challenging, those challenges can be successfully managed with planning and self-advocacy.

AUGUST 2013 WAS A TIME OF HIGH ANXIETY IN OUR HOUSEHOLD.

Our daughter Ingrid was about to leave home for college for the first time. While this is a time of excitement for many students, it was a fearful time for a teen with Asperger's Syndrome and attention deficit disorder. The tension in the air was palpable for weeks leading up to her departure.

Transitions can be particularly challenging for students on the autism spectrum. Changing location, teaching schedules, and even daily schedules can impose stress. On top of this are sensitivity issues, such as too much noise or crowds, to manage.

How do parents and students navigate this leap to college life? Now that my teen has returned after freshman year brimming with excitement over what she experienced at the Indiana University-Bloomington campus, I can share some tips that may help students on the autism spectrum and the parents and university staff that want to see them succeed.

Tailor living arrangements to student needs:

- Pick a thematic dorm floor where students share the same interests. The Science Technology Informatics and Math (STIM) floor at Forest Residence Center at Indiana University-Bloomington met the bill, catering to a physics student's interests. Seeing students on the dorm floor and then in some similar classes breeds the familiarity needed to make campus feel like home.
- Many students have a high sensitivity to noise – ear plugs or a white noise machine are essential for sleep in the dorm.
- Alert the resident assistant to the student's special needs. Ask for help.
- For some students who really need time to themselves, living at home could be the least stressful arrangement. For Ingrid, picking a campus that was close to home meant being able to come home every few weeks to get her own space.

Spend adequate time orientating to campus:

- Navigating a big campus can be overwhelming at first. Map out the exact routes from dorm to each class. Walk these first with a guide, then alone before classes start.
- Get detailed information before trying to ride buses on and off campus. Ingrid worked her way up from routes around campus to eventually going off campus to the mall. Each step brings manageable independence.
- Case out areas that provide calm and quiet around campus. This could include a rarely used dorm lounge, a remote part of the library, or a chapel. Since we are a military family, Ingrid has found the veterans' services office is a small office away from crowds where she can relax and the staff members know her.

Seek out on-campus resources for students with disabilities:

- Have an updated IEP (Individualized Education Plan) available to register with the office that handles disabilities.
- Participate in a student mentor program that pairs upper classmen with lower classmen who have similar disabilities.
- Participate in a club such as Students on the Spectrum. Choose to attend as much as or as little as wanted. Don't feel it is an obligation if there are more pressing issues like studying.

Establish a study schedule:

- Once class schedules are made, block off regular study times on a weekly calendar. Establishing a routine reduces stress over completing homework and avoids the temptation to get distracted.
- Once enough time is scheduled for study, determine how much time is available for activities without overscheduling. Autistic students, in particular, need adequate downtime to regroup. Be thoughtful in balancing between exploring new activities and having quiet time.

Set strategies for managing classes without distractions:

- Don't sit in the back of large lecture halls. If needed, ask for a reserved seat.
- Turn off electronic devices during class when possible so there is no temptation to get on Facebook or YouTube.
- Visit professors during office hours regularly to establish

working relationships in a more relaxed setting. This is also a good setting to discuss the particulars of the disorder and any needed class accommodations.

Find inclusive student organizations:

- Sort out organizations that are likely to be more accepting of students who may come across as a bit quirker. Sorority rush is likely to be stressful and have an unhappy result. On the other hand, a college religious organization that aligns with the family's beliefs may provide more moral support.
- Join an organization that shares a narrowly defined special interest. Ingrid likes Japanese anime, an interest shared by a very small subset of the college population. If the student has a large knowledge or experience base there, she will be confident making conversation.

Manage large gatherings:

- Don't be afraid to make some trips to the bathroom or out in the hall if you feel overwhelmed. If you inform the people or the professor, depending on the setting, this should be excused. Self-advocacy helps!
- Go with friends. They can help make a big place seem smaller and make introductions to others.
- Don't stay for the full length of the event if feeling socially "maxed out." Bring something else to pass the time somewhere quiet if waiting until the event is finished for a ride home.

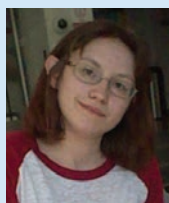
Preparation Is Key

Preparation is key to managing a successful transition to life on a college campus. For students on the spectrum, researching ways to handle needs for structure, calmness, acceptance and support makes the difference. Campuses are now better integrating students with autism, so students should feel confident advocating for their needs. Ingrid has certainly found her footing at IU-Bloomington, so mission accomplished.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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