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Higher Education Master's Learning Portfolio

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## Introduction

It is hard to believe that it has been almost two years since I arrived at Iowa State University to pursue my master's degree in higher education. As an undergraduate student who lacked confidence, I appreciate the student affairs professionals who helped me succeed academically, as well as grow personally. As a first generation college student, I truly believe if it were not for those individuals who supported me, I would not be where I am today. My positive undergraduate experience inspired me to further my education within the field of student affairs. My career goal is to provide students with the skills and confidence they need to successfully graduate with their college degree. Through the Higher Education master's program, I have acquired the skills necessary to accomplish this goal.

Within this portfolio, I will examine five learner outcomes from the Higher Education program, and how I have achieved those outcomes. I chose to focus on these specific learner outcomes because I have grown the most in these areas. In order to illustrate my progress through the program, I will also use artifacts that are included in this portfolio. Through my graduate assistantship, practicum experiences, formal education, and other educational opportunities, I feel prepared to begin my professional career in the field of student affairs.

**Students will BE:** Experienced practitioners and educational leaders

An essential form of learning in student affairs is the practical experiences provided through the Higher Education program. In this section, I will demonstrate how I have developed skills as a practitioner and educational leader through my graduate assistantship, as an instructor, and finally as a member of the Latina/o Graduate Student Association (LGSA). I believe the knowledge I have gained in these various areas will have a lasting impact on my work with students.

*College Bound Program*

As the graduate coordinator of the College Bound Program within the Office of Admissions, I have developed several practical skills that I will be able to apply in my future career. In my assistantship, one of my main duties is to assist with the planning and implementation of the Early Outreach Program (EOP). It consists of three week long summer programs designed to educate 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade first-generation and/or students of color about attending college. The goal of the program is to provide students with the opportunity to experience a college environment in which they can visualize themselves in the future.

The extensive planning for the program takes place during the spring semester. Throughout this time, one of my responsibilities was to develop personal growth and enrichment activities that would take place in the afternoons. I researched similar outreach summer programs on other campuses to discover new activities, as well as reviewed what had been done in the past. It was important for me to find activities where the students would not only learn something about themselves, but also have fun. Because the 12<sup>th</sup> grade students will be beginning their senior year in the fall, the programming was focused on applying to colleges and universities. EOP 12<sup>th</sup> grade accepts a smaller number of students (15-20) in order to provide them with appropriate attention. Some of the topics for the week included, financial aid, student involvement, scholarships, campus resources, and the college application process where students filled out applications while at EOP. The daily schedule for the 12<sup>th</sup> grade program, as well as the 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> grade program can be viewed in Appendix A. The planning of the EOP program allowed me to develop my skill of working independently, as well as my creativity in program development.

Once I determined the type of activities for each program, the next step was finding the appropriate individuals who would be willing to speak about the topic. I thought this would be one of the most difficult parts of programming; however, through contacts that I had made my first semester, I either obtained volunteers or suggestions for possible presenters. This demonstrates my effective communication skills, which I continued to develop from my first semester in this position.

During this time, I also learned the strict procedures involved when inviting high school students to stay on the ISU campus. A medical release form, a photo release form, and parental consent forms were all required in order for students to participate in the program. I was responsible for reviewing these forms, and confirming that they were completed correctly. I also made several phone calls to families if an application was not complete. I discovered how grueling making several phone calls can be; however, I reminded myself of EOP's goal, and how submitting a form incorrectly should not hinder a student's opportunity to attend. I also have a better understanding of the significance of such forms because of the liability involved with youth staying on campus.

Along with my supervisor, I assisted with the hiring of four student staff members that would be team leaders for visiting high school students. During this process, I updated and made changes to the position description and application, and distributed it across campus. I also had the opportunity to review applications, and schedule interviews. This gave me insight on the hiring process, payroll, and supervising, which I would not have had otherwise.

Throughout my two years with the College Bound Program, I am appreciative of the practitioner skills I gained through programming. I became knowledgeable of the extensive planning and collaboration that is involved when implementing such an outreach program.

*Psych 131 Instructor*

My last semester in the Higher Education program, I chose to complete a practicum experience where I could gain some teaching experience. Through the Academic Success Center and Psychology department, a one-credit course is available for students to assist with academic study skill development. I had the opportunity to co-facilitate a section of Psych 131, which allowed me to assist current students at Iowa State. As an instructor, I learned how to create a syllabus, design lesson plans, as well as develop reflective assignments to assist with student learning (Appendix B).

Even though we were given guidelines and training to teach Psych 131, we were also given the freedom to use our own style of teaching. At the beginning of the semester, my co-instructor and I chose to include one-minute papers at the end of each class period for attendance points. The students were given the last minute of class to write down their thoughts on the day's lesson, as well as anything else on their mind. I never thought the one-minute papers would be more than just a form of keeping attendance. As we collected and read what students were turning in, I began to appreciate the feedback. Students were opening up during this one-minute reflection time. Students would discuss their fear of failing out of school, the impact a speaker had on them, or suggestions on what might be helpful for next time. After reading the students' reflections after every class, I realized they were helping me as much as I was helping them. The feedback from students allowed me to evaluate my own progress, as well as bringing to my attention areas I can improve as an instructor.

As I am writing this portfolio, I am currently teaching Psych 131. Even though this experience is not yet over, I have gained a great deal thus far. My passion is to assist students in finding their own way to be successful in college. This opportunity has allowed me, through a

classroom setting, to reach students. Teaching has given me confidence as an educational leader because I have been able to visually see students progress. The lectures I create for class not only teach academic skills, but also life skills that students can use in their everyday situations. I am looking forward to viewing the continued growth of the students in the class as the semester ends.

#### *Latina/o Graduate Student Association (LGSA)*

One final area that I would like to address in this learner outcome involves my experience with LGSA. As an undergraduate student at a predominantly White institution, I was very involved in cultural-based student organizations. My involvement in these organizations contributed to the skills I developed prior to attending Iowa State. I believe cultural-based student organizations provide support to students from similar backgrounds, especially when an institution is not culturally diverse. As I began graduate school at Iowa State, members of LGSA reached out to me and introduced me to the campus. The organization was in its first official year on campus, and as a new member I began to discover the needs of Latina/o graduate students, as well as undergraduate students. At first, it was difficult for me to adjust to the idea that as a graduate student organization, the focus is no longer on undergraduate student support.

After my first semester with the organization, I was elected as the new vice president for the following spring and fall semesters. Because LGSA was still developing, I knew there were going to be challenges. To begin with, membership was a concern and promoting the organization was a priority. Through the graduate college, we were able to obtain the email addresses of Latina/o graduate students at Iowa State. This allowed us to contact students to attend bi-weekly meetings; however, few were able to attend. Some graduate students showed interest, while others indicated they needed to stay focused on research. Even though

membership continues to be a concern, we believe our existence is important to the campus community for the few who gain support from the organization.

When reflecting on the accomplishments of LGSA, the Multicultural Graduation proposal we submitted truly demonstrated our presence on campus. LGSA was invited to assist with the People of Nia celebration my first semester at Iowa State. The purpose of this celebration is to honor African-American undergraduate and graduate students who were graduating each semester. We soon realized that there was no such celebration for Latina/o students. After discussing our experiences at our undergraduate intuitions, many of us had had an opportunity to participate in similar graduation ceremonies. Because we felt that all graduating students of color from Iowa State should be honored, we chose to develop a proposal addressing a need for a multicultural graduation. For my section of the proposal, I was responsible for researching intuitions similar to Iowa State to illustrate the importance of such a ceremony (Appendix C). After meeting with the Associate Dean of Students, she agreed a multicultural graduation should be a responsibility of their office. In the spring of 2008, the first Multicultural Graduation took place. Even though it is new, I believe this celebration will become a great tradition at Iowa State recognizing the accomplishments of its students of color.

After analyzing these three different areas, I have developed skills in event planning and programming, as well as leadership. This demonstrates how my experiences outside of my coursework have prepared me to become a student affairs practitioner.

**Students will BE:** Individuals who are sensitive and aware of themselves and others

In order to better serve students, it is important to be conscious of the various backgrounds students are coming from. However, it is just as important for professionals to be aware of their own identity. I will demonstrate in this section of my portfolio how I have

developed awareness through my own self-analysis, as well as through a class project that allowed me to learn more about an underrepresented student population.

### *Self-Analysis*

In my second semester of graduate school, I was excited about my Student Development Theory II course because we would be learning about social identity theories. Even though I learned about several theories in Theory I, I felt many of them were outdated and did not necessarily fit with the students of today. Our first assignment in Theory II required us to do a self-analysis on our own identity. I was expecting to learn how students develop into their different identities, but I did not anticipate analyzing my own identity development. With this assignment, we were to use Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007) reconceptualized model of multiple dimensions of identity to examine our different identities.

I never realized the many different identities that made me who I am, as well as how they correlate to form my overall identity. The identities that I recognize the most include being Mexican, a woman, educated, first generation, and Catholic. Because my parents are immigrants from Mexico, my culture has had a significant influence on my identity since my childhood. In this assignment, I was able to reflect on how my Mexican identity has impacted my other identities. Through this self-analysis, I also reflected on aspects of my identity that are less salient. Some of these identities include being heterosexual, able-bodied, and an American citizen. I recognize that these characteristics represent where I am privileged in American society, so I easily forget how they may impact my identity. This recognition was important because it pushed me to view other aspects of my identity I do not usually acknowledge.

This assignment was significant in developing my own awareness. By being conscious of my identity, I will be able to better serve students as they begin to discover their own identity

while in college. As I reflected on my own experiences, I know that there are current students who may be going through similar situations. If a student has someone they can relate to, they may feel more comfortable to discuss issues or feel as if they belong. However, my self-analysis also demonstrated how some identities can be more salient than others, which means I may not always understand where a student is coming from. For example, recognizing that I will not know what it is like to be a lesbian or a student with a disability on campus is important. Because of this understanding, I can provide them with better support as an ally, and if I cannot help I will find someone who can. What I learned through this assignment is if I am not comfortable with my own identity, then how will I assist students as they go through their own identity development? This realization is important for any practitioner to recognize, and I am glad this paper allowed me to analyze my own identity (Appendix D).

*Fieldwork Project: Student Athletes of Color*

Along with my own self-awareness, I have had the opportunity to learn more about students from different backgrounds. Most recently, I chose to examine the experiences of student athletes of color at Iowa State through my campus environments course. This fieldwork project was one of the most rewarding projects I accomplished. Throughout the semester, I participated in a variety of activities in order to learn about their experiences. Some of the activities I accomplished involved reading research on student athletes of color, analyzing a movie related to student athletes, attending a Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) meeting, as well as interviewing three student athletes and a professional who works with student athletes.

After each activity, I reflected about the experience in a journal addressing what I learned (Appendix E). This was an important part of this project because at the end of the semester I

wrote a final paper analyzing all of the activities, as well as addressing theory regarding campus environments (Appendix F). Through this project, I learned that student athletes, in general, many times feel isolated from the rest of their peers. In regards to student athletes of color, Iowa State and the Ames community are predominantly White, so this feeling of isolation is everywhere for these students. The student athletes I interviewed discussed how an academic support system within athletics is available, but there is no cultural outlet. It was common to hear from the students that their coaches felt having teammates was all the support needed; however, the students were searching for support and opportunities outside of athletics where they could celebrate their culture. It was unfortunate to learn that the coaches would criticize students of color who wanted to participate in outside activities, such as Black Greek letter organizations. To the coaches, it was viewed as a distraction, while for the students it was the sisterhood or brotherhood that was important.

However, I was surprised to learn that two of the students I interviewed did not feel that they faced any challenges as a student athlete of color, although many of the experiences they described were certainly challenges. I realized that many of these students may not have had the opportunity to further their education if it were not for athletics. These students are very appreciative of the resources provided to them through their athletic programs, so it is not surprising that they seem to disregard the challenges they do face as persons of color.

After completing this project, I became aware of the issues student athletes of color face at Iowa State. I also determined what should be done to better serve this population of students. Initially, I believe the coaches and advisors within athletics should be educated on the needs of all their athletes. Student affairs professionals may be knowledgeable of these concerns, but as long as the individuals who work with the students directly are not informed, then nothing will

be resolved. Even though there are a large number of athletes of color, none of the services within athletics provide cultural support. I heard from students that an orientation is given on being a student athlete, but nothing on being a person of color in Iowa. An orientation should be offered for student athletes of color that informs them of services available through the campus and surrounding community that can serve their needs as a person of color. I think it is important for these students to not have to choose between their identities, as an athlete and a person of color when furthering their education. Unfortunately, I believe this is what happens to most student athletes of color.

Through my own self-analysis and awareness of issues facing student athletes of color, I have shown my ability to understand and support students from various backgrounds. This is an important skill to maintain as the student body at institutions become more diverse, and student affairs professionals must be capable of serving all their students.

**Students will BE ABLE TO:** Create, design, and implement programs and interventions

Within institutions, student affairs professionals have a significant role in implementing programs that will help students be successful. In this section, I will illustrate how I have accomplished this outcome through planning the Central Latino Exposition, and developing a graduate student manual within my practicum experience in the Academic Success Center.

#### *Central Annual Latino Exposition*

An event that I was excited to begin planning was the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Central Latino Exposition. I was introduced to this event my first semester because I represented Iowa State during the college fair portion of the exposition. The location of the exposition rotates among institutions in central Iowa, and in November 2008 Iowa State would be the host institution. The planning was a collaboration between Midwest Education, the organization that founded the

exposition, and the Office of Admissions, College Bound Program. The goal of the Latino Exposition is to invite Latina/o high school students from central Iowa to view the college experience, as well as to learn more about how to go to college. Because this is a student population where a majority are the first to go to college, this event informs students about the resources available to them.

This was my first time having a majority of the responsibility when planning such a large event. Because it was taking place in the fall, my supervisor was on the road recruiting and not available to assist with most of the planning. The responsibility of the host institution is to organize the entire day, while Midwest Education representatives worked with the high schools in bringing the students to campus. In the following paragraphs I will discuss my duties and responsibilities while planning the Latino Exposition, and in Appendix G the event schedule can be found.

My first major task was to contact faculty, staff, and students to submit presentation proposals for this event. Some of the topics we were looking for involved scholarships, admission requirements for the regent institutions, campus involvement opportunities, as well as skills to be successful. Once proposals were submitted, I was also responsible for reviewing them, and notifying presenters whether or not they had been accepted. Another task that I had never done before required me to contact admission representatives from surrounding colleges and universities to participate in the college fair. Prior to the event, I contacted the admission representatives and provided them with a map and directions, hotel information, as well as details of how the day would take place. I learned as the host institution, providing more detailed information is always better than not enough. I also received emails and comments afterwards of how appreciative representatives were for information in advance.

Finally, I learned about the logistics regarding catering and events management. Early on, I reserved as many rooms as possible within the Memorial Union; however, the difficult task was placing presenters in the appropriate rooms. I also had to work with the events management office in regards to how each room would be set-up, as well as what media was needed. Catering such a large event also became a difficult task because the estimate of total attendance would continuously change. Because I did not have my supervisor in the office checking-in with me, I learned how to work independently by setting deadlines for myself to have tasks completed. This also forced me to take the initiative to find a resolution on my own if there was a setback and trust my decision, while before I would always ask my supervisor.

The day of the event brought challenges such as students not attending the sessions for which they were registered, but in the end it was a success. Students left with more knowledge about the college experience, and the perspective that going to college is possible. I reviewed all the evaluations from the students, chaperones, presenters, and admission representatives, and typed up a report on what we could do better next time, as well as what we did well (Appendix H).

#### *Academic Intervention Program*

My first practicum experience was within the Academic Success Center during my second semester. Because my graduate assistantship in admissions involved recruiting prospective students, I wanted to gain some experience working with current Iowa State students. I also wanted to learn about retention efforts, and what services are available for students. Specifically, I chose to work with the Academic Intervention Program, which offers different services for students seeking ways to prove their academic skills. A majority of the students who utilize the program are either on academic probation or warning, and their advisor

referred them. For this practicum, my duties were to assist with academic workshops, expand my knowledge of Iowa State's academic probation/warning policy, conduct an assessment of the program, as well as consult with students.

As I began my practicum experience, I realized I had no idea of how to consult with students on academic skills. If I was meeting with a student and he or she had concerns with time management, I would not know where to start when consulting. I had the opportunity to sit-in on consultations, and I also received tips from different consultants. While meeting with the consultants, I discovered that they all had similar feelings in regards to not having specific training or guidance when beginning their graduate assistantship. I met with my practicum supervisor, and she felt that it would be beneficial for the program to develop a consultation guide for new consultants.

This became my main project during the semester, and something I was also benefiting from as a new consultant. I began gathering resources for the guide by interviewing consultants, and asking them what they wished they would have known as a new consultant. I also found what resources were the most helpful when addressing certain topics. The final guide begins by providing tips for new consultants including the importance of referrals, listening and asking questions, and recognizing that students learn differently. The majority of the guide provides suggested handouts relating to topics such as study skills, note taking, reading textbooks, test taking, time management, and goal setting. The organization of the guide I believe is what makes it very useful. New consultants can refer to handouts easily using the table of contents. The last section of the guide provides a list of resources with the contact information for consultants to have available. This section also has a table with different student concerns, and then directs the consultant to the probable referral office from the resource list. I found this to be one of the most

beneficial parts of the guide because one of the most difficult aspects of being a consultant is making the appropriate referral. A copy of the consultation guide can be found in Appendix I.

I am proud of this guide because it is something that will be useful in the Academic Success Center. I believe future graduate assistants will feel more confident and prepared when consulting with students after reviewing this guide. This demonstrates how I took the initiative to approach my supervisor with an idea on how to improve current consultations.

The Latino Exposition and the consultation guide are two examples of when I had a significant role in implementing a program and creating an intervention. Through these experiences, I have learned the work and dedication it takes to develop a significant project. I am confident that I will be able to take on similar projects in the future, and be prepared for the challenges that come with it, as well as the rewards.

### **Students will KNOW:** Student Development Theory

Student development theory is a fundamental aspect to any higher education graduate program. Even though I enjoy the practical experiences provided by the Higher Education program, having two semesters of theory were also essential to my learning. Through projects I completed in both courses, in this section I will demonstrate how I have become knowledgeable of various theorists and their work in student development.

#### *Theory I: Intervention Project*

My first semester of graduate school quickly introduced me to student development theory. Through theory, this course introduces future student affairs professionals to the developmental issues that students may experience while in college. It also prepares professionals on how to support students from various backgrounds as they go through this developmental process.

The key project for this course was to develop an intervention. As a group, we had to choose an issue that college campuses are facing that would support the need for our intervention. Because the tragedy at Virginia Tech had occurred the past spring, we felt that it was an important topic to address. Specifically, our group chose to examine the mental health facilities available at institutions with a setting similar to Virginia Tech. This project involved reviewing literature on the topic, applying student development theory, and of course detailing the intervention (Appendix J).

My section of this intervention project focused specifically on the theory. Through this course, we learned about several different theories, but I chose to focus on two theories that related to our topic of mental health concerns among college students. Chickering and Reisser (as cited in Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998) are psychosocial theorists who address in their revised theory the seven vectors of identity development. As students move through the seven vectors, they are becoming more comfortable with their identity. However, students who are lacking a strong sense of identity may have a difficult time adjusting to the college experience, which can lead to a higher risk of developing mental health problems. Chickering and Reisser's (as cited in Evans, et al.) revised theory also addresses how the surrounding environment can impact how a student may go through the seven vectors of identity development. In regards to institutional environment, if a student has access to resources on campus that can help during the identity process, then mental health issues may be minimized.

Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman's transition theory (as cited in Evans, et al., 1998) was the second theory I chose to use to address the development of mental health concerns in college students. This theory focused on changes that occur throughout a lifetime, as well as the significance of the impact the transitions may have on an individual. These lifetime changes can

take place as anticipated events, unanticipated events, or nonevents, which all can affect a student's college experience. Schlossberg et al. also determined that there are four factors that can impact how an individual copes through life transitions: *situation, self, support, and strategies*. Because it is known that attending college is a major life transition, it is important that institutions have the support services available that can help student through the different transitions they may experience.

The theories discussed provide a better understanding of why students may develop mental health issues while in college. This application of theory for this project supported the need for our intervention. My contribution to this intervention project demonstrates that I am knowledgeable in student development theory.

#### *Theory II: White Identity Development Project*

As I have mentioned before, I enjoyed my Theory II course because it concentrated on social identity development. Similar to the previous semester, the focus of this course was on the developmental issues college students face. However, it specifically brought to the forefront issues that many underrepresented student populations experience. The principles of social justice are also introduced as a way for professionals to support students while in college.

There was a main project for this course that I found very rewarding and significant in my learning. We were required to select a social identity that the class would be studying, and conduct at least three individual interviews with students who identify with the identity. While conducting this project, we had to submit five journal reflections applying the theory related to that social identity, as well as discussing what we learned (Appendix K).

I chose to do examine White identity development for this project. Before conducting my student interviews, I reviewed the White racial consciousness model discussed by Rowe,

Bennett, and Atkinson (1994), and Helms's model of White racial identity development (WRID) (as cited in Hardiman, 2001) in order to have an understanding of the theory. I also analyzed my own perceptions of White identity. In the first journal I submitted, I discussed how White privilege was one of the first ideas that came to mind when I thought of White identity. I discussed how my experiences growing up in a White community impacted my perceptions, as well as how my undergraduate education impacted my views. I became angry when I learned how the Latino population had historically been treated. However, as I became conscious of my own thinking and met White faculty and staff who truly cared about social justice issues, my views changed. Becoming aware of my own perceptions of White identity was important for me to address before conducting my interviews with students.

Through interviewing, I was able to analyze and apply theory to what I learned from students. The WRID model consists of the statuses of *contact*, *disintegration*, *reintegration* (superiority), *pseudoindependence*, *immersion/emersion*, and *autonomy*. This model focuses more on how White individuals respond to positive and negative experiences with minority populations. The other model I chose to use in my project is White racial consciousness discussed by Rowe et al. (1994). In this model, there are two statuses, unachieved white racial consciousness and achieved white racial consciousness. Within unachieved white racial consciousness, there are three types, the *avoidant*, *dependent*, and *dissonant* type, while the achieved white racial consciousness includes the *dominative*, *conflictive*, and *reactive* types. As I analyzed these theories, it was important for me to recognize that many of these models are based on how "Whites develop different levels of sensitivity to and appreciation of other racial/ethnic groups" (Rowe et al., 1994, p. 131). The focus is too much on how White individuals associate with people of color, rather than the focus being on their own identity.

The participants that I interviewed varied in where they were in the White identity development statuses. My first participant was still in the early statuses in both models because she was unaware of her racism through comments she made during her interview. However, my last participant recognized her White privilege through childhood experiences, which placed her in later statuses. I also had a difficult time finding a status that represented where my second participant was in her identity development. This helped me realize that not everyone will “fit” in a particular status, and it is important not to focus so much on whether or not a student fits into a developmental status. I gained several skills from completing this project involving how to conduct interviews, as well as how to apply theory to analyze what my participants told me. I presented my analysis on White identity development in class, and it can be found in Appendix L.

When I first began my graduate program, I was intimidated by theory and whether or not I would be able to understand it. However, once I learned how to apply theory to my own personal experiences and to my work with students, I discovered the importance of understanding theory in the field of student affairs.

**Students will KNOW:** Organization and administration of student affairs

The knowledge of theory and practical student affairs experience are continuously stressed throughout my graduate program. However, as future professionals it is also important to become familiar with the organization of student affairs, as well as to learn what to expect as we begin our professional career. In this section, I will discuss how I became knowledgeable about the organization and administration of student affairs through two of my courses: Student Affairs Practice (574) and Organization and Administration (575).

*Student Affairs Practice (574)*

A beneficial course that was required my first semester of my graduate program was Student Affairs Practice (574). This course introduced me to the practitioner role within student affairs, as well as to the expectations of graduate school. Throughout the semester, we had the opportunity to meet professionals in the field, and ask them questions about their career. This was also the first time that I was introduced to the ethical standards for those working in student affairs. We were also required to read a book relating to a current issue within the field, and write a book review. The main assignment for this course was to identify a possibly career in student affairs that we would like to pursue and research it. This was a very helpful assignment because it allowed me to explore an area in which I was interested, and learn more about it.

The career that I chose to focus on for my project was the dean of students. I am interested in the student services aspect of student affairs and student retention, which can be found within the dean of students office. For this project, I reviewed current literature that addressed current issues in this area as well as providing background information on the services dean of students offices provide. In particular, one common issue I found involved the dean of students' role in crisis situations post Virginia Tech. Because of the increased diversity of the student body, multicultural competence training of professionals and staff was also a current trend.

The second part of this project required me to, interview two professionals currently working as the dean of students at their institution. However, the professionals had to be from different types of institutions. I chose to interview one of my NASPA mentors Dr. Jacob Diaz who is the Assistant to the Vice President and Dean of Students at Seattle University. Because I was interested in learning about the dean of students role at community colleges, Dr. Diaz

suggested I interview Toni Castro, Dean of Student Services at Highline Community College in Des Moines, Washington. It was a great experience learning how these individuals found their passion in serving students through the dean of students office. The most rewarding aspect of the project was the advice they gave me, and their honesty when discussing managing a personal life with a career. I also learned about the professional organizations of which they were members, and how that membership has helped them. Both professionals had taken leadership positions in their professional organization, and received awards for their contributions to the field. This project not only provided me with the opportunity to learn more about an area of interest, but also reunited me with one of my mentors and helped me make a new contact in the field (Appendix M).

#### *Organization and Administration (575)*

Because of my involvement at my undergraduate institution and with the NASPA Fellowship Program, I was familiar with the student affairs field. However, a majority of my knowledge was from a student's perspective. As a future professional managing a unit I realized I knew very little. Within my Organization and Administration (575) course, the structure of a student affairs division was broken down to provide a better understanding of the hiring process, supervising staff, working with a budget, and other specific areas.

The primary assignment for this course consisted of applying all we had learned by developing a proposal for a new unit within a division of student affairs. The main purpose of the unit would be to provide services and programming for a specific underrepresented student population. The unit my group was given was to create a Black male cultural center, which we chose to name the Nelson Mandela Center. We began by developing the purpose and goals for the center, as well as included research on the benefits of such a center for Black male college

students. An organization plan was a key element of the proposal. This included an organizational chart, staffing plan with job descriptions, and a staff development plan. A financial plan was also needed addressing our budget for expenditures, and a revenue plan for the unit. An explanation of where the center should be located and a facilities plan was also a significant part of our proposal. Lastly, a plan to evaluate the unit, its services, and the programs was also needed within the proposal.

As a group, we felt the descriptions of the programming were an essential part of our proposal because it showed how we would serve the students. Specifically, we divided our programming into different areas including orientation, recruitment, retention, and community service. Since there were four people in our group, we each chose an area to focus on and develop. I was responsible for the orientation programs that would introduce Black male students to the campus. To begin the program, an orientation session would be offered to inform students about the Nelson Mandela Center and the services it provides. Another major event would be known as “Get Acquainted Day,” which is a large fair where campus and community clubs, organizations, and services would have informational booths for the students. These are two of the programs I developed in order to allow Black male students to become integrated with their new community and utilize its resources (Appendix N). This experience gave me the opportunity to learn what is involved in developing and operating a new unit. Even though working with students is why I am in the field of student affairs, I realized the importance of other factors that allow units to function and be successful.

Through the projects I completed in both of these courses, I became more knowledgeable about the organization and administration of student affairs. I specifically became more familiar with the dean of students role and the issues those in this position face. I also gained experience

in developing a proposal for a new unit at an institution. From completing these projects, I am better prepared as I begin my own career in student affairs.

### Conclusion

During the past two years, I have grown both professionally and personally. I entered my graduate program directly after receiving my bachelor's degree, so I was very apprehensive about having no full-time work experience. As I have previously mentioned, I chose to pursue a master's degree in higher education because I wanted to serve students who may struggle navigating the university system the way I did. However, I feared my lack of professional experience would hinder my ability to help students. I began my graduate program with little confidence, but through my practical experiences and formal education, my outlook has changed.

Throughout this portfolio, I have shown my progress as I developed into my own professional identity. I demonstrated the skills I have attained as a student affairs practitioner through opportunities outside the classroom. By reflecting on personal experiences, I am aware of my own identity, and I am more sensitive to individuals who are different from me. I have also shown that I am capable of developing programs and interventions, as well as overcoming the challenges that may arise. Knowledge of student development theory is key when working with students, and I represented this understanding through projects within my graduate coursework. Finally, by analyzing budgets, the hiring process, facility planning, and program development, I am familiar with the organization and structure of student affairs divisions at different types of institutions.

I am confident that my graduate program has prepared me to begin my career in student affairs. Although I have developed many skills, I know my learning will be continuous as I gain

employment and begin my work in the field. Two years ago, I would have been intimidated by new challenges, but now I am looking forward to navigating what lies ahead.

In conclusion, I want to thank all the individuals who believed in my abilities, which has led me to where I am today. There are no words that can express how appreciative I am for the opportunity to earn my master's degree. I am the youngest in my family and will be the first with a graduate degree. My goals and dreams have not simply been my own, but also of my family's. When my parents watch as I receive my degree, I hope they know the value of the sacrifices they made by coming to the United States. Graduate school has been such a meaningful experience that has made me realize that I can achieve anything as long as I work hard and do my best. I am proud of the many successes I have had at Iowa State University, and I know this is only the beginning of what I have yet to accomplish as a student affairs professional.

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## Appendices

- A: EOP Daily Schedules**
- B: Psych 131 Syllabus and Lesson Plans**
- C: LGSA Multicultural Graduation Proposal**
- D: Theory II: Self-Analysis Paper**
- E: Student Athletes of Color Project: Journal**
- F: Student Athletes of Color Project: Final Paper**
- G: Latino Exposition: Event Schedule**
- H: Latino Exposition: Final Report**
- I: Academic Intervention Program: Consultation Guide**
- J: Theory I: Intervention Project**
- K: Theory II: White Identity Development Project, Journal**
- L: Theory II: White Identity Development Project, PowerPoint**
- M: HgEd 574: Dean of Students Paper**
- N: HgEd 575: Nelson Mandela Center Proposal**