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“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

-Nelson Mandela

Starting My Educational Journey

This time two years ago, I was preparing for a major transition in my life; leaving my close friends and family in Michigan as I prepared to enter a place where I never thought I would end up. Entering college as a freshman, I was sure that I would continue on my pathway to a profession in the arena of healthcare. After taking a number of science courses in biology and chemistry, and an introduction to nursing professions course, I quickly learned that while I genuinely loved working with people, healthcare was not the exact career option that I wished to follow. During this same time, I had become a very active student in several campus organizations, and had attended a state residence hall leadership conference. Later on that year, I applied to be a resident assistant, after receiving some advice from my academic advisor and my hall director. I got the job, moved into the residence halls two weeks early the following fall, and began my new found path to what has now become a career in student affairs. During my time at Saginaw Valley State University (SVSU), I learned a lot about myself; more than I could ever imagine. I learned that I really loved college campuses, I learned that my family, friends, and upbringing in inner-city Detroit would shape who I am, and I reaffirmed that I had a calling on my life to help others.

After much consideration and negotiation with my parents, I decided to switch my major to sociology with a concentration in social inequality and human diversity, and began to actively seek out experiences that would lead me to Iowa State. During my time here at Iowa State, I have learned even more about myself, I have challenged myself in ways that I had never considered before, and I have sought out mentors and friends that continue to challenge and teach me. As a graduate student in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies department (ELPS), I have had opportunities to reflect on who I am, consider what things are important to me, explore my

passions, and re-articulate past thoughts. My learning and experiences here have by far been life-changing, and in this portfolio, I will share the five outcomes that have been most prominent for me.

The five outcomes that I will reflect on in this paper include: (1) students will be experienced practitioners and educational leaders (2) students will be knowledgeable student affairs scholars (3) students will be able to apply theory to practice (4) students will be able to create, design, and implement programs and interventions and (5) students will know student characteristics and effects of college on students. I have chosen these five outcomes because they are the areas in which I have learned and experienced the most during my two years here at Iowa State. There are multiple experiences that I have had in each outcome. I will provide artifacts as proof of learning. This capstone will be a personal account as to why I will have no regrets in becoming an alumnus of Iowa State University and a product of the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (ELPS) department.

Students Will Be Experienced Practitioners and Educational Leaders

In the outcome *students will be experienced practitioners and educational leaders*, I have had several experiences that I feel validate my learning. My assistantship with the department of residence, my work as an advisor to student groups and as a class facilitator, and my service to professional committees all show my dedication to student affairs work. In the following section, I will describe specific activities that I have done in each area to gain competence in this outcome.

Graduate Hall Director, Department of Residence

During the past two years, I have had a great opportunity to do my assistantship in the Department of Residence as a graduate hall director (GHD). I have worked in the Richardson

Court Area (RCA) on the east side of campus, specifically in the old RCA. The old RCA is the oldest area of campus housing, the residence halls are very traditional, and the community is extremely vibrant. In the three halls that I oversee, Barton, Lyon, and Freeman, there are two honors houses with rich history and lots of traditions. I have a student staff of six Community Advisors, each of whom directly advises a house cabinet of student leaders, and I oversee a very active hall council. My experience in my assistantship has really helped to shape my professional practice by exposing me to a lot of student interaction.

As a GHD, I have learned the art of both supervision and advising. By using a collaborative approach to my work, I function as an active participant in the residential community. I often engage with my students in a participatory method, by injecting myself into the community and working one-on-one with students. I do this by starting the year and semester out with set expectations, which include my participation in house and hall events, and establishing strong interpersonal relationships with my students. I make it clear to students that I am here to support them and ensure that they persist at Iowa State until graduation. In feedback that I have received from students, via evaluations and satisfaction surveys (see appendix A), my students have informed me that I am very approachable, available, and supportive. These are all very critical areas when creating a living-learning environment for students.

As an experienced practitioner, I must also be knowledgeable about methods of creating a living-learning environment for my students. Moos (1979) defined the campus environment through his work on the social climate, which he measured using the university residence environment scale (URES). He cited three dimensions within this environment. The first is the relationship dimension which deals with involvement and emotional support. Second is the personal growth and development dimension that involves independence, traditional social

orientation, competition, academic achievement, and intellectuality. The final dimension is system maintenance and system change, which has to do with order and organization, student influence, and innovation. These aspects of the social climate in the URES have a direct relationship to my work as a GHD in Barton, Lyon, and Freeman. In this environment, involvement, independence, academic achievement, and order and organization are all at high levels. As students participate in their house and hall leadership and activities, they develop strong independence and autonomy within the community. The academic achievement is also an area where my environment excels. With two honors communities, the focus is often on high academics and intellectual development. Lastly, the concept of order and organization is also apparent in the community, as students develop and vote on the rules and policies within their community.

By applying my knowledge of campus environments, I have worked to create a balanced community where healthy student interaction is fundamental. As a graduate hall director, I am responsible for facilitating student learning in my residential community. I assure that student learning happens by overseeing community development, supervising a student staff team, and administering high quality service. I have shown this through my dedication and commitment to enhancing the quality of life for my students in assuring their success while at Iowa State. Some examples of this include a program that my staff and I did last fall for freshmen welcome weekend (see Appendix B). This event went over so well that we received the program of the year award from the National Residence Hall Honorary reorganization group. Another example is the recent renovation that our courtyard received after plenty of meeting, planning, and negotiation on my behalf. Because of my drive to improve student life, the BLF community now has a patio area with grills and picnic tables (see Appendix C for ground plans). While I am very

excited for these accomplishments, I do not state them to boast. I list these examples to illustrate my passion for working with students and my experience as a student affairs practitioner.

Advising student groups

During my time at Iowa State, I have also had the opportunity to advise several student groups. Last spring, I did a practicum in the Student Activities Center as the advisor for the Alternative Spring Break (ASB) trip to Willow River, Minnesota (see Appendix D for ASB material). As an undergraduate, I participated in two spring break trips, one as a participant and another as the site leader for an international trip to Guyana, South America, so I have had experience with ASB. As the advisor, I selected and trained the two site leaders, as well as provided leadership to the group of 7 participants. I met weekly with the two site leaders from October until we left for the trip in mid-March, and from December until the trip, we all met with the participants. At our weekly meetings, we focused on the eight components of a positive ASB trip, set forth by the national organization, Break Away. Those components included: orientation to the site, education about the issue, strong direct service while at the site, and deep reflection both during and after completion of the trip. As the advisor, I set the direction for how we would go about orienting and educating our participants about social issues, such as youth with HIV & AIDS. I also played a key role in helping the site leaders create and implement reflective exercises for the group. For students, ASB is often a life-changing event, as they develop strong bonds with each other and a deep passion for not only the site that we visit, but also the social issue.

This opportunity provided me with a very practical chance to advise a student group on a service-learning trip. This experience taught me how to foster student commitment in relativism, as they learned to truly expand their thinking and meaning-making abilities (as cited in Evans,

Forney, and Guido-DiBrito, 1998). During our final reflection while at the site, the students became very emotional as we discussed the realities of social issues and methods of eliminating these issues. I could see that students had a great understanding of the purpose of service work and the critical role of social change agents. This experience was very meaningful for me and has been essential in my work as an advisor for students.

There are also other student groups that I have had the opportunity to advise while at Iowa State. I have served as the co-advisor to the Order of Rose and Chessman Chapter of the National Residence Hall Honorary, NRHH, and co-advisor to the Kappa Gamma Chapter of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. Both of these experiences have taught me several other skills needed in advising student groups, including challenge and support, group autonomy, and group development. Both of these groups have very distinct purposes. NRHH serves as a recognition organization designated for the top 1% of residence hall student leaders, and Phi Beta Sigma is a historically African-American fraternity founded on the principles of brotherhood, scholarship, and service. Because of these differences, the way that I approach advising the two organizations is very different. NRHH is a group of tenured student leaders, most of which are either hall presidents or current Community Advisors, all of whom are very talented students, require minimal direct advising, and only need to be supported as they create and implement programs. Conversely, my undergraduate fraternity brothers are all men, they have established a strong brotherhood, and they are all students of color, (four African-American, one Latino, and one multiracial), thus, my advising style calls for a different set of skills. When advising them, my focus is often helping them to understand and make-sense of their gender and racial identity. This happens by way of facilitating conversations on topics of race and racism on-campus, lack of involvement for men of color, and recently, topics around sexuality and the “down low”

concept within the African-American community. These diverse advising experiences have taught me to be adaptable to the needs of my students, and methods to go about fostering both organizational and personal development through advising.

Human Sciences 150 Dialogues on Diversity Facilitator

Last semester, and currently this spring, I have had the opportunity to co-facilitate the course Human Sciences 150 Dialogues on Diversity. In this course, I provide guidance and instruction to students on topics related to diversity and social identity, (see Appendix E for course syllabus). The course is seven weeks long and meets every week for two hours. This class gives me an opportunity to teach students how to have a dialogue on topics that they may have either never talked about, or prefer not to talk about. We cover topics such as gender, race, sexuality, and religion in the class. I implement instruction by way of video media, online blogs, journaling, and a final class project that helps students put their thoughts into action as change agents for diversity. This experience has taught me how to create structured classroom environments to have dialogues on topics of difference. Specifically, I have further learned how to confront students' behaviors and ideas that are not conducive to understanding and appreciating human differences.

One example of confronting behaviors entailed a conversation that I had with a student who was expressing his thoughts on the class in his online journal last semester. After our first class, one of my students wrote in his journal about why he believed that it was racist and sexist to have a class like Dialogues. He went on to discuss how courses like this only further segregate by only looking at differences. As the course instructor, I made sure to explain to the student why course like Dialogues can only help individuals. I told the student that while I understood his point, I would challenge him to think about how often he has conversations about topics of

diversity in both his other classes or with his friends. I ended my thoughts by letting the student know that we could talk more after our upcoming class if he still had thoughts. In this situation, I was able to help this student make sense of his thoughts about the Dialogues class. By instructing students and helping them to understand the realities of human difference, I have become an educational leader.

Professional Involvement and Committee Experience

The final experience that I will discuss that has helped me to be an experienced practitioner and educational leader is my work on university, regional, and national committees. Through my work in organizations like the Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA), the Higher Education Graduate Student Organization, (HEGSO) the Social Justice Summit, the Upper Midwest Region of the Association of College and University Housing Officers (UMR-ACUHO), and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), I have had the opportunity to serve on several committees and hold leadership positions. These activities include my role as the Social Justice Educator for HEGSO, member of the Social Justice Committee for UMR-ACUHO, and member of both the Commission for Social Justice Educators and the Standing Committee on Multicultural Affairs-Pan African Network for ACPA. These professional development opportunities are all very important for me and have helped me to create a professional identity.

My work on these committees and associations has varied; however, they have all provided me with an abundant amount of learning about myself and the work of student affairs practitioners. I have collaborated with campus partners here at Iowa State and with both entry-level and seasoned professionals all across the nation. One example is a project I have been working on recently through HEGSO to sponsor several master and doctoral students to attend

the Critical Race Theory 20 Conference in Iowa City in a few weeks (see Appendix F for budget breakdown). Another opportunity for collaboration occurred while working on the UMR Social Justice Committee. During the regional conference last October, I presented a workshop titled “Discover a New Beat: In Tune with Diversity”, with two professional colleagues (see Appendix G). My networking with professional colleagues has grown tremendously due to these experiences, and I have enjoyed the opportunity to have outlets that allow me to engage in other areas of student affairs. All of these experiences, including my assistantship, my practicums, and my involvement, have helped to shape me professionally and personally, and I know that I have fulfilled this learner outcome due to these experiences.

These examples, in addition to others, illustrate my passion for working with and for college students. Through my role as a Graduate Hall Director, I am able to apply classroom knowledge. As a course instructor I have had the ability to facilitate Dialogues on Diversity and learn to work in a classroom setting. Finally, through professional development opportunities on local, regional, and national committees, I have stayed informed on current trends and methods of practice, in addition to sharing my own experiences. As an active and engaged professional, I have developed the critical skills of being an experienced and informed practitioner and an educational leader.

Students Will Be Knowledgeable Student Affairs Scholars

During my time at Iowa State, I have had several opportunities to become a knowledgeable student affairs scholar. In this section, I will discuss some of the presentations that I have given and articles that I have written for publication in professional newsletters. These scholarly activities will provide an account of my learning in this specific outcome and will illustrate my professional goals of becoming a scholar.

Conference Presentations

As an undergraduate student, I presented at several local, state, regional, and national student leadership conferences. I view the opportunity to present as knowledge sharing. By presenting, I have the ability to provide a different lens of viewing a certain topic, and a space to engage with others to best consider solutions. In the past two years, I have had several opportunities to present at both local and regional conferences. In my first year, I did a presentation titled “Affirmative Re-action: How Do You Keep Diversity Alive When It’s Threatened”, (see Appendix H), at the 2007 ELPS Research Symposium. I also presented a poster during the 2008 symposium titled “Jewish Student Serve-us: Creating an Inclusive Campus Community”, (see Appendix I). This past fall, I teamed up with a good friend and fellow graduate student, Brittany Johnson, and did a presentation titled “Creating an (In)clusive Environment: Racial Realities On-Campus” (see Appendix J). We presented at the Iowa Student Personnel Association (ISPA) conference and at the UMR-ACUHO Regional conference. After winning Top Diversity Program at UMR, Brittany and I were asked to present the program at the Spring Training session for ISU Dining managers, as well as at the Iowa State Conference on Race and Ethnicity (ISCORE).

The motivation behind the racial realities presentation came from our Student Development Theory II class, where we studied student social identity development. A couple of the core readings from that class that really stood out for me was the Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) reading on critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate. In addition, the New Directions for Student Services text on “Responding to Realities of Race” edited by Harper and Patton (2007), also had a significant influence for developing the program. These readings, along with the creative methods of engagement that Brittany and I utilized,

proved to be very useful in helping professionals consider strategies of creating more inclusive campus environments and developing racial justice ally attitudes and actions.

Having this opportunity to present has taught me a lot about the work that we do as student affairs professionals. I learned that there are very practical ways to go about connecting theory-to-practice and making it understandable for professionals at all levels. I have also learned that it is important to stay current on topics in student affairs. A lot of the feedback that we received from participants was that the work that we used in our presentation was very recent and valuable to the work that folks were doing. Even the dining managers found the sections of our presentation on White racialized environments and social counter-spaces to be useful, as they had questions about why international students and students of color often sit together in the cafeteria. This session helped them to better understand how to respond to often subtle forms of racism that students experience within their work environment. This was a very exciting learning experience for me.

Scholarly Articles

During the past year, I have written a couple of articles for publication in professional newsletters. This past fall, an article that I wrote titled “Being Civically Engaged: The Role of Multiculturalism and Social Justice Education”, (see Appendix K), for the UMR-ACUHO newsletter. The theme for articles submitted for Fall 2008 was civic engagement as we prepared for election season. As a member of the Social Justice Committee, I decided to write an article on behalf of the committee that focused on the important role that social justice and multicultural education has on civic engagement. I discussed the purpose of civic engagement in higher education, and the importance for us as housing professionals to cultivate experiences in the residence halls that help students make sense of social issues and foster social change. I was

inspired to write on this specific topic after finishing my work as the ASB advisor and after reading a recent article in the *Journal of College Student Development* on the relationships between service-learning, social justice, multicultural competence, and civic engagement by Einfeld and Collins (2008).

In addition, I, with a colleague in the Department of Residence, recently submitted another article to the UMR-ACUHO Newsletter that focused on the effects of the economic crisis on university housing (see Appendix L for article). I have also been working on an article to submit to The Voice, ACPA's Commission for Social Justice Educator's newsletter, titled "Just-us: Realities of Race for Graduate Students of Color". My hope is that these two articles will be published in either the summer or fall editions of both newsletters. I have also set a personal goal to submit an article to a more notable and peer-reviewed publication in the next year. For me, having the experience to do scholarly writing has taught me the value of making theoretical concepts practical. Through written communication, I can share methods of implementing programs or policies that prove to be effective. As a professional, I hope to always be receptive to scholarship as a means of staying current in student affairs. This learner outcome is one from which I have drawn a very strong understanding and it falls in line with my personal and professional goals.

Students Will Be Able to Apply Theory to Practice

In the outcome *students will be able to apply theory to practice*, I will discuss several opportunities I have had in my assistantship to apply classroom knowledge to my work with students. Specifically, I will reflect on my work with student conduct and student staff selection and training. These experiences have all allowed me to implement my knowledge of student development theory to best serve as a student affairs professional.

Student Conduct

As a graduate hall director, I am official conduct hearing officer for the university, which basically means that I can make decisions regarding which sanction a student should receive for violating university policy. During my first semester as a GHD, I had to serve on the department's judicial committee. We were responsible for reading incident reports filed by student staff members and setting charges based on specific policies that were violated. Concurrently while on this committee, I had the opportunity to work with my direct supervisor to sit in on conduct hearings to learn the logistics of this type of work. After a semester of learning and practicing, I was allowed to hear my own conduct cases for students in my area of responsibility.

In my community, most of the misconduct occurs in Freeman hall. Freeman is 75% men. Only one floor is designated for women, and the hall is mostly first year students. Students in this hall are usually late to sign their contract with the university, which means they may not always be from a 'college-going' culture. They are mainly first generation students, and often labeled as the 'at-risk' students. Freeman has a 30% retention rate, compared to the 50-70% rate of the other two communities with the honors houses. Needless to say, the students in Freeman are very social, struggle academically, and are often involved in policy violation. Because of these facts, my interactions with the students in Freeman are often more direct and require me to be very intentional about the way that I go about interacting with students.

When working through student behavioral issues, I am often cognizant of Kohlberg's (1972) and Gilligan's (1977) theories of moral development. Moral development theories help to identify the methods by which students make meaning of moral decisions. Kohlberg explained that moral development theory seeks to transform a person's structure of thought by way of

justice. The theory suggested three levels of moral reasoning; preconventional reasoning, conventional reasoning, and postconventional or principled reasoning. Gilligan also proposed a theory of moral development that specifically looked at the ways in which women make meaning of moral dilemmas. The theory also has three levels of development; orientation to individual survival, goodness as self-sacrifice, and morality of nonviolence. Similar to Kohlberg's theory, Gilligan's work also suggested that individuals start out at a self-centered perspective and end with the welfare of others in mind. The difference in Gilligan's theory is that it looks at the role that relationships affect women's moral decision making, specifically examining the ethics of care and responsibility.

When hearing student conduct cases, I am very intentional about helping them make sense of their behavior and understanding the effect that their decisions have on the entire residential community. In conduct meetings with students, the focus is always on student learning and moral development. My goal is for them to recognize why their behavior is counterproductive to the community and to what extent they begin to affect other students. I ask students to come to a conclusion as to what their sanction ought to be. This method helps students to internalize the behavior and take ownership for their actions. More often than not, students will admit that what they have done is inappropriate and are very apologetic. In addition to this direct conversation, I also assign students to write a reflective paper on their behavior and other behaviors that may pattern their current actions or cause further disciplinary sanction (see Appendix M).

By utilizing this specific method of educating students, I have learned how to foster interdependence, autonomy, and a strong sense of meaning-making, all skills that are critical to student's growth and development (Chickering and Reisser, 1993; Evans et al 1998). This

experience has been a challenging task. I am often given a lot of autonomy, in order to best meet the needs of my specific students. Hearing student conduct cases allows me to apply classroom knowledge in very direct ways, and has probably been an area that I often look forward to when attempting to move students along in their development. My learning here has been very beneficial and I have been grateful to have such an experience as a graduate student.

Student Staff Selection and Training

Another area where I have been able to apply theory to practice has been through my work in student staff selection and training. As a GHD, I have the opportunity to select my Community Advisor's, which is not always the case for graduate assistants. The student staff that I inherited my first semester was a great group of leaders; they worked hard, showed dedication, and were mostly self-motivated. However, I did have several reservations about the group that I was interested in adjusting. The first thing was that all of my staff was White students. While this was not a huge problem for me personally, I quickly realized through both readings and conversations in Student Development Theory I, that students learn best in diverse settings (King and Shuford, 1996). I was also interested in creating an environment within the residential community where students felt as though they have staff members who look like them and share some of their same experiences. The other thing that I had reservations about was that none of my current staff members were comfortable with talking about issues of difference. These two things presented me with both personal and professional challenges. The primary reason was because I did not always feel as comfortable being the only person of color on the staff team and in social settings in the community. After finding out that I would have three openings going into the second semester, I was given the chance to select three new staff members.

When looking through the candidate pool, I reflected on the reservations that I had with my previous staff team and made intentional efforts of bringing more visual diversity to the staff team. That semester, I hired two students of color, one African-American woman and one Asian-American man, and a third candidate who had experiences living and working with international students in his previous hall. This was important for me, because in my community I have a somewhat significant number of international students who are mostly Asian. In addition to that, the handful of students of color in my halls were very hidden and seemed to exist in the shadows of the community. My hope was that by hiring more staff of color, I would be able to reach these students and assure that they too felt as though the community was indeed a place for them.

The following semester, I did a project for our Student Development Theory II class that required me to explore a social identity group different from one that I belong to and interview students. For the assignment, I chose White men, and decided to interview one of my staff members whom had recently attended a lecture on White privilege, and was very interested in exploring his White identity. This project allowed me to really engage with this staff member and better understand how he made sense of his White identity and White culture. From our interview and my work in Student Development Theory II, I decided to put together a training session on social identity and human diversity for staff training in the fall (see Appendix N). The training session was done in-hall with my immediate staff only, and focused on exploring how students of differing social identities develop and methods that can be used to support their development. The first thing I decided was that this session would take place the same day as the departments all-staff diversity training, which this specific year included bringing in a speaker from the Social Justice Training Institute. Prior to this training, I gave my students a list of questions to reflect on the night before. The questions asked students to explain what social

identities were most important to them, and how might living in the residence halls support their identity or be detrimental to their identity. Following the speaker, I facilitated the training session and lead discussions around the reflection questions, as well as some group activities that we did. By starting the year out with topics of social identity and human difference, I noticed that my student staff became much more comfortable around these conversations in staff meetings or one-to-one meetings; much different than my previous year. I also hired two additional students this past fall, one of which is a Latino student, now making half of my staff students of color.

The main reason that I provided this specific training and became more intentional about topics of social identity was due to an article that I read in Student Development Theory II last year. The article was by Jones and McEwen (2000), where they created a model of multiple dimensions of identity. The model starts out by describing the core as central to the multiple dimensions of identity. The core contains personal attributes, characteristics, and identities that are central to individuals. Outside of the core are the intersecting circles which are described as social identities or those “externally defined dimensions such as gender, race, culture, and religion” (p. 409). These social identities are measured as more or less salient depending on where they were located on the intersecting circle in proximity to the individual’s core. The closer the social identity is to the core, the more salience it has, and the further away from the core, the less salience. Lastly, the model described the outer circle as that which contains contextual experiences such as family background and sociocultural conditions. The model acknowledges that individuals have multiple identities that are influenced by contextual experiences which can determine how salient these identities are for individuals.

Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007) reconceptualized the model of multiple dimension of identity by adding a meaning-making component. By including a meaning-making filter to the

model, the authors measured the depth and permeability of complex thinking. This new filter “illustrates complex meaning-making abilities having increased depth and smaller grid openings” that can better analyze contextual influences (p. 6). Those that do not have as complex thinking abilities have narrow filters and wider openings that lack the ability to analyze these influences. By implementing my knowledge of social identity development theories and concepts, I have been able to foster a staff team that not only appreciates differences, but also works to help foster students’ understanding of their social identity. One way we do this is by addressing attitudes and actions that do not support this same philosophy. My student staff is very collaborative with each other and they get along great. They make reference to conversations that students have that can be viewed as discriminatory, and they are often very aware of how they interact with students, especially underrepresented students in our community. This opportunity has given me the ability to make even more theory to practice connections in my assistantship as a graduate hall director.

As a student affairs professional, I have learned the importance that theory and theoretical concepts has on our work. I incorporate theory into my day-to-day work with students to expand their capacity for learning. By using cognitive, moral, and social identity development theories, I can provide students with the tools to succeed academically and grow personally and professionally. In our career, we cannot work without a vision, and for me, student development theory provides the focal point for practice.

Students Will Be Able to Create, Design, and Implement Programs and Interventions

Program Implementing Master Plan

Because I have had opportunities to make strong theory-to-practice connections, I have been able to create, design, and implement programs and interventions in my community that

meet the needs of my students. An example of this is the programming model that I have adapted, the Program Implementing Master Plan (PIMP) (see Appendix O). Currently, the Department of Residence does not have a residential programming model, as some residence life units have. Instead, we have a more philosophical curriculum called the Living, Leading, Learning model (LLL). The LLL has five core competencies: community and civic responsibility, personal skills, academic skills, leadership skills, and understanding and appreciating human differences. Each of the competencies has several outcomes, goals, and strategies associated with it, however, there is not a step-by-step model that helps the Community Advisors implement the LLL. In BLF, I have created the PIMP model, which is designed to provide my staff with a more process guided system of doing programs. At the beginning of each semester, the staff and I do a month-to-month plan of programs that will take place in the hall. One of the programs must be social in nature; for example, a recent Super Bowl party that we had, or our annual Freeman Haunted House. The other program should be educational in nature and pertain to one of the five LLL competencies; for example an academic skills program, or a presidential debate watch party, which one of my staff members planned last fall. In addition to the month-to-month calendar of events, the PIMP model also requires the staff to turn in a PIMP form two weeks prior to their event. The PIMP form has three steps. The first step is where they outline their proposed program, with title, logistics, cost, advertising plan, etc. The second step focuses on learning outcomes, which requires staff members to state exactly what their program will help students learn. The final step is done after the program has been implemented. In this step staff evaluates their program and consider things that they would do different in the future. The feedback that I have received from staff members is that the PIMP model really helps them to implement the LLL and keeps them on track when planning programs

and events.

The creation and implementation of the PIMP model has been a great tool for me to use as I am learning in my assistantship. Having the ability to design a model that can facilitate student development has taught me the importance of not only making theory-to-practice connections, but has also provided me with the skill to assess and implement new procedures. This experience allowed me to use my own autonomy to develop a program that fits my community and can be adapted as needs change. I am aware that this model is not perfect and does present some challenges for students, as it requires them to consider learning outcomes and evaluate a program that they have solely or collaboratively planned. However, all things considered, I feel that the PIMP model has good use and provides staff with a structure, which is something that is supportive for their needs.

Nelson Mandela Center for Black Men

Another program or intervention that I have had a chance to design came from my work in the Organization and Administration course. In this class, a group of students and I created a campus center as a part of our final class project. The center that we created was the Nelson Mandela Center for Black Men (see Appendix P). I decided to work on this specific project because of my interest in Black male identity development, an area that I was initially considering for a thesis topic. In the literature review, I found that African American men are one of the smallest and most underrepresented populations of college students in today's institutions of higher education. These men have the lowest numbers of individuals to start and finish college. They are one of the only racial groups where women drastically out-weigh men in the college environment. Finally, this population has historically been marginalized in society on both individual and institutional levels (Cuyjet, 2006).

Our center was created at a predominantly White institution, (PWI), on the west coast. There were 30,000 students and 80 percent were White/Caucasian. We argued that this center should be established as a new support system that would be needed to allow Black male students an equal opportunity to be successful at a PWI. The center had specific programming geared toward Black male students to help improve retention and provide a safe space at campus where they could explore their racial and gender identity. The research that we found supported the creation of the Nelson Mandela Center for Black Men (NMC). In addition to programming for the center, our group also developed a mission, vision, and goals, a financing plan, a staffing plan, building and floor plans, and an evaluation plan. This project took lots of hard work, but the end product was very beneficial.

Having the opportunity to do this class project really helped me understand how student affairs is organized and administered. I learned how to put together a proposal for a new center, or program on campus. By researching our specific topic and learning about the many different models and types of practice within student affairs, my team was able to draft a plan. We then presented our proposal in front of our cohort and received their approval for the creation of the center. This experience definitely adds to my wealth of knowledge and skills as a student affairs professional. I know that this project has made me more aware about how I go about proposing new plans and ideas in my work as a professional. Recently, I have been working with some of the coordinators within my department to develop a new policy for how we go about charging floors for vandalism and damages. From the work I did on the NMC project, I understood the need to do my research in advance, develop plans of action for implementing the new system, and methods to evaluate the system. This experience has been very useful as an entering professional.

Having the experiences of designing and implementing the PIMP process and by creating the Nelson Mandela Center for Black Men, I have developed fundamental professional skills. Learning how to develop, propose, and employ new programs has been a very beneficial learning opportunity for me. Because I plan to work in an area like residence life, knowing the logistical details of program and intervention planning will allow me to best meet the needs of students. Through my application of in-class concepts, I have far exceeded my initial expectations of learning program development and implementation.

Students Will Know Student Characteristics and Effects of College on Students

The final outcome that I have chosen to focus on is *students will know student characteristics and effects of college on students*. This learner outcome is important to me because I feel that one of the most valuable experiences that I have had during my time at Iowa State has come from learning how the campus environment affects students and how I as a professional can work to construct positive learning environments for all students.

Campus Audit

During this past fall semester, I had an opportunity to visit the University of Illinois at Chicago campus, (UIC) (see Appendix Q for presentation). As an assignment for my campus environments course, a group of us took a trip to Chicago to do a campus audit. Prior to arriving on campus, we set up several meetings with institutional agents, described as academic administrators, student affairs administrators, faculty, and students (Kuh, Schuh, & Whitt, 1991). We met with both the undergraduate and graduate student government presidents, the directors of the student centers, their campus culture centers, (i.e. Asian-American center, African-American center, and Native-American center), the dean of students, several hall directors and residence hall student leaders, and the assistant vice president of student affairs. During our visit,

we also took a campus tour of UIC, had lunch with students, and because of a friend and ELPS alum who works in university housing, we were able to stay on-campus in a guest apartment for the night. I was very excited to learn about UIC because the campus is very different from both Iowa State and my undergraduate institution. UIC is an urban institution and is located a few blocks from downtown Chicago in the heart of the city. From most areas of campus you can see the Chicago skyline, and there's multiple community resources located right on campus. The city's largest source of public transit, the L-train, has two stops at the UIC campus, and several buses run through campus. The campus is very diverse. The student population is made up of 60% students of color, making UIC a minority-majority campus. Naturally, this creates a feel on campus that diversity is valued. In addition, they have several campus resources designated for underrepresented students. As I stated, the multiple cultural centers and specific academic support centers for these cultural groups include disabled students service, the gender and sexuality center, and a Hillel house for Jewish students.

This experience visiting UIC has helped me understand the type of institutional setting in which I desire to work. That setting would include an urban or metropolitan campus, in the heart of, or close proximity to a large city, with a diverse student population and multiple campus resources. As I have learned about the four aspects of the campus environment, the physical, the human aggregate, the organizational, and the constructed (Strange and Banning, 2001), I have come to realize that certain institutions are very intentional about how they are designed, the students they wish to attract, and the type of message they send. UIC is a place where diversity and multiculturalism is not just talked about, but it is practiced daily in the institutional setting.

Student Racial Conflict

Another reason that I have a desire to work at an institution like this is because of my thoughts and ideas of how students learn and grow best when in a diverse environment. During my first year of college, I lived in a seven person suite style residence hall. I was the only Black guy in the suite with six other White students. I was from inner-city Detroit, and most of my roommates were from small towns in northeastern Michigan. My roommates were often interested in learning about me and my experiences being from Detroit. One of the first questions that I was asked when I told them where I was from was, “have you been shot?” They were curious about life in a large city, how many times I’d been robbed, and if I belonged to or knew someone in a gang. While I enjoyed my time as a freshmen and me and my roommates got along great, I often felt as though I had to defend my city and my race. There were times when I felt alone and naïve about life, because my experiences were so different. Often times my roommates would tell me that I was “different than the other Black students”, or that I didn’t “act black”, which I now know is a racial microaggression (Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso, 2000).

While this was my experience as an undergraduate student, I have learned that this is often the case for my students of color as well. I recently had a conversation with a Black male student from Des Moines. He lives across the hall from a White male student from a small town in northern Iowa. Earlier during the spring semester, the Black student had a message on his door that read “turn down your ghetto music bitch”. In retaliation, he began to play his music louder and leave his door open more frequently. I was informed about the situation by one of my staff members and decided to meet 1:1 with both students. During my conversations (see Appendix R for residence hall weekly report), I was able to really understand and relate to both students. My White student who expressed his lack of interest for hip-hop and rap music, and my Black student who felt as though he could not play his type of music in the residence hall without

having other students criticize him. I helped both students to realize that passive aggressive methods of communication were not an effective way of expressing themselves. I was also intentional about getting at the comment of “ghetto music”.

I learned from this experience that for students of color who reside in a White racialized environment (Reason & Evans, 2007); their cognitive and racial identity development can be challenged. Knowing the thoughts and feelings that one of my students had to experience, I am committed to making sure that students have an opportunity to learn in healthy ways outside of the classroom. I am also committed to helping my White students to be racial justice allies for students of color (Reason, Roosa Millar, & Scales, 2005). By working at an institution with a diverse student population, I can help to foster cross-cultural relationships with students that seek to understand, rather than subtly put down students in negative ways.

My understanding of this outcome has shown me what my role as a hall director is when it comes to being a social justice ally. I can help augment the campus environment to be more inclusive and inviting to underrepresented students, which for me, is a primary purpose of student affairs professionals. Through my learning and understanding of student characteristics and the effects of college on students, I will work to alleviate oppressive behaviors and enhance social justice actions and attitudes in all students.

Ending the Journey

As I prepare to depart from Iowa State University and the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department, there are several key elements that have been instilled in me which include: understanding what it means to be a student affairs professional, knowing why student development theory is critical to our work, and developing my personal philosophy of student affairs and higher education. By having a thorough understanding of what it means to be a

professional, I now have the ability to do the work that I enjoy. As I stated earlier, making a career of student affairs has been a personal calling for me. This work will allow me to assist students and ensure that they make it onto campus, succeed in classroom, learn outside the classroom, and walk across the stage as a graduate. Utilizing my knowledge as a student development educator will assist me in this endeavor. By challenging and supporting students, helping them to make meaning of their lives and the college experience, and fostering a strong sense of identity, I will purposefully facilitate student learning and development. Finally, by keeping my core philosophy of student affairs and higher education as the central place of self-understanding and social change, I can make a difference one student at a time. I believe in this profession and in the work that we do as educators.

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Appendices

- A) Student Staff Evaluations of Hall Director
- B) ORC Of The Year Award: Start the Year with a Splash
- C) Grounds Plan: Carrie Lane Court Patio
- D) Alternative Spring Break Application and Trip Itinerary
- E) Dialogues on Diversity Syllabus
- F) Budget: Critical Race Theory 20 Conference
- G) Social Justice Committee Workshop Outline
- H) Presentation: Affirmative Re-Action: Keeping Diversity Alive When it's Threatened
- I) Poster: Jewish Student Serve-us
- J) Presentation: Creating an (In)clusive environment: Racial Realities on-campus
- K) Article: Being Civically Engaged
- L) Article: Spring is Here, But Economic Crisis Shows We're Still Frozen
- M) Student Conduct Reflection Paper
- N) Social Identity Training Session
- O) Program Implementing Master Plan
- P) Nelson Mandela Center for Black Men
- Q) Presentation: University of Illinois at Chicago
- R) Hall Director Weekly Report