

Appreciation for Student Affairs

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Appreciation for Student Affairs

As a first generation college student with a degree in Psychology was a big accomplishment. It appeared as if I earned my degree with ease to my family and friends. Little did they know that I once questioned my self-worth and purpose in higher education. With the guidance and assistance of student affairs professionals at Iowa State University, I learned how to manage with every challenge I faced. I am the first in my family to pursue a master's degree and it is hard to explain to them the benefits of continuing with my education. Throughout my two years in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (ELPS) program at Iowa State University (ISU), I gained a greater appreciation for the student affairs professionals who helped me through my challenges. I acquired skills, knowledge, and strengths from my assistantship at the Margaret Sloss Women's Center, and Dean of Students Office, practica experience with Freshmen Council and Student Support Services Program, co-curricular involvement, and formal coursework that will be beneficial to me when I am in the position to assist students through their challenges.

There are many lessons and skills I acquired through the ELPS program. I will highlight five learner outcomes and provide examples of how I have achieved those outcomes through my assistantship, practica, coursework, and involvement. The outcomes I chose to discuss are: students will be experienced practitioners and educational leaders, students will be individuals who are sensitive and aware of themselves and others, students will be able to effectively communicate in writing, students will know student characteristics and effects of college students, and students will know assessment, evaluation, and research.

Students will be Experienced Practitioners and Educational Leaders

Equity and Social Justice Educator, Margaret Sloss Women's Center

My assistantship at the Margaret Sloss Women's Center as the Equity and Social Justice Educator provided me with experience that can be applicable in student affairs. I had the opportunity to coordinate programs that empower women and bring awareness on issues women face, lead planning committees, code results from a needs assessment, facilitate three University Studies 160 Gender Justice courses, and oversee 16 Women's Center volunteers. The mission of the Women's Center is to promote equity for women and social change on the Iowa State University campus, and through my assistantship, I made a contribution to the mission.

The majority of my assistantship focused on coordinating programs to empower women and bring awareness to issues such as breast cancer, violence against women, sexual assault, and gender inequalities. Coordinating an effective and successful program or event involves collaboration with departments and recognizing the purpose of the program. The purpose of the programs I coordinate is to provide a supportive, inclusive environment to assist individuals to cope with transitions from experiencing an event such as cancer, abuse, or assault to learning how to cope with the event and recover.

Schlossberg's transition theory guided my coordination of programs and events. Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson (2006, as cited in Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, and Renn, 2009) defined a transition as "an event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (p. 33). According to Schlossberg's transition model, the four factors that influence the ability to cope with transitions are situation, self, support, and strategies (Evans et al., 2009). The challenge with coordinating programs for students, faculty, and staff is that each individual's experience is different and it is impossible to generalize the needs of a population. There is not a guarantee that the program or event I coordinate will be beneficial to everyone, but if it would have a positive impact on at least one person, I would consider the

program successful. When coordinating programs for a population for people who were affected by cancer or assault, I have to consider their situation, their perception of their selves, provide support, and develop strategies to assist in their transition.

Among the programs and awareness months I coordinated, I will discuss my experience coordinating Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) 2009 and 2010 and how I used Schlossberg's transition model to guide the programs and events (Appendix A). I will identify the four S's: situation, self, support, and strategies, and describe how I addressed the four S's when coordinating programs and events.

The target population for SAAM was survivors and supporters, friends and families of survivors of sexual assault. Survivors of sexual assault have been involved in an unwanted sexual coercion. Transitions they experience include feelings losing control in their lives, difficulty to trust others, and increased stress and anxiety (RAINN, 2009). Their perception of self relates to psychological resources and their personal development. The programs and events that are coordinated throughout the month of April are intended to provide support through networks, family and friends, and from Iowa State University and Ames community. After an event, a discussion portion takes place to address the issues and provide them with a space to express their emotions and help them manage feelings or thoughts. When considering programming for sexual assault awareness month, I took into consideration how the programs would help survivors and friends and families of survivors with the transition from an unwanted event to moving forward and empowering themselves.

Skills I acquired at the Women's Center will be transferrable to my professional position in student affairs. I gained experience interacting and assisting students and used theory to guide my planning and coordination of events. I have knowledge on how to develop and code an

assessment, facilitate a discussion, manage volunteers, lead meetings, and the benefits of collaboration. My experience and wide range of responsibilities at the Margaret Sloss Women's Center prepared me to become an experienced practitioner.

Academic Coach, Student Support Services Program

Currently, I have a three-credit practicum at the Student Support Services Program (SSSP) as an academic coach. My position as an academic coach means I serve as a resource for first year students who have a GPA under a 2.0 and are on academic warning. The students will spend the semester completing the Directed Learning Program (Appendix B). I meet with six students weekly for 30 minutes and provide them with useful tools and strategies to enhance their organizational and time management skills. I discuss with them the academic challenges they face with their classes and find ways in which they can overcome those challenges.

Students who are participants of SSSP are either first generation college students, have a verified disability, or receive a Pell Grant as part of their financial aid package (Student Support Service Program, 2010). The students I interact with have difficulty transitioning from high school to college. The common themes I discovered from the students are that they hesitate to approach their professor, rely on their professors, tutors, or study groups to give them the answers, do not know how to study, or they have multiple responsibilities and do not have enough time to devote to their education. I noticed that many of the students' identity include another person. When coaching students, my goal is to promote Baxter Magolda's theory of self-authorship, or "the internal capacity to define one's beliefs, identity, and social relations" (p. 269, as cited in Evans et al., 2009).

First year generation college students are often held to high expectations from their families, because they accomplished a goal that was unobtainable by their family members. The

transition from high school to college is a cultural shock for them when they realize that college encourages critical thinking instead of memorization. Students at phase one: following formulas of Baxter Magolda's self authorship theory, are often doing what other people are telling them is right and how things should be done. Two of the students enrolled at Iowa State University, because their parents pressured them and they would have been disappointed if the students denied the opportunity that was given to them. Five of my students declared a major that their parents or mentors had recommended for them, based on the salary after graduation. All six of my students did not do well on exams, because the questions on the study guides were not the same questions on the test. The students displayed characteristics in phase one of Baxter Magolda's self authorship theory, because they are influenced by other people or relied on external things to shape their identity.

Phase two of Baxter Magolda's self authorship theory is crossroads (Evans, et al., 2009). Individuals at the crossroads phase go through a transition of recognizing how others have influenced and shaped their identity. They develop a new path for themselves that satisfy them. When meeting with students, I challenge them to think about their purpose in college. They are able to reflect on what they would like in regards to their plan on selecting a major, course selection, and graduation date. I encourage them to take authorship of their own lives and create a path that will be beneficial and satisfying to them. Along with practicing studying and organizational behaviors, I use validation (Rendon, 2002) to encourage them and help them recognize their potential, which motivates them to succeed academically.

I engaged in conversations where students will question their purpose in college. They compare themselves to their peers and use their family's high expectations as a standard. When they do not perform as well as their peers or meet other's expectations, they feel as if they have

failed and do not belong in college. Providing them with tools and resources to help them succeed, accommodated by validation and promoting self-authorship, is a combination that will bring satisfaction to students. My experience and interaction as an academic coach in the Student Support Services Program has prepared me to become an experienced practitioner.

Asian American Graduate Student Association, Iowa State University

As an undergraduate student, I was involved in numerous clubs and organizations. The most influential organization was the Asian Pacific American Awareness Coalition (APAAC). I inherited a family and a support system to help me get through my undergraduate years and appreciate my identity as an Asian American. As one of two Asian Americans in the ELPS program, I knew it would be important for me to develop close relationships with people who I identify with. I, along with two other Asian Americans, founded the Asian American Graduate Student Association (AAGSA), an organization for Asian American graduate students from all disciplines. I have become an educational leader through my involvement in AAGSA.

The purpose of starting an organization for Asian American graduate students was to provide a supportive and welcoming community for students to appreciate their identity and to bring cultural awareness to the university and community. Through our meetings with Asian American graduate students from all disciplines, we discovered that they found themselves lost in the White American society and wanted to interact with people who had similar physical features. With the exception of the three founders, all of the members were majoring in the hard sciences, such as Physics, Chemistry, and Engineering. They shared how they did not feel like they fit in, because their peers were either White or International students. They spent most of their time on their research and found it easier to be alone, even for lunch. With that knowledge, we coordinated a biweekly lunch meeting, where we would all meet for lunch off campus, and

organized other social events to provide a supportive group of people who shared similar experiences.

It was surprising that our first introductory meeting lasted more than two hours when we had planned for an hour meeting (Appendix C). The question that provoked such a long meeting was, “What has been your experience as an Asian American Graduate Student at ISU?” Only seven people attended that meeting, but everyone had a story to share. The most common theme was that they felt people portrayed them as the model minority and ignored their oppressed identity as an Asian American (Omatsu, 1994, as cited in Evans et al., 2009). They shared challenges they faced, but did not have the support of others to support them through those challenges. Their stories inspired certain programs and events that have been planned for Asian American Heritage Week in April 2009 and 2010.

Asian American Heritage Week promotes consciousness on the Asian American identity, by inviting keynote speakers, showing educational documentaries, exploring the arts of calligraphy and origami, and celebrating all the Asian cultures in a night of shows, performances, and foods (Appendix D). The documentary, “First Person Plural” expressed one woman’s experience during her awakening to social political consciousness and redirection of Asian American consciousness from Kim’s Asian American identity development model (Evans et al., 2009). The main character is a Korean woman who was adopted by a White American family and did not identify as Asian American until she was reunited with her biological family in Korea. She did not receive support from her White American family when she wanted to reclaim her identity and go by her birth name, and identify as a Korean American. The video was followed by a panelist discussion of the experience of adopted Asian Americans who also shared their experiences and how they explored their Asian identity after years of being a part of

a White American family. Bringing awareness to the ISU community and providing support for Asian Americans who may be searching for their identity and understanding of their role in American society was the reason why AAGSA was created. Utilizing my coordination skills and knowledge on issues Asian American graduate students face, I have become an experienced educational leader through AAGSA.

There were many opportunities for me to become an experienced practitioner and educational leader, but I chose to focus on the ones that have been meaningful to me. I developed practical skills, including coordinating events such as sexual assault awareness month, providing support and resources for students in crisis, assisting students who are on academic probation, and bringing awareness to Asian American issues and challenges that have been ignored due to the model minority myth (Omatsu, 1994, as cited in Evans et al., 2009). My range of experience in a professional setting and multiple opportunities to lead a student organization has made me become an experienced practitioner and educational leader.

Students will be Individuals who are Sensitive and Aware of Themselves and Others

The most important person I need to take care of is myself. I need to be aware of who I am and what influences molded me to become who I am today. Once I established a better understanding of myself, I was able to be sensitive and aware of others. Throughout the program, I reflected about myself and completed projects that allowed me to focus on other types of identities in which I do not identify. The reflections, projects, and interactions with a diverse student population made me become an individual who was sensitive and aware of oneself and others.

There are many identities that make up Somchit Som Mongtin, but I have not had the opportunity to explore them as deeply as I did during graduate school. When using the Abes,

Jones, and McEwen (2007) reconceptualized model of multiple dimensions of identity, I examined my multiple identities and how they intertwined with one another to make up my identity. Laying out my identities and discovering which ones were most salient to me increased my appreciation for my other identities, such as religion. There was an exercise where we were asked to list our identities. My list included, race, gender, family, educational, social, and financial status, relationships with others, and other oppressed identities. What I failed to list were my privileged identities including able-bodied, religion, and age. My lack of attention to my privileges motivated me to challenge myself and ask myself what I have done to deserve these privileges.

Asian American Woman: Self Identity

My most salient identity would be my race and gender. Those identities are physical attributes of me that society can see immediately and are able to label me as such. I accepted those labels without questioning what it meant, how it would affect me, and how the labels would influence how others will perceive me. I felt discomfort with myself and could not explain why I felt that way. Society taught me that I was different and did not fit the norm that society constructed. The uneasiness of not feeling comfortable pressured me to want to become what society had set as normal. I found myself relating to the White identification stage of Kim's Asian American identity development model (Evans et al., 2009).

After analyzing Kim's Asian American identity development model in Higher Education 676 (Appendix E), it made more sense to me why I felt uncomfortable and out of place. I received the message that White is beautiful, successful, intelligent, powerful, and American. I wanted to be White, but knew it was important for me to hold on to my Asian culture, heritage, and pride. Having the desires to be both contradicted itself and caused me to feel discomfort.

Having a supportive group of Asian American friends and attending the Midwest Asian American Students Union conference my junior year helped me come to terms with my identity. I became aware of my identity and learned how it interacted with my other identities. When learning more about myself, I gained a greater appreciation for other identities that I never paid much attention.

Be Sensitive and Aware of Others: Spiritual Identity

After being more aware of myself, I became sensitive to others and recognized their identities. I worked with a co-worker who had a learning disability. My interactions with her made me more aware on how I presented items such as fliers or powerpoint presentations. I avoided bright contrasting colors, prepared an alternative presentation that displayed a bigger font size, and kept my images simple (Appendix F). Making accommodations to present a universal presentation enhanced my awareness of others with oppressed identities, such as a learning disability.

I became more aware of my Christian privilege and sensitive to those who were not as privileged (Appendix G). After Warren Blumenfeld came and spoke to our Higher Education 676 course about Christian privilege and answer questions we had about his article, “Christian Privilege and the Promotion of „Secular“ and Not-So „Secular“ Mainline Christianity in Public Schooling and in the Larger Society,” I began to notice how Christianity influences academia. The academic calendar caters to Christian holidays, such as Christmas and Easter. At Iowa State University, the lighting of the tree on central campus east of Beardshear was used to represent a Christmas tree and the cross in the chapel are examples of how Christian privilege plays at ISU. Other religion’s holidays are not celebrated throughout campus or given time off classes to spend

with family. When I see signs of Christian privilege at an institution, I am motivated to incorporate and celebrate other religions as well.

Becoming more aware of my identity allowed me to feel more comfortable with myself and with how society viewed me. I utilized my support group in APAAC as an undergraduate student. I wanted to share the Asian American culture and heritage with others by planning events for Asian Heritage Month from 2005-2007. As a graduate student, I recognized the need for a support group at the graduate level and founded AAGSA. Once I felt secure about my identity, I was able to educate myself about the identities of others and hear their story. I am aware and sensitive to how society determines what is normal and how that affects populations who do not identify as the norm. My participation in AAGSA and knowledge derived from Higher Education 676 helped me become sensitive and aware of others and myself.

Students will be able to Effectively Communicate in Writing

Communication is an important skill that is a basic requirement in all job positions and in all areas in life. Communication includes verbal, non-verbal, and written. At the Margaret Sloss Women's Center, I had the opportunity to communicate with directors of departments, Deans of colleges, presidents of organizations, community members, and within the Women's Center staff. I utilized my written communication in sponsorship letters for Take Back the Night Open Mic, The Vagina Monologues, and SOARS (Story of a rape survivor) performance. My written letters of communication was effective in raising more than \$3000. I communicated the mission of and services and resources offered at the Women's Center through a recreation of the brochure. I am able to communicate effectively in writing through sponsorship letters and the Women's Center brochure.

Sponsorship Letters

One of my goals is to improve my written communication skills. I was given the opportunity to apply my skill in letters that requested funding. When writing the letters, I wanted to be professional, concise, and informative (Appendix H). My first sponsorship letter was asking for funding to provide drinks and snacks for Take Back the Night Open Mic Night in 2009. With a few edits from my supervisor, I felt confident to send the letters to various departments at Iowa State University. Asking for sponsors for the event has not been done in previous years, because of the fear of low response and support. When communicated and explained effectively, departments and organizations are more willing to sponsor an event.

Using the confidence I had with my first sponsorship letter for Take Back the Night Open Mic night, I continued to extend my communication from ISU departments and organizations to local businesses and organizations in Ames. For The Vagina Monologues, I asked for sponsorship from local clinics, McFarland Clinic PC, attorneys, and bakery shops that I would support a mission to end violence against women and girls. After receiving a positive response for The Vagina Monologues sponsorship, I extended my sponsorship letters to the Deans of all the colleges at ISU for SOARS. The more experience I had to write sponsorship letters, I felt more confident with my writing skills and learned the basics to communicating effectively; be concise, informative, and professional.

Margaret Sloss Women's Center Brochure

Designing and writing information to be included in a brochure that communicates the services and resources offered through the Women's Center enhanced my effectiveness of communicating in writing (Appendix I). I had to be informative and clear when describing the services offered through the Women's Center, and have the text look appealing. It is difficult to describe what the Women's Center does on a 5.5" x 17" page spread. It was a challenging

balance to keep the text in the brochure visually appealing, but informative. I was able to find that balance after creating four drafts of possible layouts and having one of the drafts edited multiple times. I learned that to be effective at communicating, texts should include key words that are easily understandable, short phrases, bullet points are helpful, and to avoid repeating a concept.

Sponsorship letters I wrote for the three events, Take Back the Night Open Mic, The Vagina Monologues, and SOARS, encouraged collaboration within the Ames and ISU community. Even during times of budget cuts, departments, student organizations, and local businesses and organizations are willing to donate a few hundred dollars to support a beneficial cause. If the request is concise, informative, and persuasive, many departments and organizations are willing to support the event. The process of writing a brochure for the Women's Center included multiple edits. I had to be informative and clear when describing the services offered through the Women's Center. I have become an effective communicator in writing through sponsorship letters and designing the Women's Center's brochure.

**Students will know Student Characteristics and Effects of College on Students
Unit Proposal for Undocumented Students**

Throughout my one and half years in the program, I had the opportunity to examine and discuss many student populations ranging from commuter and non-traditional to Muslim students. The student population, which has not received much attention in class or in literature, is undocumented students. I was interested in taking the challenge to explore undocumented students and higher education. The culture center group project in Higher Education 575 provided me with the opportunity to explore the novice population of undocumented students (Appendix J).

The challenges of focusing on undocumented students included finding literature on the population and justifying their place in higher education. The main literature we used as a foundation for our project was a *New Directions* volume that was not published at the time. Challenges undocumented students encounter in regards to higher education include access, retention, finding appropriate employment, having multiple responsibilities, and citizenship status (Marin et al., in press). We had to consider those factors when considering the location and type of the institution, the floor plan of the cultural center, the organization of the staff, the services provided and resources that would be available, programs, and funding and employment opportunities. The main purpose of the Jerry Yang Resource and Support Center for Undocumented Students was to provide a supportive environment for undocumented students and their families.

To enhance my skill on coordinating programs and events, I was interested in developing the learning outcomes and measuring the effectiveness of the programs and services offered through the center. When developing the learning outcomes, I kept in mind challenges undocumented students may face. Most often, undocumented students are first generation college students from a low socioeconomic background (Marin et al., in press). They may not have had the opportunity to find appropriate resources or develop relationships with mentors, due to their multiple responsibilities of being a student, family member, and income provider (Gildersleeve, Rumann, & Mondragón, 2009). I developed programs that provided them with practical skills and knowledge on topics such as financial assistance, networking and employment, and obtaining citizenship. Knowing that family is an influential factor in undocumented students' lives, it was important to invite the family members and create programs and workshops that were informative to both the student and family member. Factors

to take into consideration when developing learning outcomes and coordinating programs included financial assistance, family responsibilities, and citizenship status.

Two of the programs covered the topics of citizenship and employment. Undocumented students attend college to prepare for employment, but their employment opportunities are limited, because of their citizenship status (Gildersleeve et al., in press). It is a barrier for undocumented students to access higher education, and at the cultural center, we wanted to prevent them from encountering other barriers in their employment. We wanted to provide opportunities for them to succeed beyond college by assisting them in the process of obtaining citizenship. As American citizens, the challenge of finding employment that requires a social security number and the fear of being deported is eliminated. As a cultural center on an institutional campus and a resource center for undocumented students, we wanted to focus on the academic and personal success of undocumented students.

Higher education should be accessible to all who are interested. Undocumented students encounter the challenge of financial assistance, family obligations, and limitations of employment opportunities due to citizenship status. It was the intention of the Jerry Yang Resource and Support Center for Undocumented Students to provide academic and personal support for undocumented students. We did that by creating a safe, inclusive environment for all students and by facilitating programs that focused on personal and professional development.

Students will Know Assessment, Evaluation, and Research

Assessment of the Multicultural Student Affairs Office

As a Psychology undergraduate major, I had an interest in assessment and research. Most of my experience consisted of the basics of research and assessment, and most often replicated another research to validate their results. In Research and Evaluation 597, I had the opportunity

to conduct a formal, formative evaluation (Schuh, & Associates, 2009) from the beginning phases. I chose the purpose of my assessment, set my goals and objectives, developed research questions, conducted an electronic survey, coded the results, and reported the results in my final assessment paper (Appendix K).

My interest to evaluate the Multicultural Student Affairs (MSA) office came from the decrease in the retention rate of students of color in 2007 from 2006 (Office of Institutional Research, 2009). Duffy (2007) found that students of color at a predominately White institution found it challenging to succeed in college if community programs and support are not offered on campus. As an undergraduate student, I utilized resources from the MSA office such as tutoring, exposure to cultural events, and scholarships. I knew people who decided to discontinue their education, leave Iowa State University, and did not have a desire to return to higher education. It would have been interesting to hear their stories, but the purpose of the assignment was to evaluate a program, department, or office. I wanted to gain perspective on the MSA side and evaluate the effectiveness of the programs and services offered by the office.

The purpose of assessing the programs and resources MSA offers was to see if expansion of programming and resources would benefit students of color. I expressed my knowledge of the different types of evaluation approaches by incorporating them in my research. The approaches used were the participant-oriented evaluation, management-oriented, and objectives-oriented approach. I used a convenience sample of students who were on the MSA listserv. The survey consisted of quantitative and qualitative research questions. Research questions I wanted to have answered are: are the current programs of MSA meeting the needs of all students of color, how responsive are students of color to the programs MSA offers, and what services can MSA offer to students to encourage them to graduate. The purpose of the MSA program is what the results

from the evaluation were compared and used to suggest ways in which MSA can meet those purposes.

I used the reoccurring themes from the survey as the basis of my questions for students who I would interview. I interviewed six students of color who faced challenges while at ISU. Some chose to return and finish their degree, while others decided that they were no longer interested in pursuing a degree. Results from the assessment showed that students felt MSA did a satisfactory job assisting them through the adjustment and transition from high school to college. However, students felt they would benefit more from MSA if they facilitated workshops that focused on financial responsibilities and the benefits of graduating from college with a bachelor's degree. When comparing the results from the assessment and the six areas of development MSA strive to focus (Iowa State University, 2010), the assessment found that MSA did an adequate job meeting their goals and providing resources and service to their students.

The process of developing an assessment from scratch, implementing the assessment, coding and analyzing the results, and reporting the results made me knowledgeable in the areas of assess, evaluation, and research. I gained a better understanding of the different types of assessment approaches, learned about clients and stakeholders, and refreshed my knowledge on research methodology. The assessment report on the MSA office provided me with knowledge and a greater appreciation for assessment and evaluation.

Conclusion

Two years in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies masters program taught me more about myself than I learned in the 16 years of education prior. My enrollment in 14 courses, employment at two assistantships, and participation in numerous co-curricular activities has contributed to my development and success as a graduate student. Those experiences

prepared me to be an experienced practitioner and educational leader, sensitive and aware of myself and others, effective in written communication, know the effects of college on different student populations, and know assessment, evaluation, and research.

I am an Experienced Practitioner and Educational Leader

As a social justice and gender equity educator at the Margaret Sloss Women's Center, I was exposed to many different opportunities to become an experienced practitioner. I was able to coordinate programs, facilitate a university course, lead planning and campaign committees, manage 16 volunteers, develop a budget and an annual campaign, code results from an assessment, publish articles and newsletters, write memos and formal letters, assist students in crisis, and promote equity for women. My assistantship at the Margaret Sloss Women's Center provided me with many professional development opportunities to help me to become a well-rounded experienced practitioner.

Although I interacted with students in my assistantship, I wanted to have more interaction with students. I am interested in providing assistance and being a resource for students. Therefore, I was interested in being an academic advisor in the Student Support Services Program. From my personal experience and after reading the literature that focused on first-generation college students and the challenges they face in higher education, I wanted to encourage students to succeed in their academics. As much as I have taught the students about basic organizational, study, and note taking skills, they have taught me a lot about how first generation college students viewed higher education. I learned more from listening about their experiences and the paths they have chosen to take to graduate and plan for a better life for themselves and their family.

Reflecting on my identity in Higher Education 676 challenged me to think about my racial identity. I felt discomfort and at times ashamed of my identity and Asian culture. Participating in Asian Pacific American Awareness Coalition (APAAC) in undergrad provided me with the support and validation I needed to find my sense of pride in my racial identity. I continued to create a supportive and inclusive environment of Asian American students at the graduate level by starting Asian American Graduate Student Association. I interacted with graduate students who I knew were not comfortable with their Asian American identity, and felt it would be easier if I assimilated the White American culture. It was important for me to feel comfortable about my Asian American identity, before I created an organization that supported others about recognizing their identity.

I am Sensitive and Aware of Myself and Others

Once I recognized my privileged identities, one of which being religion, I gained a greater sense of appreciation for all identities. I took on an interest in viewing from the perspective of an oppressed group to identify what messages the group receives from higher education institutions like Iowa State University. How does certain rituals, symbols, or actions affect people who do not agree with what has been done or displayed? Being aware and sensitive of other identities has inspired me to challenge everyday things that society normalizes, such as holidays, religion, and ability.

I am Effective in Written Communication

Writing and requesting funds are two skills that I wanted to improve before I became a student affairs professional. I found that I am better at writing letters that share the quick facts than writing that requires detailed description, explanations, or examples such as writing assignments for classes. Asking for sponsorship in the forms of funds made me feel

uncomfortable, especially when many departments and offices are experiencing budget cuts. I had to look beyond the request for funds, and start looking at it as a collaborative effort that benefits a larger student population. In the long run, collaboration reduces the cost and time from each department and has the potential of creating a better more effective event.

I Know the Effects of College on Different Student Populations

In most of the courses in the higher education program, at least one assignment required the students to focus on an underrepresented student population. Populations that I focused on included student athletes, students with religions that contradicted another identity of theirs, Latino/Latina, non-traditional, and Greek, and students at Maharishi University of Management. I took an interest in focusing on undocumented students, because of the lack of literature and emphasis on the population. I immersed myself in unfamiliar territory when I worked on the group project to design a cultural center for undocumented students in Higher Education 575. To gain a better understanding of the student population, we focused more on laws and bills that related to undocumented persons, than on literature review. It was a rewarding experience for me to have the opportunity to explore a student population that has not been given much attention.

I Know Assessment, Evaluation, and Research

Focusing my assessment project on the Multicultural Student Affairs office provided me with an assessment experience that will be beneficial to me in my professional career. I was able to develop an assessment on my own evaluating the services provided through an office on campus that serves students of color. My interest is interacting with and retaining students of color in higher education. The ability to identify the needs and challenges of students and

developing programs or services to meet their needs is an experience that I am fortunate to have had.

Moving Forward

I decided to quit planning my path in life, because it never goes as I had planned. My unintended experience as a peer mentor and my quick, and late, decision to apply for the masters program remind me that student affairs found me. I belong in student affairs and am fortunate for the opportunity to explore my interest and develop my appreciation for the work of student affairs professionals. I will take all that I have learned from my two years in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies masters program and apply it to my professional career and in my interaction with students. I was grateful for the student affairs professionals who assisted me in my development as an undergraduate student. Now it is my turn to foster students' development and growth in higher education. After completing the master's program, I gained a greater appreciation for all student affairs professionals and their influence and affect on students in higher education.

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Appendices

- A: Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2009 Flier
- B: Directed Learning Program Packet
- C: Asian American Graduate Student Association First Meeting Agenda
- D: Asian American Heritage Week 2009 Flier
- E: The Development of My Asian American Identity
- F: Get A Yes Cyride Signage
- G: Spiritual Development
- H: Sponsorship Letters for Take Back the Night and SOARS –Story of a Rape Survivor
- I: Margaret Sloss Women’s Center Brochure
- J: Unit Proposal for Undocumented Students
- K: Overcoming Challenges Students of Color Face in Higher Education