

Personal philosophy of student affairs after the first semester

Xiaohan “Linda” Du

Arkansas Tech University

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As a prospective student affairs practitioner, I start to explore what I need to do and how I can achieve some accomplishments in order to contribute to this career, which not only benefits students in higher education but also other stakeholders, such as parents, faculty, staff, alumni, and the community. I have lots of expectations for myself in student affairs. I desire to become an international educator, working for international students to help them succeed based on my own successful or unsuccessful background experience. I understand I need to learn different things beyond just international part to work in student affairs. I need to make sure anything I am learning now is fully understood to set a firm foundation. Every goal is ambitious, and I am determined to achieve each goal with my passion, skills, and hard work.

Role of Student Affairs Professionals to Students

One of the main purposes of most programs and services provided within higher education is to ensure student success. In my opinion, student success is not simply just to earn a baccalaureate degree within four to six years for an undergraduate student, or not just to have a cum laude honor shown on the diploma. Student success is a broad goal containing so many things that are related to students and can make students feel proud of themselves. Therefore, the role of student affairs in relation to students is mainly to assist them to identify themselves, to achieve their aspirations, and to create a memorable experience during their lives.

What can student affairs professionals do to engage students and support them to succeed? We have talked about this topic during the class. The text book lists seven conditions that impact student success. They are all very meaningful although I think the answer to this question is endless. The first essential thing that we can help students with is to inform them of institutional resources available to them. It is why we have provided orientation service and

orientation courses for students. This is significantly important for first-time, first-year, or first-generation students due to lack of knowledge about what resources they can utilize on a campus. Therefore, student affairs professionals have obligations to “establish and hold students to high performance expectations outside the classroom that are consistent with student’s backgrounds, abilities, and aspirations” (Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 1991). This idea recalls my personal experience with my undergraduate advisor. I was a student only focused on academic courses. To save time and graduate earlier, I asked my academic advisor if he could allow me to take over eighteen credit hours per semester. He did not refuse me right away, instead he told me he wanted me to enjoy college life outside of classrooms and to consider about his decision. At that moment, I probably thought he just could not understand my personal needs. While after my freshman year and getting involved in those holistic campus events during my free time, I really appreciated his wise decision to me as a first-time, first-year, and first-generation student.

Another obligation introduced by Kuh is to “provide intrusive, success-oriented advice and feedback to steer students toward activities that will enrich their college experiences and increase the odds that they will persist in and benefit in the desired ways from college” (Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005). To apply this principle by student affairs professionals on students, I believe some personal characteristics are quite important to ensure the quality of student services. I will hold standards and improve myself continuously to better serve my students. Therefore, I need to get to know my international students well so that I can have better and suitable suggestions for each unique student. Meanwhile, it is also necessary for me to learn every student subculture, such as student athletes, adult learners, LGBT students, and so on. An international student may hold several roles in other student subgroups.

Generally, roles of student affairs professionals to students act like a mentor outside of classrooms. Students can get the most sincere and the latest information from us in an overall and broad view. No matter what kind of service it is for students, such as course tutoring, career service, financial aid, or graduate service, the one goal we have for every student is to wish them success.

Role of Student Affairs Professionals to Higher Education

Student affairs professionals not only need to work with students, but also need to regulate with other colleagues from different offices, divisions, and institutions. As we discussed about institution classification and various types of institutional culture in class, this idea is supported by the theory behind it. Different types of institution have different features and different structures to function. While student affairs professionals as student-directly-engaging administrators play roles in a “strategic planning, rational decision making, and tried-and-true management system” to better tie their divisional mission under the institutional mission (Manning & Munoz, 2011). No matter the institutional culture is collegial, managerial, developmental, advocacy, virtual, or tangible, student affairs professionals are playing a critical role in enhancing the overall performance of a campus.

With a better understanding of the nature of the community members within the institution and the unique history of the institution, I think I need to dig deeper into the spirit of a college and fit myself into that institution’s unique way of being. Studying college student personnel program definitely can prepare myself to practice in higher education profession. Beyond the academic preparation, being a responsible and helpful student affairs practitioner is a long-term training that requires me to continuously improve myself. If everyone in this career

can perform self-assessment and further assess the programs and services they have provided, the whole institution and the higher education community will keep growing in a positive way.

During this semester, we have done some case studies and role playing to see how we should react in a specific situation. Working as a student affairs practitioner cannot be treated as a typical nine to five job, but instead it is a profession that requires a commitment to contribute this career with passion, creativity, independency, responsibility, and so many characteristics. Everything in higher education is unique, and we have obligations to flourish this meaningful career.

My Role in Student Affairs

Becoming a student affairs professional allows me to have the opportunity to make a difference in the life of a student. This can be exciting, meaningful, or it can also be risky. This requires certain competencies to ensure the qualification of me to be able to provide good programs and services for my students. We spent lots of time this semester to discuss each professional competency area established by the two largest comprehensive student affairs professional associations in the United States, ACPA and NASPA. The purpose of this set of professional competency areas is to “define the broad professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes expected of student affairs professionals regardless of their area of specialization within the field” (ACPA & NASPA, 2010). Thus, I can use this document as a guide to examine and improve myself. Ten competency areas listed are “advising and helping; assessment, evaluation, and research; equity, diversity, and inclusion; ethical professional practice; history, philosophy, and values; human and organizational resources; law, policy, and governance; leadership; personal foundations; student learning and development” (ACPA & NASPA, 2010). Currently, I

am still working on to train myself to reach at least the basic level for all professional competency areas before I really enter this field.

I know my advantages to work in this field as an international educator although I need to develop myself well in all directions. I understand well the background for most international students. I desire to do something to help them gain what they want to learn here and what else they should know from their study abroad experience. The recruitment and admission of international students can bring an institution financial support, diverse atmosphere, and lots of benefits. In return, I want to make sure my institution can provide them more advanced services to help them succeed.

After the first semester in college student personnel program, I have started to explore and to generate my personal philosophy of student affairs. This career is about life-long pursuing effort and passion. I will keep updating my knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become a good student affairs practitioner along with my passion, experience, and hard work.

References

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