

**DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP SKILLS  
AND ABILITIES FOR  
STUDENT AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATORS**

Publication Number 4

AMERICAN SERIES IN STUDENT AFFAIRS  
PRACTICE AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

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**DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND ABILITIES  
FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATORS**

**“Lesson Letters” to and from our Colleagues**

*Edited by*

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## ABOUT THE EDITORS AND CONTRIBUTORS

### About the Editors

**Jacqueline S. Hodes, Ed.D.** is an associate professor in the Department of Educational Foundations and Policy Studies at West Chester University and Coordinator of the Higher Education Policy and Student Affairs graduate program. Dr. Hodes has worked in the field of higher education for 32 years. Previous to this role, Dr. Hodes spent 26 years in direct work in student affairs with undergraduate and graduate students and serving as an adjunct professor in various institutions for over 16 years. She received her B.A. in psychology and sociology, her M.Ed. in college counseling and student personnel management and her Ed.D. in educational leadership with a concentration in higher education administration from the University of Delaware. Dr. Hodes has delivered numerous presentations (regional, state, national, international) on various aspects of college student development and has published many articles on best practice work with undergraduate students on college campuses. She is a contributing author for the text *Transformational Learning Experiences: A Conversation with Counselors about Their Personal and Professional Developmental Journeys*, and has recently coauthored a book chapter on nontraditional student development for the text *The Dynamic Student Development Meta-Theory: A New Model for Student Success*.

**Matthew R. Shupp, Ed.D, NCC, BC-TMH** is an associate professor in the Department of Counseling and College Student Personnel at Shippensburg University where he coordinates the College Counseling and College Student Personnel specializations. Previous to this role, Dr. Shupp was a student affairs administrator for 12 years in a variety of institutional settings, including the community college, for-profit, private, and public higher education sectors. Dr. Shupp received his B.A. in psychology as well as his M.S. in counseling-college student personnel from Shippensburg University, a post-master's certificate in clinical mental health counseling from Messiah College, and his Ed.D. in higher education leadership from Widener University. He is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) in the state of Pennsylvania, a National Certified Counselor (NCC) through the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC), as well as a Board-Certified Tele-Mental Health Provider (BC-TMH). He is Past-President of the Pennsylvania College Personnel Association (PCPA) and is currently on ACPA's Commission for Professional Preparation Directorate. Dr. Shupp has presented at local, regional, national, and interna-

tional higher education and student leadership conferences. He has published numerous book chapters and a number of his scholarly articles have appeared in the *Journal of College Student Development (Research in Brief)*, *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, the *Journal of Student Affairs*, ACPA's *Developments*, *About Campus*, *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly*, and other reputable higher education publications.

**Zebulun Davenport, Ed.D.** is the Vice President for Student Affairs at West Chester University. He earned his Doctorate in Higher Education and Leadership from Nova Southeastern University, a Master of Education in College Student Personnel Administration, and a Bachelor of Science in Communications/Public Relations with a minor in Human Services from James Madison University. Davenport's experience in student affairs spans over 25 years, including the serving as a senior student affairs officer since 2007. His contributions have advanced campus culture, organizational structure, and student success. Under his leadership, two divisions of student affairs, Indiana University, Purdue University Indianapolis and West Chester University, have received *Diverse Magazine's* the distinction of "Most Promising Places to Work." His expertise includes the areas of student retention, outcomes assessment, strategic planning, and strategies for assisting first-generation college students. Davenport's publications include coauthoring two books entitled *First-Generation College Students—Understanding and Improving the Experience from Recruitment to Commencement*; and *Student Affairs Assessment, Evaluation, and Research: A Guidebook for Graduate Students and New Professionals*, a chapter in an edited volume entitled *The Student Success Conundrum*, in B. Bontrager (Ed.), *Strategic Enrollment Management: Transforming Higher Education*; a chapter in an edited monograph entitled *Creating Collaborative Conditions for Student Success* in S. Whalen (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 8th National Symposium on Student Retention 2012*, and a chapter in the fourth edition of *The Handbook of Student Affairs Administration* in Jossey Bass 2016. He has presented at workshops for numerous public agencies; educational institutions; state, regional, and national conferences; as well as to thousands of college students and professionals throughout his career.

## About the Contributors

### *New Professionals*

**Christopher Bloomford** received his Master's in Counseling from Shippensburg University with a focus in College Student Personnel. He currently resides in south-central Pennsylvania and works locally at Gettysburg College in the Center for Career Engagement as a Career Counselor and Coordinator for Marketing. Prior to coming into student affairs he worked within various nonprofit organizations and family services. He has worked in various functional areas within higher education including affinity centers, alumni engagement, career services, new student orientation, and academic support. He is incredibly passionate about social justice and inclusion work and is an active member of both ACPA and NACE.

**Brandy Brady** is an Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admissions at Shippensburg University. As a two-time graduate of the university, she has found passion working in student affairs through her involvement on-campus and exposure to diverse student services. She would like to continue sharing her love for higher education by providing prospective students with the knowledge and tools they need to be successful in college.

**Charles Dania** is an International Student Counselor at the International Student and Scholar Services office at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. He advises international students on immigration regulations, career services, and other personal challenges. He also works with international students who are experiencing academic and financial difficulties. Charles studied at the University of Benin, Nigeria for his Bachelor's degree in Philosophy and at Shippensburg University, Pennsylvania for his Master's degree in Counseling and College Student Personnel.

**Wes Garton** is a staff member for Spectrum Scholars, University of Delaware's college-to-career experience for autistic undergraduate students. Formerly, Wes worked at University of Delaware's two-year certificate for students with intellectual disabilities called the Career and Life Studies Certificate (CLSC). Wes is interested in inclusive higher education for students with disabilities by reducing barriers and increasing accessibility for all. Wes earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Liberal studies and a Master of Science in Higher Education Counseling and Student Affairs at West Chester University of Pennsylvania. Outside of work, Wes is a runner, gamer, and cereal-eater.

**Matthew Hicks** graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from Eastern Connecticut State University and a Master's Degree in College Student Personnel from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Matthew currently works at Towson University, just outside of Baltimore, Maryland as the Coordinator for New Student and Family Programs. In his role, Matthew enjoys supporting transfer students through their orientation and transition experiences. He also enjoys serving as an academic advisor for first-year students and developing orientation leaders. Outside of his professional role, Matthew is a big fan of college and professional sports and is an avid writer.

**Andrew Kiefer** holds a B.A. in English and an M.S. in Counseling-College Student Personnel from Shippensburg University. He currently works for Penn State as a Residence Life Coordinator and enjoys travel, photography, and trying to keep up when Gina goes running.

**Gina Kiefer** holds a B.S. in Business Administration from Shippensburg University and an M.A. in Educational Leadership from West Virginia University. She is currently studying Financial Planning through Penn State's World Campus and works as a Learning Lab Assistant and Lab Tutor at the Community College of Beaver County. In her free time Gina enjoys running and spending time with family.

**Sara Leader** received her Bachelor of Arts in Film/Video from Penn State University in 2011. During her time there, she was very involved in the Penn State Dance Marathon (THON), a philanthropy benefiting the Four Diamonds Fund, whose mission is to conquer childhood cancer. Once she graduated, Sara moved to Los Angeles and worked in the entertainment industry for two years before realizing that she was looking for more fulfilling work. After returning to the East Coast and doing some reflection, she began her graduate program at West Chester University of Pennsylvania. Sara obtained her Master of Science in Higher Education Counseling and Student Affairs in 2016 and went on to work at the University of the Sciences and Georgian Court University. She currently serves as the Assistant Director of Student Involvement and Leadership at Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Sara has a passion for working with students and helping to develop them as leaders. She believes all students have the potential to be amazing leaders and create positive change in their communities.

**A. Malik Muhammad** currently serves as an Associate Director of the LGBT Center at the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn). A Philadelphia native, Malik completed his Bachelor's in Psychology with a Theater Arts Minor at West Chester University (WCU) of Pennsylvania. Immediately following, he diligently pursued his Master's for an additional two years at WCU to receive a degree in Higher Education Counseling and Student Affairs. A proud brother of the Pennsylvania Tau Chapter of Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity, Malik's passion for student affairs and social justice bloomed throughout his time working as a Male Peer Educator at the Women's Center of WCU during his undergraduate studies. That passion continued to flourish as he started working with LGBTQA Services at WCU during his graduate career. There he truly came to realize the deep significance of LGBTQA advocacy, education, and working from a true intersectional lens at the higher education level. After graduate school, Malik went on to serve as the Coordinator of Sexual and Gender Diversity at Bloomsburg University (BU) of Pennsylvania. Within that role, he had the honor of functioning as the LGBTQA Resource Center's Director; serving both the campus and surrounding communities. After two years at BU, Malik has graciously transitioned into his new role at UPenn.

**Joann Noel** currently works as a Student Success Coach at Millersville University Pennsylvania. In that role, she serves as a resource for a positive and successful learning experience for students across campus. She also teaches a college success workshop for students returning on academic probation. She has a particular passion for coaching students with ADHD using a strengths-based model and incorporates growth mindset into her practice. Joann earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Economics from Temple University and her Master of Science in College Student Counseling and Personnel Services from Shippensburg University. Her personal interests include kayaking and backpacking with her dog, Wellesley, and reading books with her husband, Justin.

**Emily Tipton** is in her fourth year with the career center at Towson University. She serves as the Assessment & Analytics Coordinator. She graduated with her Master



of Education in Counselor Education—Student Affairs from Clemson University and with her Bachelor of Science in Sociology from Virginia Tech where she was a NCAA Division I student-athlete (swimming). She currently lives in Baltimore, Maryland with her partner, Jefferson, and dog, Jenna.

**Becka Yerger** is currently a Residential Area Director at Millersville University. She received both her degrees from Shippensburg University where she found her passion for working with students while working as a Resident Assistant. After working in other departments in graduate school, she found her way back to housing and now currently supervises 21 RAs and oversees a building of 700 students. She spends her free time traveling with her boyfriend and raising a service dog in training.

### ***Mid-Level Managers***

**Lorie Logan-Bennett** has worked in public university career centers for 20 years and is currently serving as the Director of the Career Center at Towson University just outside of Baltimore, Maryland. She received a Master of Arts degree in Sociology from The Ohio State University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from Ohio University. Lorie is a Gallup-Certified Strengths Coach and has presented at regional and national conferences.

**Christina Brenner** holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Management from West Chester University of Pennsylvania and a Master of Arts in Counseling and Personnel Services from the College of New Jersey. Christina currently serves as the Assistant Dean of Students in the Office of Student Conduct, West Chester University of Pennsylvania. Christina's experience began by serving as the Assistant Director of the MacMoreland Center at Widener University to facilitate the student center program, coordinate conference services and serve as a food service liaison. While earning her Master's degree, Christina was hired as the Assistant Program Coordinator in the Alcohol and Other Drug Education Program at the College of New Jersey. She assisted with implementing a campus-wide drug and alcohol awareness and prevention program, providing compulsory drug and alcohol education and counseling. At West Chester University, Christina has served in multiple roles including the Assistant and Associate Director of Sykes Student Union, Director of Judicial Affairs and Student Assistance, and currently as the Assistant Dean of Students.

**Danielle Brower** has worked in higher education and student affairs for 10 years, at both large state universities and private liberal arts colleges. She is currently a Career Counselor at Towson University. Danielle received her bachelor's degree in Psychology from Towson University and a master's degree in Counselor Education from McDaniel College.

**Mary Sloan Burnett** has held the position of the Director of International Programs at Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania for over 14 years. She holds a Bachelor

of Science in Business Administration from Shippensburg University and a Master of Science in Marketing from the University of Stirling, Scotland, United Kingdom. Throughout her tenure, she has worked closely with faculty and staff to internationalize the campus by providing student experiences abroad on individual and faculty-led trips as well as admitting and supporting international students from over 30 countries around the world. Her proudest and most exciting experience to date was being selected as a Fulbright International Education Administrator Scholar in which she spent two weeks in Germany learning about higher education, scholarship, culture and all things German. Mary believes getting outside of your comfort zone and experiencing a new culture is the best thing for your soul.

**Tatiana Diaz** was born and raised in Bogotá, Colombia, graduated from Penn State University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and Minor in Women Studies. Ms. Diaz has also received a Master's in Community Psychology and Social Change, a Diversity in Community Certificate from the same institution and Certificate in LGBT Health from Drexel University. For the last decade she has worked in higher education institutions establishing diversity related programs while advocating for diverse students and creating opportunities for community growth and identity development. Currently she is the inaugural Director of Diversity and Inclusion for Cedar Crest College, a primarily women's college in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

**Tammy Hilliard-Thompson** holds an Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership, Learning and Innovation from Wilmington University, a Master of Arts in Education from Sacred Heart University, and a Bachelor of Science in the Recreation Profession from Montclair State University. Tammy currently serves as the Assistant Director in the Office of Student Conduct at West Chester University. Prior to this position at West Chester University, Tammy worked as the College Retention and Success Advisor for a nonprofit organization Philadelphia Futures. Previously, Tammy served as a Resident Director for the Office of Residence Life and Housing and as an Associate Director of the office formerly known as the Office of Multicultural Affairs at West Chester University.

**Christina King** currently works at Rutgers University-Camden as the Assistant Director of the Campus Center where she oversees the daily operations of the conferences and events in the building. She has worked in higher education for the past 14 years, beginning her career in Residential Life at Stockton University. Chrissie has experience in a variety of topics including budgeting, training, hiring, and team-building. She enjoys the detail-oriented and student-focused aspects of her position. In her spare time, Chrissie loves to read, spend time with her family and friends, do some crafts and hike. While employed at Stockton University, Chrissie obtained two Bachelor's degrees; one in Psychology and the other in Education. She continued her education by obtaining her Master's in Special Education from Stockton University and plans on pursuing an Ed.D. in the future. Chrissie has been heavily involved in a variety of organizations including the Mid-Atlantic Association of College and University Housing Officers, the National Association of College

Activities, and most recently, holds a position on the Regional Conference Planning Committee for the Association of College Unions-International.

**Richard Kopp** is the Assistant Dean of Students and Director of Student Engagement at Community College of Philadelphia. He has a Master of Science degree in Higher Education from Drexel University and a Bachelor of Science degree in Restaurant Management from The Restaurant School at Walnut Hill College. He is also a certified facilitator of the MBTI®, Habitudes, and The Student Leadership Challenge. Richard has over 18 years of student-alumni engagement experience and innovative leadership at small and large, private and public two and four-year institutions. He has experience leading and supervising numerous student affairs functional areas and teams, including: campus activities and traditions, fraternity and sorority life, recreation and wellness, commuter services, student government and clubs/organizations, student leadership programs, first-year and senior-year transition programs, new student orientation, commencement, community service/service learning, multicultural affairs, and university pub operations. He regularly teaches first-year experiences courses and enjoys facilitating classroom discussions and workshops on issues including diversity, leadership, team/group dynamics, and personality styles. Richard is principally passionate about using his expertise in student advising, development, and engagement to create campus environments that assist students, and eventually alumni, in meeting their academic, personal, and professional goals.

**Dayna D. Levy** is the Director of Career and Professional Development at Bryn Mawr College in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. Dayna began her position at Bryn Mawr College in 2014, after serving for 10 years as the Director of the Career Development Center at Thomas Jefferson University, an academic health center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Prior to this position, she was an Assistant Director and Career Counselor at Saint Joseph's University, also in Philadelphia. Dayna's first professional position was at Quinnipiac College (now University) in Hamden, Connecticut. Dayna holds a Bachelor's degree in Human Development from the State University of New York at Binghamton, a Master's degree in College Counseling and Student Affairs Administration in Higher Education from the University of Delaware, and a Doctorate of Education in Higher Education Administrative Leadership from Widener University. Dayna is also a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) in Pennsylvania. Dayna's professional passions are at the intersection of career development, leadership development, and advancing the status of women in higher education and beyond.

**Jason A. Levy** is the Director of Student Center Operation and Conferences at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and has served in that role since 2006. Prior to returning to Philadelphia, he held Senior Associate Director and Associate Director positions at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and Vanderbilt University respectively. Jason completed his Master's degree in Higher Education Student Affairs from Indiana University—Bloomington in 2000 and

received his Bachelor's degree in Business from West Chester University in 1998. Jason is currently enrolled in the doctoral program in Higher Education at Temple University. He serves as the President-Elect for the National Association of College Auxiliary Services (NACAS) and continues to serve in volunteer roles with the Association of College Unions International (ACUI). Jason's professional passions focus on the development of students through campus employment and involvement and the finance of higher education, specifically in auxiliary services areas such as student unions and residential programs and services.

**Amanda Ries** is the Assistant Director of Residence Life for Academic Initiatives at the University of Pittsburgh. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Westminster College (PA) and a Master of Arts degree in Student Affairs in Higher Education from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She has experience in residence life, housing, orientation, Greek life and student conduct. Her current professional interests include residential academic programs, living-learning communities and assessment. Her personal interests include teaching group fitness classes, running and exploring the Pittsburgh restaurant scene.

**Debbie Scheibler** is the Director of Residence Life at Wilkes University. Prior to this role, Ms. Scheibler worked for Rutgers University, Stockton University and Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania in various residential life and student affairs roles. She received her B.A. in Psychology as well as her M.S. in Counseling (College Student Personnel concentration) from Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania. She is currently pursuing her Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership from Wilkes University. She is a Past-President of the Mid-Atlantic Association of College and University Housing Officers (MACUHO), serves on both the Professional Standards Committee and Women in Housing Committee of the Association of Colleges and University Housing Officers International (ACUHO-I) and is codirector of the MACUHO/NEACUHO Regional Entry-Level Institute (RELI). Ms. Scheibler has delivered numerous presentations (regional, national and international) on various aspects of leadership, empowerment, mentoring, failure, supervision and professional competencies. She enjoys spending time with her family, most especially her husband and two children.

**Sarah McDowell Shupp** currently serves as the Director of the Office of Student Conduct at Shippensburg University. She has been working in the field of student affairs for over a decade across multiple functional areas including career development, drug and alcohol education, and student conduct. Sarah is also a part-time doctoral student at Indiana University of Pennsylvania studying administration and leadership. She earned an Associate of Arts degree in General Studies at Harford Community College, a Bachelor of Science degree in Family and Community Studies at Villa Julie College and a Master of Science degree in Counseling, with a concentration in College Student Personnel from Shippensburg University. When she is not studying or training for another marathon, you can usually find her traveling with her husband and their pug, Koda.

**Kimberly Taylor** is the Associate Dean of Students at Ursinus College, a small liberal arts college in Collegeville, Pennsylvania. She earned an M.Ed. from University of Delaware in College Counseling/Student Personnel Administration and served as Assistant Director of Residence Life/Area Coordinator and Assistant Softball Coach at Ursinus from 1992–1996. After almost a decade in private industry, Kim returned to Ursinus in 2005 at the Director of Campus Safety. In her current role, Kim's areas of responsibility include campus safety, prevention and advocacy, emergency management, student conduct, and crisis response. She serves as the College's Title IX Coordinator and Clery Compliance Officer. An avid Philadelphia sports fan, Kim also enjoys playing golf, biking, and spending time with her family, which includes her wife, Deb, and their rescue vizsla, Sophie.

### ***Senior Student Affairs Officers***

**Peggy Burke** served as the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs at DePaul University from 1999–2018 in which she supervised the departments of residential education, student involvement, and new student and family engagement and also served on the leadership team of the Vice President of Student Affairs. Prior to this position, she was Director of Student Life from 1989–1999 and the Director of Special Services from 1985–1989 and Special Services Administrative Assistant from 1984–1985 all at DePaul University. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Secondary Education and a Master's degree in History from DePaul University and earned her Doctorate in Higher Education Administration from Loyola University Chicago. She holds professional interests in the areas of college student development, leadership development, women's development, organizational development and change management. She has been an adjunct faculty member at Loyola University Chicago, DePaul University, Benedictine University and Northwestern University. Active in NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, she has served as the cochair of the national NASPA Mid-Level Administrators Conference and Region IV–East regional director. In 2011, she received the Outstanding Contribution to NASPA IV–East Award; and in 2016 was named a “Pillar of the Profession” by the NASPA Foundation Board.

**Kathleen G. Kerr** is Associate Vice President for Student Life at the University of Delaware. She attended Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana where she received both her B.A. in Psychology and her M.S. in College Student Personnel Administration. In 1998 she earned her Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from the University of Delaware. She currently resides in Newark, Delaware with her husband and enjoys frequent visits from her four grown daughters.

**Kathleen R. (Kate) Linder** recently retired from her position as Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, University and Community Engagement, at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) in Indiana, Pennsylvania. She earned a Bachelor of Philosophy in Interdisciplinary Studies and a Master of Science in College Student Personnel Services from Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. During her 34

years of professional experience, Ms. Linder held positions in residence life, student conduct, student life, and student affairs divisional leadership. She can be reached at [krlinder@iup.edu](mailto:krlinder@iup.edu) and will reply when pausing from enjoying life with her wife Stacy and their canine kids, Franco and Jackson, and being proud of their daughter Kate, a student affairs professional.

**Mary-Alice Ozechoski** is currently Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment at Cedar Crest College. Mary-Alice earned a Bachelor of Science in Communication from Clarion University and a Master of Arts in Student Personnel Services from Edinboro University. She has been a Chief Student Affairs Officer for over 10 years and has over 30 years of experience in higher education in a variety of institutional settings across the country.

**Tom Segar** is the Vice President for Student Affairs and Information Technology and an affiliate graduate professor in the Shepherd University College Student Development and Administration program at Shepherd University. Segar teaches courses on the higher education student, higher education administration and legal accountability, student leadership development, and management and leadership in student affairs. Segar earned his B.S. in Psychology with a Certificate in African American Studies from the University of Maryland, and his M.S. in Counseling with a Specialization in College Student Personnel from Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania. He earned his Ph.D. in College Student Personnel Administration from the University of Maryland with a concentration was teaching and social justice in higher education.

*We dedicate this book to our student affairs colleagues. We hope you find inspiration for your own practice as you read the stories of others. As you share your stories, may others, including students, find inspiration in them.*





## FOREWORD

*Winning is the responsibility of the leaders.*  
Gerald A. Michaelson

A competent leader is a leader who has the drive and desire to lead, the willingness to assume responsibility, a vision for the future, the quality of honesty and integrity, the ability to engage in talent to create change, the ability to prepare for the unpredictable, and the willingness to invest in self. The leadership competency area outlined by ACPA/NASPA (2015) addresses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for a competent leader. The document has further specified the outcomes of leadership at foundational, intermediate, and advanced levels. These traits and outcomes of a competent leader at different levels in student affairs of higher education are all reflected in the book titled *Lessons in Leadership: Letters to Our Student Affairs Colleagues* by Jacqueline S. Hodes, Matthew R. Shupp, and Zebulun Davenport. This book is mainly for graduate students who plan to become leaders in student affairs of higher education and those new student affairs leaders. It provides knowledge, skills, and wisdoms for you the reader to map out your journey to become a competent leader in the field of student affairs.

*Lessons in Leadership: Letters to Our Student Affairs Colleagues* is an essential volume in the *American Series in Student Affairs and Professional Identity*. The significance of this book is due to its focus on the practical value of leadership, one of the professional competency areas for student affairs educators proposed by ACPA/NASPA in 2015. With that has been said, this book has aimed to address the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of a leader in student affairs as described in the leadership competency area by ACPA/NASPA in 2015.

First, the most significant value of *Lessons in Leadership: Letters to Our Student Affairs Colleagues* is the first-hand knowledge and practical experiences from the editors and all the chapter authors. You will find that all the editors, Dr. Jacqueline Hodes, Dr. Matthew Shupp, and Dr. Zebulun Davenport, have worked in student affairs field for many years and gained tremen-

dous amount of practical experiences as leaders at various positions. As experts in student affairs of higher education Dr. Hodes, Dr. Shupp, and Dr. Davenport have identified high quality practitioners who have been leaders in student affairs at colleges and universities across the United States for this project. These chapter authors have held positions as leaders at entry, middle, and senior levels. In this book, they speak to you about their lessons in leadership in student affairs of higher education. All their lessons in leadership can be a valuable tool for you while you are evolving as a leader in student affairs.

Second, *Lessons in Leadership: Letters to Our Student Affairs Colleagues* is unique in format. Unlike almost all other academic books this book uses a unique format—letters to convey the professionals’ first-hand knowledge, experiences, and wisdom to future and current student affairs leaders. The letter format displays the closeness between the authors and the reader. As the reader, you will find all the authors are directly speaking to you about their experiences, and passing you their knowledge, skills and first-hand information. Everything they provide in the book is personable and easy to digest, accept, and use in practice.

The third unique aspect of *Lessons in Leadership: Letters to Our Student Affairs Colleagues* is that the authors integrated leadership theories in their writing while speaking about their personal experience on how to develop leadership skills and professional competencies. Moreover, the authors also discuss on how to build professional identity in the process of leadership competency development.

Fourthly, though the book is divided into three parts—letters in Part I to graduate students in student affairs preparation programs, letters in Part II to new professionals, and letters in Part III to mid-level managers—the theme of leadership competency development is throughout the entire book. With this theme, the graduate students in student affairs preparation programs and the new student affairs professionals may see where they are currently and where their destination will be in the future. Once becoming mid-level managers you may use the knowledge, skills and insights provided to train graduate interns and your supervisees new to student affairs field.

Finally, *Lessons in Leadership: Letters to Our Student Affairs Colleagues* is a valuable tool which not only assists graduate students in student affairs preparation programs and new student affairs educators to expand their knowledge and develop their leadership skills but also provides them insights on how to lead effectively at all levels of leadership positions in student affairs field. This book is an essential volume of the *American Series in Student Affairs Practice and Professional Identity*. Along with all other 10 volumes, this book will help you develop your professional competencies and build your professional identity.

*American Series in Student Affairs Practice and Professional Identity* is a unique book series that creates an integration of all 10 professional competency areas for student affairs educators outlined by the College Student Educators International (ACPA) and the Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) in 2015. The series reflects three major themes: professional competencies development, professional identity construction, and case illustrations for theory translation into practice. All volumes in the series are targeting graduate students in student affairs preparation programs and new student affairs educators. The series blends contemporary theory with current research and empirical support and uses case illustrations to facilitate the readers' ability to translate what they have learned into practice and decision making. Each volume focuses on one area of professional competency except the volume *College Students and Their Environment* which addresses some major aspects of the Interaction of Competencies. As being said the series helps graduate students in student affairs preparation programs and new student affairs educators develop their professional competencies (ACPA/NASPA) by (1) constructing their personal and ethical foundations; (2) understanding the values, philosophy, and history of student affairs; (3) strengthening their ability in assessment, evaluation, and research; (4) gaining knowledge, skills, and dispositions relating to law, policy, and governance; (5) familiarizing with and learning how to effectively utilize organizational and human resources; (6) learning leadership knowledge and developing leadership skills; (7) understanding oppression, privilege, power, and then learning how to understand social justice and apply it in practice; (8) acquiring student development theories and learning how to use them to inform their practice; (9) familiarizing themselves with technologies and implementing digital means and resources into practice; and (10) gaining advising and supporting knowledge, skills and dispositions. As a result, the series helps graduate students in student affairs preparation programs and new student affairs educators foster their professional identity and ultimately achieve their goal of the whole-person education.

Naijian Zhang, Ph.D.  
West Chester University of Pennsylvania



## PREFACE

*If you had to start back at the beginning of your professional journey, what do you wish you had known? What would have been most helpful to hear from a more seasoned peer? . . . Or, perhaps, no matter the type of wisdom shared, this journey is something that must be experienced first-hand. Think upon these prompts. Then, write a thoughtful letter to a yet-to-be-admitted [Student Affairs] Graduate Student. What would you say? What wisdom would you impart, both for personal and professional growth consideration?*

The above-mentioned prompt from Matthew's spring 2017 internship syllabus is the genesis for what you are now reading. In actuality, this is not entirely true. It was in preparation for this semester that Matthew's department required two sections of his internship class. For continuity, the adjunct instructor, Joel and Matthew sat together to discuss course expectations, including contents of the syllabus and class assignments. Joel made the suggestion to incorporate a "Letter to Emerging Student Affairs Professionals." He pitched the idea as both a reflexive and reflective exercise, one that would allow students to look both inward and backwards, hopefully resulting in meaningful insight for yet-to-be admitted students into our graduate program.

We would be embellishing quite a bit if we indicated that this addition to the syllabus was met with a resounding approval from Matthew's students. Some were excited; most were skeptical, primarily because it was yet one more project tacked on to an already-demanding course. What was not expected was the level of skepticism and the "why's" that followed, which often was preceded by "I don't understand" and "So, who's gonna read these letters?" Through a few noncommitted head nods, students indicated an understanding of what was expected from them.

Matthew, too, was leery on how serious students would take the assignment and how deeply they would engage in the writing process. We hesitate to indicate that they were fully resistant to the exercise. For, without them, and the emergence of their truly inspiring words, we do not believe—no, we are quite certain—that this book would not exist.

The project continued to evolve when Jackie and Zeb approached Matthew to collaborate on a book project on leadership for this book series. We talked with each other about how this book—another book about leadership—might find a unique approach to discussing the concept. Through many conversations and with much input and inspiration from Matthew's assignment, we settled on a book of letters, letters to encourage and assist graduate students, new student affairs educators/professionals, and mid-level managers/administrators as they contemplate their current and next leadership role.

To honor their contribution to this process, we felt it important to include a few excerpts from a few of Matthew's students' "lesson letters."

***From Jazzy Williams Smith, Master's Graduate '19***

I want you to know that I am proud of you for getting this far. You have taken a huge step into the unknown and that takes courage. This program will change your life, it will force you to learn and accept the parts of yourself that you would rather stay hidden. I can't say that the program will be easy or even that you'll love it all of the time but what I can say is that it's worth it. . . . If you give it your all.

***From Jennifer Moser, Behavior Specialist Consultant***

I changed and grew a lot . . . my perception of the unknown went from being terrifying to almost exciting. Now that I have a sense of who I am as a person and a student affairs practitioner, the unknown doesn't seem quite as terrifying. That change happened when I let myself be open to other people and as cliché as it may sound, when I let others break down my walls. Open your heart and mind to those around you, and don't take too long to let them in. They deserve to get a glimpse of your soul and you deserve to give a piece of yourself to the world. There's a reason you're here as well. You may still be unsure of what that exact reason is and you may not find it right away. But you will.

***From Shantanique Johnson, Assistant Director  
of Multicultural Engagement, Gettysburg College***

Today is the beginning of a new journey for you . . . open your mind, heart, and ears. This is a time of true learning and growth. In the beginning, I was resistant to a lot that was being taught in the classroom and I really did not think there was much that anyone could really teach me that I did not already know about myself. I learned that I simply had to trust the process and that I had to be open-minded. I constantly asked

myself how the things I experienced in the program taught me about myself personally. I also wondered how has it helped me to become a better local and global citizen, and how has it made me more culturally aware. I started to try to take a lesson away from each experience even if the experience was terrible or uncomfortable. Don't allow the fear of failure or making a mistake to limit you. Know that with every mistake comes an opportunity to learn. Know that criticism does not mean weakness but it is simply pointing out an area of growth for you. Being open to feedback allows room for improvement and a chance to see things from the perspective of other.

***From L. Marie Sanjurjo Lopez, Student Services Generalist,  
Rowan College at Burlington County***

When I think back to the beginning of my journey as a graduate student, I realize that I was not mentally prepared for such a huge transition. The transition was a lot more than just mental, it was financial, personal, cultural and spiritual. I went from being surrounded by people who looked like me to fighting to find a space where I felt safe. It is not enough to talk the talk, you have to be willing to get in the trenches and *REALLY* put yourself out there. Growth does not happen when you are content and comfortable, so take a risk and dare to leap! It is 100% worth it in the end. I must learn to believe in myself more. Imposter syndrome is real . . . and if you let it get the best of you, it will start showing. It is easy to feel that you are not adequate but understand that this is normal and no one becomes an expert in anything overnight. No one expects perfection of you; this is a time where you can feel free to make mistakes but what you learn from them is the most important takeaway. Learn self-care techniques that work for you so that you can implement them into your schedule. It will be most imperative to take time away from everyone at some point and just be with yourself.

***From Drew Melendez, Residence Director and  
Student Activities Coordinator, Clark University***

Graduate school is hard [but] you'll get through it, trust me. You just have to believe in yourself and trust the process. You're here for a reason, and throughout your journey, it's so important to take the time to not forget that reason. No one wants to see you fail. You will grow so quickly. Bring some tissues . . . because this program brings out an authenticity in oneself and in others that can't always be found otherwise. Be selfish and take advantage of opportunities. Learn self-care.

There are days that you will be exhausted and feel defeated. They don't happen often, but they do. Make sure that you know how to take care of yourself along the way. Develop good self-care habits and learn to love yourself. Make good habits now so you'll have good habits later. You're not alone in this. There is always someone to reach out to, to laugh with, and to help you along the way.

***From Britni Greenleaf, Coordinator of New  
Student Programs, University of Mary Washington***

You get what you put in, and I promise the effort is worth it. You will change in ways that you did not think were possible. If it was easy, everyone would do it . . . experiences outweigh "stuff." Put your relationships above everything else and take time away from school work to hang out with the people you love the most. The things that matter cannot be bought. Travel, see the world, and try as many new things as possible. Experiences become a part of your identity. We are not our possessions but we are the accumulation of everything we've seen, the things we've done, and the places we've been.

If you continuously look forward to what is coming next, you will miss the present moment. If there is no struggle, there is no progress. You are finding out who you are, what you want, and where you want to be, and transforming into a better, stronger person. Find balance between the past and the future. Last year I started to write a list of all of the things I wanted to accomplish during the year and hung it on my mirror. It served as a reminder that I needed to continue working hard even on the days I felt crappy. It becomes easier to achieve when you have a plan or vision for how you are going to get there.

You are important . . . do not allow anyone to tell you different. Nothing in this life is guaranteed. You are going to have bad days and moments of zero energy. That is part of the process! If you do not take care of yourself and your own happiness, it will become hard to maintain your job, relationships, grades, etc. Do not miss moments in life. . . . Work can wait.

***From Christopher Ossont, Area Coordinator/Assistant  
Track and Field Coach, Elizabethtown College***

You will ask yourself questions that have a complex answer such as "Why am I here," "How do I know if I am doing this 'Student Affairs thing' right," or the most interesting question of all, "Am I a fraud"? While all these questions are wonderful to ask yourself, the answers are



not found in the words or thoughts of others; they must come from within you. Believe that you are here for a reason and follow your heart. This educational road is not an easy one. It calls on you to question your thought process, view the world from different lenses that you may never have thought of, and ask you to look inside yourself and see where you stand in the world. It sounds like a daunting process but is necessary for you to grow and learn. Ask yourself the following questions; “Why do I want to be a Student Affairs professional,” “How am I going grow as a person and a professional,” “In what ways can I grow as a person,” and “How will my actions shape the future of the field”? These are all questions that you will answer with time and personal reflection.

Summarizing these students’ stories and providing a glimpse into their lived experience as graduate students while, at the same time, honoring the essence of their voices proved challenging. Yet, we believe we have captured their range of emotions as they challenged themselves to grow through their graduate school experience. We encourage you to reread these excerpts again. Reflect on their insight, vulnerability, genuineness, passion, and care for those students they had yet to meet who would soon embark upon a similar graduate school experience.

To conclude, we ask all of you to read these lesson letters and reflect upon the wisdom imparted from our student affairs colleagues. You may find that just one phrase, just one small lesson gives you inspiration to continue this important work we have embraced as we lead on our campuses to contribute to student success.



## INTRODUCTION

Leadership skills and abilities are essential for student affairs administrators and educators. Teaching leadership theories and helping to develop leadership skills and abilities in a classroom setting is one way to help graduate students learn about leadership in student affairs. Yet, leadership skills are often learned “in the field” as educators and administrators are faced with situations that require the application of theories and skills discussed in the classroom setting. Through a narrative approach, this book will address current issues in leadership and administration in student affairs from a variety of perspectives.

The book provides lessons, tips and strategies for student affairs professionals at various levels. Letters from new professionals in the field of student affairs offer insights to graduate students on the challenges of leadership that occur when entering the profession. New professionals will learn from mid-level managers about leadership and supervision. And, mid-level managers will learn about strategic leadership and leading for change from senior and retired student affairs professionals.

Letter authors have incorporated their thoughts on how to develop specific leadership competencies outlined in the ACPA/NASPA Professional Competencies document. Embedded in each letter/chapter are important concepts for readers including a focus on developing one’s professional identity and information on the related ACPA/NASPA Professional Competencies. Authors discuss the lessons they learned in their leadership roles and how readers might be able to incorporate these leadership lessons in to their practice. Concluding each chapter are “takeaways” and exercises for reflection and action.

It was our goal to deliver a book on leadership to graduate students, new professionals, mid-level managers, and even seasoned professionals in the field of student affairs. Each letter is written from the heart of the author and includes advice on developing one’s personal identity as a student affairs educator/administrator, reference to the foundational skills included in the ACPA/NASPA Professional Competencies, advice on navigating transition, self-care, and so forth, and most importantly reflection on leadership. Addi-

tionally, each letter author has provided exercises for further reflection or action or both. These letters can be used in the classroom as case studies. Students can read the letters through the lens of student development, leadership, understanding the profession, ethics, law and policy, power and privilege, and so forth. They can even mirror the text and write their own letters!

The chapters are grouped into three parts including: Letters to Graduate Students from New Professionals, Letters to New Professionals from Mid-Level Managers, and Letters to Mid-Level Managers from Senior/Retired Administrators. Each section provides an introduction by one of the editors, a simple framing of some of the salient issues in and of the letters. In each section, the reader will find stories, in the form of letters but stories nonetheless. There are stories of excitement about a new position, disappointment about a complicated work environment, triumph over difficult situations, agony over making mistakes and the confidence that comes from learning from one's mistakes. And, it is through each others' stories that we hope you will learn.

Stories are powerful. Tahir Shah, author of *Arabian Nights*, wrote that they "are a communal currency of humanity." They often shed light on the hustle and bustle of our lived experience in ways only stories can. For us, they provide hope. It is our hope that these stories calm you in times of high stress, enlighten you and bring clarity in moments of confusion, ground you in times of uncertainty, uplift you and bring you peace during moments of crisis, and provide a reminder that, in this noble and altruistic profession, you are invaluable to your students. Thank you for your hard work and contribution to our students' continued development.

Enjoy these "lesson letters."

Jackie, Matthew, and Zeb

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**Jackie:** I wish to acknowledge so many people who made this book possible. First, my colleague Naijian Zhang who gave us the opportunity to develop this book proposal. Second, thank you to all of the writers of these leadership lesson letters. It is clear you all spoke from your hearts and from your experiences. I was privileged to learn so much about you and your journeys, short or long, in the field of student affairs. Third, thank you my coeditors—Matthew Shupp who had the wonderful idea to make a book of letters and Zeb Davenport who lent his expertise and patience as we navigated the process of creating this edited book. Fourth, thanks to my partner, Mary-Alice Ozechoski, a book contributor and the person who listened to me persevere about each step in the process. Finally, thank you to the students I have the privilege to teach. Your excitement about the field of higher education and student affairs is a daily inspiration to me and a reminder of why I pursued this career in the first place.

**Matthew:** It is almost impossible to acknowledge all of the individuals who helped Jackie, Zeb, and me bring this idea to fruition. First, to my coeditors: Zeb, thank you for your insights as Jackie and navigated our first foray into editing a book; Jackie, I am grateful to you for taking the lead on this project, keeping us on track and our energy high on days we felt stuck in the weeks. To Joel Covert, a friend and colleague who I admire more than he probably knows. Thank you for suggesting we include a “lesson letter” in our College Student Personnel internship and supporting our graduate program and its students. To Sarah McDowell Shupp, my partner, contributing author, and amazing student affairs professional. Thank you for your tireless support of my professional endeavors as well as the positive example you set for our students on a daily basis. You are the epitome of a consummate professional. Finally, I wish to acknowledge all of my students that have poured their hearts into their “lesson letters” assignment, particularly Jazzy, Jen, Shantanique, Marie, Drew, Britni, and Chris, who bravely allowed us to highlight in this book some of their most vulnerable insights. Thank you for

your wisdom and allowing me to be a small part of your life's journey. May you continue to inspire and be inspired by others. Go change the world.

**Zeb:** First, I would like to thank the creator for the gifts given to all of us as we embarked upon this incredible journey. I want to thank my colleagues who shared those gifts for the good of this profession and this project. Much gratitude goes to both Jackie for successfully navigating all of the components of this project and to Matthew for assisting along the way. I want to thank Dr. Mark Warner and Dr. Jim Voltruba for the many lessons in leadership they taught me along my "way." Finally, I always give thanks and gratitude to my wife and children for their support while I borrowed time from them to complete this project.

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**DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP SKILLS  
AND ABILITIES FOR  
STUDENT AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATORS**



# **PART I**

## **LETTERS TO GRADUATE STUDENTS IN STUDENT AFFAIRS MASTER’S DEGREE PROGRAMS FROM NEW PROFESSIONALS**

It is daunting for graduate students in the sunset of their master’s degree in higher education and student affairs preparation to prepare for a position as a new professional. There is high anticipation and excitement coupled with anxiety and concerns and maybe even a bit of imposter syndrome. It is an enormous transition for most students, even those students who may stay at the same institution for employment. And, even students who are currently employed may still be concerned about next steps post-graduation. They now have a master’s degree and are leaving the perceived safety and security of the student role and joining the ranks of educators. Did they learn enough? Do they know enough? Will they be respected, especially if they are new and young professionals? Will they actually like the work?

Many have been prepared in programs that adhere to the CAS Standards for Master’s Level Student Affairs Professional Preparation Programs (CAS, 2015). They have had many hours of intentional internship, often over 300 hours in the field. Many have worked in graduate assistantships and arrived to graduate programs with significant undergraduate leadership and paraprofessional experience. They are prepared but journeying into somewhat unknown territory . . . like “riding the bike without training wheels!”

The transition from graduate student to a full-time professional in student affairs work has been studied by a number of scholars (Gansemer-Topf, Ross, & Johnson, 2006; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). Other scholars have studied the socialization process of graduate students to the profession of student affairs (Cliente, Henning, Skinner Jackson, Kennedy, & Sloan, 2006; Liddell, Wilson, Pasquesi, Hirschy, & Boyle, 2014; Magolda & Carnaghi, 2004; Perez, 2016). Many have made recommendations on ways to enhance the experience for graduate students so as to have an easier transition to

their new professional role. Developing self-authorship and understanding how students make meaning (Magolda, 1998; Perez, 2016), may assist those who work with graduate students in preparing them to be “reflective practitioners and critical thinkers who are capable of leveraging their knowledge and skills to meet the evolving needs of students and institutions in a global society” (Perez, 2016, p. 776). Magolda and Carnaghi (2014) have written a second edition of the popular text for students entitled, *Job One 2.0* which shares the stories of new professionals about their transitions to positions in student affairs. Students may have read these stories as part of their graduate program. The letters in this section where new professionals write to graduate students are filled with stories of finding one’s professional self, coming to understand the culture of student affairs, developing one’s voice and self-efficacy, and a lot of empathy, compassion, care, and genuine encouragement.

The focus of this section is to help graduate students understand the trials, tribulations, excitement, questions, concerns, challenges, and joys of leadership as they transition to a new professional position. The leadership lessons contained in the letters of the new professionals are filled with great wisdom, perspective, passion, and support. Graduate students will be guided in ways that they may not even know exist and questions will be answered that they might not have considered. These 11 letters with powerful suggested exercises for reflection and action will inspire and prepare graduate student readers for the next step in their student affairs journey.

Chapter 1 opens with authors Christopher Bloomfield and Charles Dania as they discuss their experiences in transitioning from their graduate student role to the role of a new professional. Becka Yerger in Chapter 2 helps the reader understand how to navigate a new environment and in doing so, how to hold on to what you know and simultaneously stay open to new experiences. Chapter 3 addresses the significant importance of learning to set boundaries with undergraduate students. Both Brandy Brady and Malik Muhammad reflect on the importance of boundaries, especially as a young and new professional. Joann Noel tackles a tough issue as she shares her story of taking a first position that was not the best match for her and her skill set and values. Chapter 4 is a must-read for students as they begin their job search. Chapter 5 addresses the importance of work-life balance. Both letters in Chapter 5 address important life issues for the authors and provide thoughtful strategic advice for readers. Emily Tipton chose to change positions and move “home” following a personal tragedy and Andy and Gina Kiefer help us understand the challenges and benefits of having a dual-student affairs career relationship. Both Sara Leader and Matthew Hicks write in Chapter 6 about the importance of professional development both on and off-campus and the value of engaging in one’s professional associa-

tion. Finally, the section is closed by Wes Garton's thoughtful letter in Chapter 7 about finding oneself on the fringes of student affairs in one's first professional experience.

As in each section in this book and in each letter, authors have included discussion on the Professional Competencies (ACPA/NASPA, 2015). The letters in this section have focused mainly on the foundational outcomes of the competencies and give cogent suggestions on how to learn more about a particular foundational outcome to gain competency. These letters will help graduate students grow and more seasoned professionals remember.





## Chapter 1

### MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM GRADUATE STUDENT TO NEW PROFESSIONAL

#### NAVIGATING POLITICS AND FINDING YOUR HOME

*Christopher S. (Ford) Bloomford*

Dear Graduate Student,

In writing this letter, I am humbled by the privilege and experience that has led me to where I am currently; a reality that I could have never predicted. Along the way, I have been able to have strong mentors who me towards higher education as a career and have personally taken me under their wing to learn from their own highs and lows. I believe there is benefit in “trying on” other lived experience and learning from their greatest successes and challenges. It is my hope in writing this letter that others are able to reflect on how they may react when they find themselves in unexpectedly political climates or better support those navigating these environments from a supervisory role.

While I identify within the LGBTQ+ community and have experienced microaggressions from colleagues and leadership alike, I recognize that I am also a white, cisgender, male and live in a society that grants me unalienable privileges based on who I am. I present this information in hopes of framing the forthcoming reflection realizing that my experience may not reflect that of all LGBTQ+ individuals and I possess privileges that others may not.

Upon reflecting on my first year out of graduate school, I realized that my most transformative moments were deeply rooted in the unexpected and unplanned. The transition from graduate student to professional did, most assuredly, present some specific circumstances challenging my knowledge and passion for the field. Throughout my graduate program, all learning was framed from a developmental lens. I had field placements that I then was able to discuss with a group of academically-minded, emergent profession-

als. My growth was hinged on the “Competencies,” a basis for which our profession positions itself (ACPA/NASPA, 2015). However, in my transition, I quickly realized the level of self-work that was involved in continuing my own growth. I found that without having a class or professor prompting reflection I often missed critical moments in my own development.

While these conversations would have been helpful to have with a supervisor, I found that the first year of employment is really more about getting your footing. Furthermore, you will find, as I did, that sometimes you may have a supervisor who is not familiar with the Competencies or who may come from a different lens such as academic affairs or outside of higher education completely. In these moments, I often would refer back to the *Report on the New Professional Needs Study* produced by ACPA (Cliente, Henning, Skinner Jackson, Kennedy, & Sloan, 2006) and the research of Shupp & Arminio (2012); these key findings of these resources paralleled my needs as an entry level professional entering the field and contextualized my desires through a much wider lens. The onus was on me to reflect on these key capacities and to bring them to the forefront both in my personal reflection and in supervision. I quickly found the importance and value of setting aside time each month to reflect on my growth. If time was not set aside, I found the exercise went by the wayside. I highly recommend finding something that works for you. In part, much of my reflection was done through exercises such as this writing or periodic conversations with colleagues.

In finishing my graduate program, I was able to quickly secure a temporary, one-year position in a newly created academic support program at my graduate institution; the experience of working at my graduate institution would present both significant benefits and unique challenges that I did not necessarily realize in totality at the time of accepting the position. While I had done similar work as a graduate assistant, this professional role felt different; I found myself in a situation where I was the one-and-only student affairs professional in my area.

While this new role provided a unique perspective, I often found myself having trouble finding my voice with a group of colleagues who I once viewed as supervisors and upper-level administrators. Would I say the wrong thing? Would they even care what I think? These negative thoughts consumed me at every meeting. As weeks passed, I found that I was slowly able to add my ideas into the mix. I was able to bring in theories from student development that I had spent so much time learning and used those concepts to inform my thoughts. I was learning first-hand when to speak and when to listen; this was my first of many lessons in this position. While in graduate school my voice was expected, I was now among colleagues with experience, albeit different than my own, who had political power and influence. By speaking and chiming in when appropriate, which was predomi-