# ADVISING AND SUPPORTING
## IN STUDENT AFFAIRS

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# ADVISING AND SUPPORTING IN STUDENT AFFAIRS

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PRACTICE AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

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# ADVISING AND SUPPORTING IN STUDENT AFFAIRS

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Rachel and Chase are frequent co-collaborators and co-conspirators who share a commitment to providing research and scholarship that is useful to practitioners, such as their co-editing and co-authoring of *Gender-Aware Practices: Intersectional Approaches to Applying Masculinities in Student Affairs* (New Directions for Student Services).

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**Alina Wong, Ph.D.,** currently serves as the Assistant Vice Provost for Educational Equity at Penn State. Her past research explored racial identity construction, and recent scholarship applies intersectionality to cultivate individual and collective accountability and social justice as a daily practice. She facilitates workshops that examine power, privilege, and oppression with a focus on individual and collective responsibilities for institutional change. Alina received a Bachelor's degree in history and Spanish from Amherst College; a Master's degree in history from the University of New Mexico, and a Doctoral degree in higher education from the University of Michigan.

*In memory of Dr. Maurianne Adams who taught us what it means to write and think with our whole complex selves in an accessible way that invites others to muse alongside us.*

*To Dr. Barbara J. Love who gave us the tools for critical self-awareness in our lives, scholarship, and praxis and reassured us that to dream is an emancipatory practice.*

# FOREWORD

It has been an amazing experience for me in the past twenty years while editing book series. I feel so appreciative of the opportunities to know numerous scholars and practitioners in the fields of student affairs and counseling. Though I have not met majority of them in person, I have known them through their scholarly work and their positive attitudes toward others and what they are doing. I admire their personal quality and truly respect their commitments to the professions. Dr. Rachel Wagner is one of them. While collaborating with Dr. Wagner on the book, *Multicultural and Diversity Issues in Student Affairs Practice: A Professional Competency-Based Approach,* I was impressed with the quality of her work and her professionalism. The invitation for her to write the volume about advising and supporting in student affairs became natural and warranted. I was pleased that Dr. Wagner accepted the invitation and teamed up with her frequent collaborator, Dr. Chase J. Catalano, on this project because I always believe what Helen Keller said, "*Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.*" Dr. Wagner has a unique character with many strengths and wisdoms. She became a professor in Higher Education and Student Affairs at Clemson University after her 20 years of full-time student affairs experience in residence life and housing at a range of institutions. Besides teaching, her research focuses on understanding how college environments can support students flourishing. She published numerous articles and book chapters. In addition to his professional experience in student affairs, Dr. Catalano, a faculty member in the Virginia Tech Higher Education program, published numerous articles, book chapters, and edited books. Both Dr. Wagner and Dr. Catalano approach their work with a scholar-practitioner lens to create their contribution to the field of student affairs with the current volume *Advising and Supporting in Student Affairs* in the *American Series in Student Affairs and Professional Identity.*

About 2500 years ago Lao Tzu offered his advice that *one who understands others has knowledge; one who understands himself has wisdom.*" The book *Advising and Supporting in Student Affairs* by Dr. Rachel Wagner and Dr. Chase J. Catalano reflects the thought of Lao Tzu. They applied a critical self-awareness framework for student affairs practitioners to utilize in their efforts to

understand their students—gaining knowledge, and to become aware of themselves—obtaining wisdom. Advising and supporting (A/S) of college students in student affairs plays a significant function in successful collegiate experience. Ultimately, the gift of attention to this competency of advising and supporting by ACPA and NASPA is necessary for all those in student affairs who seek to engage with students in authentic ways.

To help individuals, instructors, or teams who adopt this book in the development of stronger A/S skills by utilizing critical self-awareness, *Advising and Supporting in Student Affairs* outlines essential elements for those who advise and support in their student affairs role. Each chapter provides an overview of a key area of the A/S competency and utilizes scenarios or case studies to engage in application component to the learning process.

First, *Advising and Supporting in Student Affairs* provides the reader a focus on practitioners' knowledge on both others and their own social identities, as well as an examination of positionalities; addressing the significance of these major elements in the development of self-awareness and how they play an influential role in helping process. Second, *Advising and Supporting in Student Affairs* offers the reader theoretical models in helping to support students with an awareness of common mental health issues. Readers will also learn advising and supporting skills, as well as intervention strategies. Third, there is an emphasis on ethical considerations to advising and supporting and various ethical decision-making models for consideration when examining and confronted by ethical dilemmas. Besides handling ethical dilemmas, the reader will learn intervention strategies on how to advise and support students in crisis and with conduct issues. Fourth, to increase self-awareness *Advising and Supporting in Student Affairs* helps practitioners in student affairs identify their values, lived experiences, personal belief systems, and social-political views, and how these may impact their effectiveness in the process of advising and supporting. Fifth, student affairs professionals explore how to recognize emotions and their role in the pursuit of helping others. With the increased self-awareness student affairs practitioners will be able to attend to their own emotions which often play a significant role in advising and supporting process and the emotions of students living through difficult life experiences. Sixth, mentorship is a unique way in advising and supporting. *Advising and Supporting in Student Affairs* provides the reader with insights on how to build mentorship and make connections across the field of student affairs, as well as knowledge on various mentorships and potential opportunities to establish formal or informal mentorships. Seventh, *Advising and Supporting in Student Affairs* also introduces new student affairs professionals to theories used to understand compassion fatigue and approaches on how to prevent it. In addition, the reader will further obtain knowledge about how disabilities influence approaches to providing support

for all students. Eighth, *Advising and Supporting in Student Affairs,* offers student affairs professionals ways to think about what it means to continually develop their capacities for advising and supporting throughout the progression of their career. Finally, like all other volumes in the series, *Advising and Supporting in Student Affairs* reveals the three common themes in the *American Series in Student Affairs Practice and Professional Identity:* (1) integration of ACPA/NASPA Competency Areas for student affairs educators; (2) development of professional identity; and (3) application of knowledge and theories to practice. Particularly, to reflect the theme of applying knowledge and theories to practice, this book, like all other volumes in the series, included bounteous case studies and thought-provoking questions to reflect the knowledge, skills, and dispositions throughout the book and to help student affairs educators more effectively advise and support college students. *Advising and Supporting in Student Affairs* is a valuable tool which not only assists graduate students in student affairs preparation programs and new student affairs educators to expand their knowledge on advising and supporting but also provides those supervising them ways to engage in conversations to foster professional development.

*American Series in Student Affairs Practice and Professional Identity* is a unique book series that creates an integration of all ten 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 theories 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 Environments: Understanding the Role Student Affairs Educators Play in Shaping Campus Environments* which addresses some major aspects of the Interaction of Competencies. 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 under-

stand 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.

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West Chester University of Pennsylvania

# PREFACE

Sherry K. Watt

*Professor of Higher Education and Student Affairs*
*The University of Iowa*

Her name was Tanika.[1] We were standing in front of our residence hall. There were many students standing around watching. She was yelling at me. She was charging toward me to physically fight me. I do not recall the source of her dissatisfaction this time. I probably had asked her to turn down her music earlier in the day. Exuding agitation was not uncommon for Tanika. She resisted any authority I had as the Resident Director (RD). I was a senior in college. Due to a number of unexpected personnel changes, I emerged as the best candidate to take over the RD position. Tanika and I, both African Americans, were surviving life on a historically White campus. Justifications abound in the reasons for her angst. There were constant, subtle, and obvious slights regularly directed at her person that she endured in classroom, in the residence hall, and even in the cafeteria. I felt all of that too. As both an athlete (volleyball player) and a member of the Housing and Residence Life staff, I resisted the unwelcome that I felt by calling it out in meetings with supervisors, snubbing my coaches, and confronting my teammates whose ignorance fatigued me. Tanika did not see any of those exchanges. She may have thought that I was forcing her to fit into this inequitable system. She saw my even-temperedness as problematic. I represented the source of her angst: the university. I saw myself as a mediator and as a buffer to the system for her and other Black students. Our two perspectives did not line up. And she targeted her frustration at me.

As a new professional, I toiled with my role as both a supporter of Tanika's development and as a leader within an organization. It erupted a series of personal and professional development crises for me. I questioned my racial identity and awareness, my conflicted personal commitment to an

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1. Pseudonym

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institution, my role in supporting the development of students, and my strategies for fighting inequity in the environment. It exhausted me.

This moment in my professional career, I found that my love for working with students not only tired me out, but also stretched me. I needed to sort through these challenging situations in a productive way to make sense of the age-old question: *Who am I now?* I need to find a way to nurture a life-long career in this field that readily sprouted these situations that raised these dissonance-provoking questions for me. Therefore, I needed a sustainable way to reflect and to renew. I began to ask myself: *How do I build a career that sustains my energy to be what Baxter Magolda (2002) calls 'good company' along the journey for students?*

*Advising and Supporting in Student Affairs* is a practical guide that will help you to do the perpetual reflection needed to sustain yourself in a career that requires that you bring your whole self to work in order to be good company for students and in community. This book brings into focus essential aspects of professional development such as how to raise your self-awareness, how to reflect on your personal and professional identity, and how to do so in the context of the standards and competencies of the profession. This book incorporates the practical wisdom and scholarship of the authors and the editors. Rachel L. Wagner and Chase J. Catalano carefully and superbly curate it. Each author brings their perspectives on how to apply the professional standards and competencies to real life day-to-day practice. The content of each chapter builds on the foundations of the authors' personal experience as well as the scholarship. What I love most about this book is that it serves two purposes—it offers the (1) basic facts about advising and supporting students all undergirded by (2) the assumption that who you are matters to what you do.

This book is a unique offering to the profession. It extends beyond reviewing the literature or reporting the competencies. It assumes that to be competent in advising and supporting students that student affairs professionals must not only possess the skills, knowledges, and dispositions to complete the basic tasks, but also they need to build the stamina to situate themselves in relation to the challenges they are facing in their professional lives. This type of reflection asks that student affairs professionals do work to make meaning of their identity, background, historical context, cultural norms, and institutional dynamics as they work with students. This book situates this awareness as not separate from the idea that working effectively with students and on behalf of them also requires—a keen sense of the broader context of the institution and that they have clarity about specific policies and procedures. Through a specific focus from each of the chapter authors, Wagner and Catalano provide specific guidance on professional competencies that goes beyond surface-level understanding of the 'what' (specific poli-

cies, ethical guidelines) and into inviting a more thoughtful connection between those and the all important 'why and how' (reflective action, traversing conflict, and controversy). In other words, this book offers content along with the processes of how to engage these professional ideals in real life by offering relevant examples through case studies and practice scenarios.

As a new or seasoned professional in the field, I suspect that you can also pinpoint the moment(s) that shaped your reasons for wanting to work with students in the field of higher education. Tanika and I did not physically fight that day. My resident assistants stepped in and helped to calm Tanika. What remained with me was dissonant feelings about how we reached this point of tension. We eventually found a way to live cooperatively while still taking different approaches to the problems we faced on campus. At Tanika's graduation, she looked over at me and nodded — the kind of respectful head drop you offer to a worthy opponent after a hard-fought competition. I nodded back. I did not know it at the time, but that major confrontation with Tanika that day was a defining moment for me. I chose to be an educator precisely because the rewards of supporting a student's development outweighed the cost. I still wrestle with questions about identity, commitment to an institution, and strategies to fight injustice. I have not found the right answers. I have come to value more exploring the questions. What I do know is that I agree with Wagner and Catalano, along with their authors—the constant consternation and the perpetual reflection helps me to be better company on the journey with students as they also accompany me on mine. What I did not know that day Tanika confronted me was how the exhaustion would be a constant partner of the joys. I am glad that there is a book like this one that will serve as good company on your journey as a student affair professional. It offers essential guidance on how to reflect, to learn and absorb lessons that will help you to embody a whole life in the profession.

## Reference

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I (Rachel) want to thank my mother and grandmother who taught me the best lessons on how to be generous and reciprocal in relationships from an early age. I want to thank my mother-in-law, Toni, for being an earnest cheerleader of all my scholarly endeavors. To the students I have learned alongside about the possibilities of advising and supporting, thank you for your insights and continued belief in the power of growth in community, it has indelibly marked this text. For Chase, who makes me smarter and more certain that I can do the unthinkable, I am ever eager to plot and scheme and wonder and subvert with you. Lastly, to my wife, Keri, I am grateful every day to grow in understanding of myself and move further towards my aspirational self, supported by your love and candor. May everyone have relationships that honor our current selves and simultaneously beckon us toward a fuller humanity.

I (Chase) want to first acknowledge my mother, a vibrant, funny, and thoughtful woman who shaped the best parts of me, and was an endless support of who I am and the work I do. She showed me what advising and support was long before I ever had the words for it. Her passing in 2019 means she only knew of the idea of this book, and I will think of her beaming with pride when I hold the first copy of this book in my hands. I appreciate my family (Annmarie, Sara, Sam, Pablo, and Dad) who remind me not to take myself too seriously, and show me all kinds of ways I should engage in critical self-awareness. I appreciate my partner Stephanie for just plain getting me, and building and sharing life with me. I must acknowledge the influence of my trifecta of mentors from Dickinson College who helped me find this current path: Joyce Bylander, Lonna Malmsheimer, and Susan Rose. My deepest gratitude for all the students I had and have the pleasure to work with who offer me new insights and ways of thinking about myself, each other, the world we inhabit, and the world we want to live in. And last, but certainly not least, thank you to Rachel for inviting me into this project, as I delight in any and every opportunity to collaborate with you.

This book is the effort of a team of people who provided support, guidance, and encouragement. We want to thank the following people who

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# ILLUSTRATIONS

# ADVISING AND SUPPORTING
# IN STUDENT AFFAIRS

# Chapter 1

# A REFLEXIVE SELF-AWARENESS FRAMEWORK FOR ADVISING AND SUPPORTING

*Rachel Wagner and Chase J. Catalano*

## ADVISING AND SUPPORTING IN STUDENT AFFAIRS

Think about a time in college when you were struggling. Perhaps you were grappling with big questions: Who am I? What do I value? What will I do for my life's work? Who will be the people I share my life with? Or maybe, something smaller in scope, but just as consuming: How do I get a roommate who is not terrible? What do I have to do to pass this course? How do I know which internship is right for me? Take a moment to remember. Remember how intense the uncertainty or frustration was considering these questions. Remember being sad, lost, angry, upset, or anxious, unsure what to do. If you were fortunate, perhaps someone supported you through your difficulty. They did not give you answers, make decisions for you, or fix things on your behalf. Their support did not involve telling you what you wanted to hear; instead, it gave you the space to validate your feelings, gain insight, and see a conceivable way forward. Through their time and attention, you gained a bit more clarity on how you felt, what you wanted, and what options might lay before you.

We offer the previous reflective prompts to help remind readers of the vast emotional and situational dynamics that individuals experience during their time as undergraduate and graduate students. Emerging and current student affairs professionals (SAPs) are on a continuous journey to serve the role of addressing students' personal and academic needs in the support of student learning and success (Dungy & Gordon, 2011). Two of the

leading overarching student affairs organizations, American College Personnel Association International (ACPA) and National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), collaborated "to establish a common set of professional competency areas for student affairs educators" (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 4). In 2009, ACPA and NASPA defined ten competencies necessary for SAPs to effectively do their work. They revisited the competencies in 2015, and one of the updates included renaming "Advising and Helping" to "Advising and Supporting." ACPA and NASPA (2015) enumerated this competency to describe "the knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to providing advising and support to individuals and groups through direction, feedback, critique, referral, and guidance" (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 15). Advising and supporting are integral skills for student affairs work, as well as sustaining oneself and the populations one serves. The change in language from helping to supporting signified a philosophical shift in how student affairs professionals (SAPs) should emphasize "the agency of college students in their development of self-authorship" (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 15).

Self-authorship refers to the internal capacity to define and direct one's beliefs, identity, and social relations (Baxter Magolda, 2008). Through the language shift and clarification of philosophical perspective, ACPA and NASPA, as leading student affairs professional organizations, asserted that the role of SAPs is neither directive nor therapeutic. Rather, it is incumbent upon SAPs to provide environments for student-directed growth and development. In other words, SAPs can provide facilitative support for students, but it is not their work to make students' choices for them.

In order to accomplish this, ACPA and NASPA (2015) encouraged development of professionals' capacities for "listening, addressing group dynamics, managing conflict and crisis situations, and partnering with other professionals, departments, and agencies" (p. 15). Providing the kind of facilitative dynamic that A/S encourages requires that SAPs invest significant effort into personal enrichment and skill development. SAPs must continuously work towards their own self-understanding and embrace their own growth to be good company on someone else's journey of self-discovery (Baxter Magolda, 2009). Emphasis on self-awareness is a significant professional skill in a variety of helping professions including counseling, nursing, medicine, and education (Feize & Faver, 2019; Pompeo & Levitt, 2014). There is a diversity of roles that SAPs play on campus, yet persistent in each role is that SAPs are responsible for the development of the whole person, which classifies them as helpers (Reynolds, 2009).

The purpose of this book is to present meaningful opportunities for graduate students and new professionals to cultivate a professional identity based on strategies for A/S that emphasize self-awareness; developing one's capac-

ities is central to bolstering skills that support others' growth, development, and success. This chapter introduces relevant student affairs terms, provides a conceptual framework of self-awareness and reflexivity, introduces the importance of self-evaluation and continuing learning, and provides an overview of the book.

## COMMON TERMS EMPLOYED IN THIS BOOK

Working as an SAP means learning many of the acronyms and language used in higher education, some of which colleagues and supervisors take for granted as common knowledge. This section delineates the distinctions between self-awareness, reflection, reflexivity, and feedback that serves as the basis of the approach for A/S. Together, utilizing reflection, reflexivity, and feedback, creates a critical self-awareness approach to self-development.

## Self-Awareness

As discussed earlier, self-awareness is fundamental to working with and attending to others. Scholars have long discussed the importance of self-knowledge and introspection, specifically for helping professionals (Brew & Kottler, 2017; Feize & Faver, 2019; Reynolds, 2009). Self-aware SAPs think about and are willing to work on their own psychological wellbeing. To this willingness to foreground one's own growth, we add a layer of attention to how we are situated in a social and political landscape. We borrow prominently from Love's (2018) description of self-awareness as a fundamental element of a liberatory consciousness. Specifically, Love (2018) discussed self-awareness as "developing capacity to notice, to give our attention to our daily lives, our language, our behavior, and even our thoughts" (p. 612). In this way, self-awareness is a form of intrapersonal responsibility and actions, and deeply intertwines with liberatory potentialities for individuals, institutions, and cultures. Thus, self-awareness refers to: (a) the overall and omnipresent awareness of one's mental states (beliefs, feelings, and values) and environments (external stimuli) (Harrington & Loffredo, 2011); (b) the process of observing, reflecting and evaluating one's feelings and thoughts to reduce personal biases (Feize & Gonzalez, 2018); (c) noticing the impact of systems of power (Love, 2018); and (d) actions to protect and improve the self (Feize & Faver, 2019). In other words, to be self-aware as a SAP, one must consider one's own thoughts and feelings, the environment one is in, systems of power, and ongoing actions to grow and develop.

## Reflection

Reflection is a building block of self-awareness that emphasizes the importance of examining and re-examining experiences as a part of the learning process. Reflection involves meticulous and careful consideration of a belief, as well as the evidence which supports or rejects it (Dewey, 1910). Re-examination is a deliberate reconsideration, applying standards of reason, logic, and evidence to an experience. Because "reflection is not, by definition, critical" (Brookfield, 1995, p. 8), this means reflection requires intentional consideration to take into account power differences, or critical self-reflection. Being critical is not the same as criticizing; critical reflection is a perspective wherein individuals must interrogate how systems of oppression historically and structurally operated. The knowledge gained then informs how one perceives and makes sense of information. To layer in the complexity of power inequities requires the more robust tool of reflexivity.

## Reflexivity

Liberation is a commitment to "changing systems and institutions characterized by oppression to create greater equity and social justice" (Love, 2018, p. 611). In this way, self-awareness, has liberatory roots, linked closely with reflexivity as we define it. Reflexivity draws upon critical social theories that surface and interrogate how multiple oppressions structure the existing social order (Lay & McGuire, 2010). Within student affairs, utilizing reflexivity enables SAPs to question what they know and how reality functions when examined through forms of power. Reflexivity sensitizes SAPs to considerations of how power makes legitimate certain ways of knowing and doing in the world. For instance, conceptualizations of a residential collegiate experiences as the "norm" clouds or obscures how structural inequalities of race, class, gender, ability, age, and veteran status (to name a few) may exclude students from being able to live in the residence halls.

Reflexivity demands us to consider systemic or macro conditions as we make sense of prior experiences. SAPs can use reflexive tools to challenge dominant and hegemonic beliefs, values, and narratives that maintain an unjust status quo (D'Cruz et al., 2007). Utilizing reflexivity requires giving attention while utilizing information and experiences others offer to consider the influence of power. Feedback is one way SAPs can receive potentially useful sources of information to enhance the utilization of reflexivity.

## Feedback

Plainly stated, feedback involves individuals giving and receiving information about themselves and others (Martin & Jacobs, 1980). The purpose

of feedback within employment is to direct behavior toward desired goals (e.g., meet departmental goals), as well as to stimulate and maintain high levels of effort (Bandura, 1982; McCarthy & Garavan, 2006). Feedback also functions within group dynamics, operating at the non-verbal and verbal level to invite or curtail the sharing of information or opinions. For instance, non-verbal feedback can send the message that the listener has shut down and detached from the conversation, a shift evidenced by a lack of nodding, withdrawal of physical attention such as sitting forward, and a lack of utterances such as hums of interest or agreement.

SAPs may be in the position to give or receive feedback to a student or supervisee or give and receive feedback from a supervisor. In each instance, feedback is most likely to be effective when it is communicated in the context of an effective working alliance (Bordin, 1983; Wood, 2005). A working alliance depends upon three components, mutual agreement and understanding of the goals sought, mutual agreement of the tasks undertaken, and a relationship marked by trust, respect, and care. Without the broader context of a mutual working alliance, feedback may be interpreted as criticism or unreasonable expectations (Crockett & Hays, 2015).

Together these tools demonstrate how critical self-awareness encompasses reflection, reflexivity, and feedback to help graduate students and new SAPs throughout their career.

## CRITICAL SELF-AWARENESS AS A FRAMEWORK FOR ADVISING AND SUPPORTING

Like the educator, researcher, or therapist, an SAP embodies "self as instrument" to bring their knowledge, their attention, and their personal commitment to a supporting relationship. That is, as counseling scholars have noted, bringing one's authentic self to the advising relationship can diminish power differences and deepen relationships (Reinkraut et al., 2009). SAPs aspire to provide students with the physical, psychological, emotional, and figurative space to make sense of their world and to consider how they want to proceed as an agent in their own life as holistic beings. And yet, while SAPs often focus their minds, hearts, and physical attention upon the student in front of them, they are still collections of the experiences, belief systems, ways of being and doing that constructed their own consciousness. In other words, being present and attentive to someone else does not mean SAPs do not bring their own life experiences, beliefs, identities, and values to each interaction. Each person shows up in the classroom and the workplace informed by how they see the world and their perceptions of how the world sees them. It is SAPs' obligation to examine those life experiences and