

MA PELSA Pre-Reflection Paper: A Look at my Goals and Values

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Throughout my academic endeavors, I developed my knowledge of what student affairs was, is currently, and is going to be. I was a transfer student; I had spent three years at community college, earning two associate degrees, then transferred to my undergraduate institution, where I completed three more years to get my bachelor's degree. It wasn't until I was in my undergraduate experience that I first learned of student affairs or gained an understanding of the roles that field presents. While finishing out my undergraduate experience, I got to experience a few areas of student affairs including Housing, Student Activities, and the Pride Center, to name a few. Not only did I get to work on aspects of the Postsecondary Educational Leadership with a specialization in Student Affairs (PELSA) Program Learning Outcomes (PLO's) in my extracurricular work, but I had also experienced this work interweaved into my coursework for my degrees.

For my undergraduate degree, I studied Biology. There is a lot of structure and knowledge with that line of study. I had the opportunity to use some self-awareness and regulation practices to determine my leadership strengths when working in groups, communicating effectively in those groups, and working collaboratively with equity-mindedness at the forefront of my classwork (PLO's 2, 7, 8). In my classes I worked in groups, as well as individually; but it is in these groups where I worked with equity-mindedness by making sure that everyone had their voice heard, everyone was allowed space in their terms, and making sure to help share others ideas if they weren't comfortable.

Outside of my academic coursework, I had the opportunities to work in select areas of Student Affairs, as mentioned above, including Housing at multiple institutions, Student

Activities, Event Planning, and as a Fellow in the NASPA Undergraduate Fellowship Program. I have worked in Housing at a few different institutions, including Eastern Washington University (EWU), University of Washington (UW), and Western Washington University (WWU). It was in my housing experience at EWU where I was able to development many of the learning outcomes. I was able to become self-aware of my leadership strengths and worked on how to practice them by working with my fellow Community Advisors (CA's), and leading my floor of residents (PLO's 2, 3, 7, 8). I worked collaboratively with other CA's to plan programs and events together within the same buildings I was in, as well as across campus in other communities. In my limited housing experience at WWU, I was able to engage in almost all the PLO's of the PELSA program. As a working professional, I worked with a few theoretical foundations of student learning and development (PLO 1). The one we worked with the most was the theory of Community Cultural Wealth, which embodied the idea that every person has something they bring to the table, so to speak. Every student has a story and has experiences that others can learn from. I was in a leading position, where I was an advisor for community council, a supervisor to a staff of resident assistants, and on committees with the Facilities area of our department (PLO's 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8). I worked with the community council members on how to communicate effectively, as there were some difficulties in their leadership styles (PLO's 3, 4, 5, 7, 8). The executive board members went on a retreat to help work through communication techniques and learn about each other's leadership style. This experience really gave me great insight and an entry level view into Student Affairs as a professional.

The one Program Learning Outcome that I don't have much experience with happened to be outcome 6: Utilizing scholarly literature on student success to inform practices that

advance access and equity in postsecondary institutions. Although I have not had much experience with this outcome before entering this program, I have made it a goal of mine to work on this outcome through my graduate experience, and beyond. I plan to do research in different areas of Student Affairs to help find where new ideas may come from, and to be able to do this, I will need to read and interpret articles to learn and apply the gained knowledge to different functional areas.

For me to be successful in this graduate program, and to master these learning outcomes, I need to make sure that I am actively engaged in discussions inside and outside of the classroom, build a network of professionals in the field to help me open up to new ideas, and engage in self-care practices. One may not always think that this last area is something important, but for me it is a major priority. Once I get to a place where I can effectively manage my self-care practices, I can then more-easily engage in the other activities. If I don't take the time to care for myself, I won't have the proper foundation to further my learning.

References

Masters of Arts in Postsecondary Educational Leadership with a Specialization in Student Affairs. (2014). Retrieved October 16, 2020, from https://interwork.sdsu.edu/main/ma_student_affairs