

Philosophy of Student Affairs Paper

So there's always a back story.....

My entrance into education came the roundabout way – you see I've always loved teaching. While playing with dolls as a child, most of the scenarios were classrooms as opposed to the happy homemaker. It took me over a decade to realize my passion fully and yes, I took the scenic route. I stopped by the private sector and corporate high life, filling my head and pockets with big business bounty and dreams of carving a solid niche for myself in that landscape. Yet, in the midst of scaling the corporate ladder, smelling the roses for me always lead to instruction, training and facilitating. Call it what you may - I taught. I enjoyed the feeling of playing a role in the molding of minds, to see pure joy when a student made a new discovery or overcame a challenge. That feeling – more than everything else kept calling to me. I watched and admired how my mother who had been a teacher for over 40 years was revered and respected and how her students spoke of her fondly. After 12 years of corporate life, I stopped running. I got the opportunity to face my original calling and accepted the opportunity to lecture at a small college and I didn't look back. Now on the eve of a 15-year anniversary in education, I realize that being in education is more than being an educator – it is a calling to be in student affairs and to think of student development holistically. So my philosophy is fashioned around the three building blocks of my mantra; **Aspire...Perspire...Inspire.**

So What do I ASPIRE to do?

As I progress through my field of study in College Student Personnel and Educational Leadership, I realize that my appreciation of students has shifted. I now aspire more than ever to be a person who understands students, comprehensively. Aspiring to excel in student affairs

practice involves a commitment to fostering student development and creating a supportive campus environment. I aspire to provide all-inclusive support that addresses students' academic, emotional, social, and career needs. I aspire to offer personalized advising and mentorship to guide students through their academic journey, helping them navigate challenges, set goals, and make informed decisions. I aspire to encourage student engagement in co-curricular activities, organizations, and leadership opportunities as these experiences enhance their personal growth, leadership skills, and community involvement. I aspire to develop and implement initiatives that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion on campus. This includes creating safe spaces, supporting underrepresented groups, and addressing systemic barriers. I aspire to foster a culturally competent campus community by providing training, workshops, and resources that promote understanding and respect for diverse perspectives and identities. I aspire to advocate for policies and practices that ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities for all students, striving to eliminate disparities and create a more inclusive campus environment. I aspire to implement programs that support students' physical, mental, and emotional well-being. I aspire to develop effective crisis management protocols to respond to emergencies and provide timely support to students in distress. I also aspire to foster a sense of community by organizing events, traditions, and initiatives that bring students together, celebrating collegiate culture, and promoting positive relationships among students, faculty, and staff. My ultimate aspiration is to be the Dean of Student Affairs or the Dean of Students.

So How will I PERSPIRE doing it?

Changing a culture is difficult. Bureaucracy and personal biases threaten to maintain the status quo. I understand the task ahead is difficult and progress might flow like molasses uphill but I must. Effecting real change in student affairs practice requires strategic, innovative, and

often challenging initiatives. I will perspire to move beyond reactive support by proactively reaching out to students through workshops, screenings, and wellness campaigns. I will perspire by openly addressing systemic inequities by conducting thorough assessments of institutional policies and practices. I can assuredly expect to perspire as I advocate for and support the integration of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into the curriculum. As one of the current political footballs at the moment, I expect to perspire to try and establish clear accountability measures to track progress on DEI goals. I will perspire by utilizing data analytics to understand student behavior, preferences, and needs. Working hard in this regard will ensure students and staff are proficient in using new technologies while addressing digital divide issues to ensure equitable access to technological resources.

So Who will I INSPIRE to also do?

People are inspired by what they see and I hope this inspiration occurs at all levels. I think that one has the opportunity to inspire others through their grit and determination. I hope to inspire our policymakers and government to also advocate for the creation and implementation of inclusive policies that support all students, particularly those from underrepresented or marginalized groups. I hope to inspire in our Board of Governors, a culture of innovation and experimentation where innovative ideas are encouraged and tested. I also hope to inspire an environment of continuous institutional learning, where feedback from students, faculty, and staff is actively used to inform policies and practices. I hope to inspire long-term planning by policy makers developing a strategic vision for student affairs that aligns with the overall mission and goals of the institution. I also hope to inspire interdepartmental collaboration through the formation of cross-functional teams that include representatives from various departments to work on specific student affairs initiatives, such as diversity training or mental health awareness

campaigns. I want to inspire departments to collaborate on creating integrated programs that address the multiple dimensions of student well-being, including academic support, career services, and mental health. I hope to inspire faculty and staff to advocate for continuous professional development opportunities that focus on student affairs best practices, inclusive pedagogy, and effective student support strategies. I hope to always inspire a collaborative environment where faculty and staff work together with student affairs professionals to support student success holistically. I hope to inspire recognition and reward of faculty and staff who contribute significantly to student affairs initiatives and demonstrate a commitment to progressive change. Most importantly I hope to inspire student empowerment and inspiration to take an active role in their own development. I will use my own life story about campus life to inspire students about the opportunities for leadership, involvement in student organizations, and participation in decision-making processes. I also hope to inspire advocacy where students feel empowered to advocate for their needs and the needs of their peers, particularly in areas related to mental health, diversity, and inclusion. I hope to inspire students to graduate successfully and go out into the world more empowered to live their best lives and make significant change in their homes, their communities, their countries and their world while remaining unfinished and always focused on continuous improvement.

So Why adopt a philosophy?

I have adopted a student affairs philosophy because it is crucial for guiding practice and decision-making. A philosophy enhances my personal and professional development, and drives me to build a collaborative and supportive community. This core outlook helps me as a professional stay aligned with my values, fosters kaizen while remaining unfinished, and strengthens my ability to advocate for and support students effectively.