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Personal Discernment: My Professional

Development Plan

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Personal Discernment: My Professional Development Plan

As a graduate student in the College Student Personnel Program (CSP) and a Graduate

Hall Director (GHD) at Bowling Green State University (BGSU), I believe that I have gained

valuable experience that makes me a knowledgeable practitioner in the field. The CSP course

work has provided me with a foundation of theories and skills that I have effectively utilized

within my role as a GHD. I also believe that the experience I gained from my GHD position

has given me additional knowledge which will serve as a foundation for my first professional

job after graduate school. Looking at my two years holistically, I can confidently say that I am

knowledgeable about working in Residence Life, being a conduct officer, using reflection in my

supervision style, and developing strong staff dynamics. Although I have expertise in these four

areas, I am also aware that I need to further educate myself about working with students with

emotional disabilities, utilizing research, expanding my multicultural competency, and finally

learning more about Service-Learning as a functional area. The purpose of this paper is to

explore both my knowledge and limitations an effort to create a professional development plan

that will help guide me through my first years as a student affairs practitioner.

What do I Know?

Although I feel like I have a basic understanding of the ten competencies, I know my

knowledge expands past various areas. This has been the result of my unique path through the

CSP curriculum and my work experience as a GHD.   For this section, I will explore four

expertise areas. Within each area, I will explain what I know, how I obtained the knowledge,

and how I believe that it will lead to my success as a professional.

Residence Life: Supervision

My experience as a GHD for the Office of Residence Life (ORL) has provided me with

the knowledge that I need to be a successful Hall Director. I feel like my last two years working

as a GHD has taught me most about working within the Residence Life functional area. My

experience taught me that Residence Life contains multiple experiences which include

supervising and advising student leaders, serving on a crisis response team, managing a facility,

and implementing programming models within the residence hall (Council for the Advancement

of Standards in Higher Education, 2012). For simplicity, I will focus primarily on my

supervision experience.

In terms of supervision, my knowledge of Baxter-Magolda's Self-Authorship Theory

(King, Baxter Magolda, Barber, Brown, & Lindsay, 2009), Park's (2000) *Big Questions*, *Worthy*

Dreams, and the Jesuit value of reflection have contributed to the formation of my supervisory

style. Knowing that students enter college following formulas prescribed by individuals they see

as experts, I know that in order to help students internalize foundations and move towards self-

authorship that they need to become self-aware through reflection (McNair, 2011). I know that

providing students with reflective opportunities will create the dissonance that I need in order to

help them move them through following formulas into internalizing their own foundations.

Students who develop their external voice, sense of self, and inner voice will be able to act on

their beliefs and values (Baxter-Magolda, 2008). Therefore, as a supervisor I know that

reflection will allow contribute to helping them develop along these three areas (Frieden &

Pawelsi, 2003).

Reflection challenges students to formulate an idea of their own values, beliefs, and

emotions in order to help formulate a concept of self, which motivates students in becoming

leaders and self-authors (Baxter-Magolda, 2008). As a supervisor, I know that Baxter Magolda's

(2008) Self-Authorship Theory helps students take part of reflective conversations that help

create meaning and purpose. Thus, as a supervisor, I utilize this theory to frame my supervision.

I know that it helps students become aware of diversity; develop a sense of beliefs and actions;

identify a sense of self; helps them become responsibility for their own learning; helps them

learn about the value of collaboration; helps develop deep and mature relationships; and become

more open to diverse perspectives (King et al., 2009). I believe that students who work for me,

develop self-authorship and an understanding of their own personal values.

Majority of the knowledge in this area has been obtained as the result of my Jesuit

education at LMU and my course work in CSP 6010 Foundations and Functions of College

Student Personnel. As an alumnus of LMU, I was introduced to the art of reflection and a value-

based education through the various retreats, trainings, and the many supervisors that I had

during my time there. Through these experiences I learned that we all have different values that

motivate us, therefore I've used this knowledge to frame my supervision style. Personal values

only become evident when we take the time and energy to reflect on them, therefore knowing

this, I decided to engage my supervisees in activities that would help them develop a deeper

understanding of who they are and a help them become self-authors. Additionally, my

experience in the CSP 6010 further supported the development of my supervisory style. This is

because that class was my introduction to Baxter-Magolda's Self-Authorship Theory. Realizing

that this theory could be applicable to various types of students and situations, I decided to use it

to frame my supervision style.

Conduct Hearer

As a conduct hearer, I have also utilized both Baxter Magolda's Self-Authorship Theory

and the Social Change Model to frame how I conduct my hearings. Knowing that reflection

allows students during these meetings to realize that their actions are not consistent with their

values, I use these both this theory and model to ground the conversations I have with students. I

know that students who engaged in reflection will develop a sense of their personal values

(Baxter Magolda, 2008). I've found that most students that get documented and go through the

conduct process have never thought about the implications of their actions on their academics, careers, or the perception others hold of them. Therefore, when it comes to holding conduct hearings, I know that students take more away from those meetings when they realize there is a lack of congruence and consistency between their values and actions. As part of the Social Change Model, in order for students to become citizens of a community they must first develop consciousness of self, congruence, and commitment to their personal values in order to see how their actions impact their community (Astin & Astin, 1996).

Furthermore, my understanding of restorative justice plays a key role in how I conduct my meetings with students. I know that both the victim and the alleged violator are at different developmental stages, thus I know that each individual I meet with will have different needs and outcomes. I know that students in either role are still developing and that I as a professional have the opportunity to educate them.

Lastly, I also have a strong foundation of how due process looks like at BGSU. I know that in our process that students need to be provided with a conduct outline, their rights and responsibilities, provided the ability to read the reports, and be able to provide their viewpoints during those discussions. Furthermore, students need to be provided with information that pertains to how they can appeal sanctions, what policies they broke, and how they can keep themselves from being documented again. As a conduct officer I also know the legal restrictions I have regarding sharing information with parents because of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Finally, I also know that impact of using sanctions as reflective mediums to help students connect meaning to their actions.

I developed this knowledge through my experiences as a GHD. I have served as a conduct hearer for residential level cases at BGSU. Prior to holding conduct meetings, I took part of two extensive training sessions outlining the purpose of the conduct process and

educational sanctioning at the institution. Additionally, my past supervisor required me to shadow various conduct hearers in order to help me develop my personal conduct hearing style. Using the information I gathered and the little experience I had beforehand, I created an outline that would help frame my conversations with students. Knowing the benefits of valued-based discussions from my undergraduate experience, I incorporated reflection within my discussions. As explained earlier, I knew that valued-based discussions would be most effective for students because it would challenge them to think about lack of consistency between their values and actions.

The knowledge I gained as a conduct hearer is crucial for my success as a Residence Life professional because it's a major component of Residence Life positions (Cawthon, Schreiber & Associates, 2012).   I know that as a HD that I will be the primary hearer of student cases in my building; thus I need to be a competent conduct hearer. By using this knowledge, I hope to help my new community in addressing student concerns, addressing negative behavior, and supporting students in their development. Additionally, I hope to utilize this knowledge to prevent student crises from occurring.

Incorporating Reflection

From my personal experience, I know that reflection leads to a transformative experience (Frieden & Pawelsi, 2003). Students experience transformation only when they are able to reflect on their experiences therefore, I know that in order to create meaningful experiences that I need to incorporate reflection into my work. Transformation occurs a result of meaning making and developing purpose (McNair, 2011). I know that reflection plays a crucial role in the develop morality and ethical based decision making, but that it also contributes to a student's self-awareness (Baxter-Magolda, 2008). Trust and rapport must first be developed before engaging students in reflection (Baxter-Magolda & King, 2008). Building trust and rapport are

critical in establish reflective mediums during one-on-ones, conduct hearings, and staff development activities. Furthermore, I know that in order to create a reflective culture that I need to provide a safe space, utilize various approaches, model the way, and set appropriate time to do so (Seifert &Holman-Harman, 2009).

I know that when someone has internalized who they are that it becomes easier to explore the values and beliefs of others (King et al., 2009). People who have a good sense of what they value have a greater understanding of how they interpret the world. Having this understanding allows them to pursue activities that align with their values, while also providing the opportunity to explore the perspectives of others. Additionally, I believe that all students are continuously learning and reflecting through the interactions we have with other people (Hart, 1990). Thus, a value-based approach has been very successful in motivating and energizing my current staff. This is because they feel listened to and appreciated. My understanding of the learning that results from reflections makes it easier for me to implement them within my work. I know that each student that I work with has strengths and weakness, therefore my ability to incorporate reflective conversations will be critical in providing them with a transformative experience.

I obtain this knowledge through my Jesuit education at LMU. My spirituality is an example of a tool that I obtained there. I believe that discovering my spirituality has been the most critical thing that I learned about myself. Through the various retreats and group reflections that I took part in, I felt that I was able to develop a deeper understanding of how I interpret the world and make meaning of it. I also realized spirituality goes hand in hand with reflection. People who can engage in these philosophical questions will be able to make meaning of their experiences and find responses to the intellectual, intrapersonal, and interpersonal self (Parks, 2000; Davidson, 2011). Additionally, my involvement in the service organization Sursum Corda (Latin for "lift up the heart") helped me develop my love for

reflection and educating others about the benefit of reflecting regularly. My experience in this

organization sparked my interest and curiosity to know about other people and how they

formulate purpose and meaning. Because of the transformative experience that I gained at LMU,

I now want to create the same opportunities for my students.

Using questions similarly to Park's (2000) *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, I am able to

create safe spaces were student can explore the art of reflection. These conversations will help

me help my students learn more about their own values and provide a way for students to

verbally articulate them. This valued-based supervisory style, has contributed to my success as a

GHD. This is because I have been able to create an engaging experience that challenges and

supports my supervisees. Also, I will use this knowledge to incorporate reflection into my work

to create mediums for both my supervisees and colleagues to take part in. This can be in the

form of leading professional development presentations, presenting them as expectations, or by

leading retreats.

Staff Development

Staff development is an area that I claim expertise in because of my experiences working

for Harshman Anderson-Bromfield and Centennial Hall. My knowledge about Astin and Astin's

(1996) Social Change Model has also helped me develop an understanding on group dynamics. I

know that in order to obtain citizenship that students must first develop at the individual and

group level (Dugan & Komives, 2010). Individuals need to develop consciousness of self,

congruence, and commitment to their personal values before easing into the group stage.

Students who are able to develop these three C's will effectively collaborate and work in groups

due to increase of awareness and openness to different perspectives (Brown, 2009; King et al.,

2009; Dugan & Komives, 2010). Baxter-Magolda's Self Authorship Theory helps students

move past ideas of self and work towards being part of a staff. Utilizing the Social Change

Model proves effective in creating a strong staff, increasing morale and pride, developing student empowerment, building community, and finally creating a sustainable system where staff members hold each other accountable (Dugan & Komives, 2010). Students who are able to develop a strong sense of self and be able to work in groups will ultimately become active and empowered leaders in the hall.

The major contributors to my expertise knowledge in this area would primarily be my current role as a GHD. As a GHD I determined that my staffs needed to develop self-awareness of their values, beliefs, strengths and weaknesses, and group dynamics in order to be successful. Because of this, I took the responsibility develop this area among both of the staffs I have worked for. Last year in HAB, I created a staff development chair. I directly worked with this individual in creating various development opportunities depending on the staff needs. Currently as in Centennial Hall, I have been responsible for facilitating personality assessments, activities, and discussions centered on developing the bonds among staff members. Aside from my experience as a GHD, I also feel that I gained this knowledge from my prior experience as an RA and as an Orientation Leader. Both these positions required me to learn about different types of individuals that made up a group which proved helpful in learning how to supervise different individuals.

Learning about *True Colors*, *StrengthsQuest*, *Myers-Briggs*, leadership, followership, and the Social Change Model gave me an appreciation for the various types of individuals that contribute to the dynamics can exist among a group. This is why I have been able to successfully create two very strong staffs. Additionally, for the past two years, my supervisees have indicated that they enjoy working and interacting with both me and the rest of staff. My expertise in this area has allows me to prove to my RAs that I genuinely care for them and their development. Doing so has contributed to the morale and satisfaction of my staff.

Ultimately, having an appreciation for these experiences and assessments will allow me to be tuned to how various group members interact with one as a group. I as a practitioner will continue to utilize team builders, ice breakers, and personality assessments to educate my supervisees about each other in order to learn about how it applies to our group. Additionally, I hope to continue my education in these areas by taking part of training sessions in order to facilitate formal presentations. This will allow me to become a campus facilitator and resource for my future institution.

What I Wish I Knew?

When holistically looking at my experiences, I have not yet explored the areas that I feel I know very little about. Although I believe I have gained some level of knowledge in these areas, I feel like I can do a much better job of expanding and learning more about them. In this section I will briefly explain the areas that I believe I need more knowledge about. In addition, I also included four competency areas that I have very limited knowledge about in order to provide a framework for my professional development plan.

Students with Emotional Disorders

With an increasing number of students with emotional disorders coming into higher education institutions, it is important that I am able to learn how to support this population. With the advancement of medical and technology, I know that I will interact with students that have emotional disorders within my Residence Life positions. I am aware that students with emotional disorders have special needs, thus I have specifically sought out courses, trainings, and on-campus resources to develop competency in how to support these students. At this point in time, I have very little knowledge about the varying types of disabilities and disorders that exists and how they differ from one another. Another limitation is that I do not have the strongest relationship with the counseling center, which I need to have in order to support these students.

Personally, I have not had the opportunity to be trained or have ever worked as a counselor, so my expertise in this area is very limited.

I have identified these areas as areas of improvement because I know that I will be working with this population very closely as a HD. Secondly, as students with emotional disorders continue to enter higher education, it will be expected that I know how to work with and support students in my hall. Furthermore, as a new underrepresented group on campus, I will have to learn how to listen and advocate for their needs on campus.

To further expand my knowledge in this area, I will seek out opportunities by attending sessions that focus on this population at NASPA or ACPA, take additional counseling courses if permitted, and continue to develop a relationship with the counseling center at my institution. It is vital that I obtain more knowledge in this area in order to be supportive and inclusive of this population (Cawthon, Schreiber & Associates, 2012). Additionally, if I want to be a successful practitioner, I need to understand how to work with students with emotional disorders.

Multicultural Competency

In order to be a successful student affairs practitioner I need to continue to develop my multicultural competency. I know that multicultural competency includes developing among three areas: self-awareness, knowledge, and skills (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004). I also know that in order to serve the underrepresented student populations that I need to continue to develop expertise among these three areas, because developing multicultural competency is a continuous process (Pope et al. 2004). Because of my experience in CSP 6035 Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs, I have become aware of some of my personal triggers as well as learned how to be more confident in facilitating presentations as a professional of color. Thus, I feel that I have gained a strong foundation of multicultural competency through CSP.

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With that said, I believe that I have limited knowledge about how to support international students, students with disabilities, students that are undocumented, Asian, and African American students. Although, I have an understanding of multicultural competency, I do not know what it's like to be part of these groups, thus making my knowledge about these groups very limited. Additionally, a second area of improvement would be my lack of experience presenting on diversity related material. My lack of experience thus contributes to my lack of confidence. Aside from my work in CSP 6035, I do not have much experience presenting on these topics. The only experience I have had to develop my multicultural competency has been through my CSP 6035 and the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) training I had last fall.

The reason I mentioned limitations is because I would love to learn more different groups and develop more confidence in presenting on topics related to diversity. The student demographics of today demand that practitioners able to support all of students, thus a successful student affairs practitioner must know how to do so (Cawthon, Schreiber & Associates, 2012). Due to this change in demographics, I will be working with various underrepresented groups, thus I need to be able to connect to all students and not only students who share my identities. Secondly, as a professional of color I need to be comfortable in advocating and educating others about diversity related material. The confidence gained my experience presenting will allow me to be a better ally and advocate for unrepresented groups. As a profession, there is an expectation we continue to develop our multicultural skills in order to be better equipped to address them (Pope et al., 2004). Thus, I need to continue to develop my self-awareness, knowledge, and skills sets in order to better support underrepresented groups.

Service-Learning(S-L) as a Functional Area

My prior involvement in community service has contributed to my interest in learning more about obtaining a job for a Service-Learning office. Unfortunately, I lack the knowledge and experience to work for one. I am interested in pursuing a S-L position because I know that students that take part of S-L experiences report higher civic involvement, awareness of social issues, and global understanding (Lee & Espino, 2010). Even though most of my experience has been within Residence Life, I am highly interested in potentially working for an S-L office in the future. What keeps me from applying to entry level positions is my lack of knowledge of working with non-profits, creating and implementing large scale programming, developing immersion trips, and experience working for a S-L office.

In order to work for this area, it essential that I seek opportunities to collaborate or gain experience from working in a S-L office. I believe that in order to be marketable and feel competent working in S-L, I need to make sure to create opportunities that will provide me with the experience I need to transition into this functional area. Finally, I need to attend professional S-L conferences in order to learn more about this area.

Competency Limitations

In this section I will briefly highlight a few deficiencies that I personally have pertaining to the NASPA/ ACPA competencies. Using my Personal Competency Portfolio I have identified the following areas of improvement:

Assessment, Evaluation, and Research (AER)

AER plays a critical role in decision making and determining whether services and programs are successful (Schuh et al., 2011). I know that AER is primarily utilized to hold institutions or functional areas accountable for the services that they provide for students (Schuh et al., 2011). Additionally, I am aware that I do not have much knowledge or competency within this area due to lack of exposure.

My experience in developing assessment, evaluations, and doing research is very limited. In my graduate work, I have only taken a basic statistics course and one online research course. Which for the most part were not effective in teaching me how to do research that was applicable to our profession. Prior to this, I was exposed to research through my biology background but the topics I researched then were very different from the material that I am studying now. Aside from understanding the basic understanding of statistics, the different types of research, and the benefits of AER, I do not know do utilize the information I obtain to support the profession. In other words, I do not know how to use or apply the information gather using these methods.

I mentioned these limitations because I know AER is important for our work because it allows us to see patterns that can guide that work that we do. Additionally, grounding our work in statistical data will provide evidence of the work we do, thus not being able to AER will prove detrimental when accessing outcomes. Unfortunately, I have not been given nor had much exposure to this area.

By educating myself, I hope to be able to one day develop assessments and potentially have enough interest to pursue a doctorate degree. Additionally, if I learn how to use AER I would be able to access the effectiveness of my own work and that of the professions in order to implement better practices. Lastly, being able to use AER would allow me to become a contributor to our profession by providing statistical data to support our efforts.

Law, Governance, and Policy (LGP)

For this competency area, I do not have much desire to further pursue knowledge in this area. I believe that I hold a basic understanding of the implications of LGP that is applicable to my position now. I know about the implications of due process, the student code of conduct, FERPA, and Clergy Act to name a few, but I feel I do not have much need or want to elaborate in this area. In my role, it is only important to know the implications of LGP and making sure

our halls abided by these regulations. I do not have the authority to develop policy. Although, I

say this, I know it is important to understand that I play a role in holding others accountable for

these regulations. Additionally, in the future, there might a great need for me to have more

competency in this area, but currently I do not have to be an expert in developing or changing

policy.

History, Philosophy, and Values

I have developed a basic understanding of this competency through the CSP 6010 course.

In that class I was able to learn about the field's history, values, and professional standards that

guide our profession. Aside from that class, I have gained an appreciation of these topics

through my professional involvement in NASPA and GLACUHO. Although I received a

semesters worth of knowledge about these areas, I feel that I gained a better understanding of

HPV through my experience at conferences, within my internship, and readings from various

course materials. Even though I have had some education about these topics, I cannot recite

them or fully articulate the history, philosophy, and values of the profession. This might be

because I am still a new professional and have not attached much meaning to the material I

gained in the CSP 6010 course.

As a new professional I recognize this deficiency and understand that I need to develop

competency in what these are and mean to myself and the rest of the profession. Especially

when it comes to articulating the purpose of our field to other on campus constitutes. I have an

interest in further developing this competency, but I am also aware that it will develop more as I

gain experience in the field.

Ethical Professional Practice (EPP)

Although, I follow the Ethical Principles and Standards (EPS) of the profession, I do not

have much experience in developing or creating artifacts that related to these topics. I know that

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EPS includes upholding professional responsibility and competence, student learning and development, responsibility to the institution, and responsibility to society (ACPA, 2006). Outside of making sure that I abide by them, I also know that legal action might result if they are not followed. The standards were developed as a way to bring awareness to the professional responsibilities of student affair practitioners in effort to guide them in their everyday practice (ACPA, 2006). In other words, these standards are to be used by all student affairs practitioners as guidelines for decision-making.

By making sure that I follow them, I will stay out ethical dilemmas and make sure that my experience in the field is positive. When conducting myself, representing the community I work for, and role modeling, I must be conscious about the perception I create of the field. In addition, as a new professional I need to have more experience in the field in order to develop more competency in this area. This is because I have not had much experience ingrain these values into my work

Professional Development Plan

In my last two years going through the CSP program has taught me a lot about the Student Affairs. Through my discernment, I have developed expertise in various areas but have also become aware of the areas that I lack knowledge in. As states earlier in my paper, I need to continue to learn about working with students with emotional disabilities, expanding my multicultural competency, continuing to learn about Service-Learning as a functional and utilizing research in order to achieve personal goals. Aside from my areas that I have limited knowledge about, I also identified a few areas deficiencies in the NASPA/ ACPA competency areas that I need to work on. With that said, I wanted to create a professional development plan that will help me hold myself accountable in accomplishing these tasks. Thus, I have framed

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how I would continue to gain experience in the next three years using my deficiencies. My

professional development plan is as follows:

Areas of Growth	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Student with Emotional Disorders	Establish relationship with Counseling Center Inform myself about Emotional Disorders by Reviewing Emotional Health information on nimh.gov.	Take Counseling course relating to Emotional Disorders	Develop staff development or presentation for Hall Director Training
Multicultural Competency	Read *Colorblind* (Wise, 2010) Develop relationship with Multicultural Affairs Office Become Safe Zone Trained at new institution	Attend the People's Institute Present during RA training Develop relationship with International Student Services	Attend Social Justice Training Institute Create a diversity retreat
Service-Learning as a Functional Area	Join Higher Education Service-Learning Listserv Meet with Service-Learning Office professionals for informational interview Attend an Alternative Break Trip	Read *Looking in Reaching Out (2010)* Seek and establish practicum experience in a S-L Office Attend Without Limits Conference Lead an Alternative Break Trip	Establish a second practicum experience with S-L Office Create an Alternative Break Trip
Assessment, Evaluation, and Research	Develop relationship with Higher Education Faculty Attend a local assessment conference	Reach out and join a research committee Attend dissertation presentations at NASPA/ ACPA	Take a research course Research possible PhD interests
Law, Governance, and Policy	Subscribe to *Chronicle of Higher Education Magazine* Educate myself about the Dream Act and its effects on the student	Take a Higher Education Law course Listen to ASCA monthly webinars Join Committee to work	Potentially attend an ASCA Drive-in Conference

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	population Subscribe to ASCA listserv	on establishing Dream Act support for undocumented students	
History, Philosophy, and Values	Review *ACUHO-I Core Competencies* Review Foundation Course Materials Attend NASPA/ACPA regional and annual conferences	Attend NASPA Region VI Conference Join NASPA Region VI Committee	Continue to attend NASPA Region VI Conferences Continue committee work
Ethical Professional Practice	Review ACPA Ethical Standards Attend NASPA/ACPA sessions relating to ethical practice/ development	Seek opportunities to interview higher education administrators regarding ethical practice	Develop staff development opportunities for Hall Directors

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