

## **Student Affairs Philosophy Statement**

Alyssa Westberry

Student Affairs in Higher Education, Miami University

EDL 676: Foundations of Student Affairs

Dr. Jayne Brownell

November 16, 2020

(revised March 2022)

I consider life to be all about your reasons why. Your intention behind the things you do influences quite a bit in your life. Since I chose to pursue Higher Education, I have found myself questioning my reason why. With the assistance of the course and all of the knowledge that I have gained and that I am currently gaining, I believe that my reason why has been solidified. Throughout this assignment, I will discuss my philosophy behind the student affairs profession and what drives me to want to do the work of a student affairs professional.

According to Campus Compact (2015), the primary educational mission of higher education is teaching, research, and service. My interpretation of this mission is that student affairs professionals must be willing to teach and be taught. The things you can learn from students are limitless. In addition to being taught, I believe that the research aspect of this mission fits in perfectly here. If there is a community of students that I do not directly relate to or want to know more about, the tool of research becomes useful. Lastly, being a service to someone and taking part in service is crucial. I do not think that the service portion of the mission is directly related to community service or anything like that but more so to the service that you are providing to the students you are serving. I believe that the role of student affairs to act on this mission is to do just that; act. Practitioners must be intentional in everything they do to support and live out this mission.

I consider my contribution to the profession to be very extensive. The ways that I plan and hope to contribute to the profession are: motivating, influencing, and supporting students, promoting new opportunities for them, encouraging them, putting the students first, actively listening to them, mentoring them, and engaging with them. Although I believe that each role I listed is very important, the three that stick out the most to me are, supporting the students,

putting them first, and engaging with them. I remind myself every day that my job regardless of the actual job description is to be there for the students. I reflect on my undergraduate experience and my current graduate experience and I am reminded of how much support from practitioners helped me during my time as an undergraduate student and how it is helping me now. When it comes to putting the student first, I am mindful that I would not even be in this field if it was not for the students. Ultimately, we are all here to serve the student. Putting students first is the bare minimum that this profession asks for. Lastly, engaging with students is the action that is needed to let them know that you are truly there for them. A practitioner who sits in their office all day with the door closed is not one who the students benefit and learn from. With these roles, I believe that the profession will grow stronger with me in it because it will be gaining someone genuinely in not only my words, but through my actions as well. I truly just want to help and be there for the students. The students will benefit from this greatly. Knowing that someone somewhere is cheering them on in everything they do, wants to see them succeed, and openly cares for them is what is needed the most. Truthfully, that is what got me through undergrad and kept me at my institution. Practitioners who live by the roles that I listed above are what students need.

There is a list of guiding principles that ensure good practice within the profession. Although I plan on practicing each one of them, the principles that will guide my practice are: helping students develop coherent values and ethical standards and building supportive and inclusive communities (ACPA, 1997). These principles stood out to me the most because they allow you to be very direct in what you intend to do. These principles will allow me to understand the student and help them develop in manners that will last them a lifetime. College is so much more than just attending class. Most of the lessons you learn are outside of the

classroom by connecting with the campus community. I am hopeful that these two principles will help me when it comes to helping students get there.

I believe that my values align with the principles that will guide me in the profession. With the principles in mind, to shape my career in student affairs, I plan on being dependable, unprejudiced, accountable, communicating effectively, and being intentional. These values are very personal to me. Not only are these values what I am going to use when I become a practitioner, but, they are things that I already do in my everyday life. These values have molded me into the woman that I am today and I believe they will allow me to be the best practitioner that I can be.

When it comes to being dependable, I want students to know that they can come to me for any and everything that they want to. Of course, boundaries will be enforced and they will be informed that I am a practitioner first, but, I want students to know that they can count on me. I will be unprejudiced in everything that I do. No student is better than the next and with this mindset I truly see myself going far in the profession. I will hold myself, my coworkers, and students accountable. I am a firm believer in practicing what you preach and I also believe that this allows me to be a responsible practitioner. I will communicate effectively and as thoroughly as possible. Words mean so much. If I am not clear in what I am saying, things could go left pretty quickly. Finally, I will be intentional in everything that I do. Intentions are everything when it comes to students. I am hopeful that these values will wonderfully shape my career and future.

Throughout my first semester as a graduate student, I have constantly questioned my reason why. Each assignment that I have done thus far has validated my main reason more and more each day. I just want to help students be the best students and humans that they can be. My

greatest wish is to change just one life. Of course, I will not stop at one, but, as long as I get one under my belt, I will know that I chose this profession for the right reasons.

## References

American College Personnel Association. (1997). *Principles of good practice for student affairs*.

<https://www.myacpa.org/sites/default/files/Principles%20of%20Good%20Practice%20for%20Student%20Affairs.pdf>

Seligsohn, A. (2015, April 29). *An observation about the mission of higher education*. Campus

Compact. <https://compact.org/an-observation-about-the-mission-of-higher-education/>