

Personal Philosophy Statement

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## PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

Developing a personal philosophy statement is a healthy exercise for any professional wishing to find fulfillment in their day to day work. While highly personal, these statements are also very temporally-bound. A guiding philosophy today, may not hold true in the context of tomorrow. Every day our values are challenged and our understanding of them grows and develops. Today, I use this exercise to connect my current values, morals, and identity to higher education and student affairs. I will accomplish this by addressing four questions: What is the purpose of higher education? What is the purpose of student affairs? What is my role as a student affairs administrator? And, how do I connect to my role as a student affairs administrator?

What is the purpose of higher education? To me, the purpose of higher education is two-fold. First, to move generally up Bloom's taxonomy of learning; Second, to do so while becoming increasingly independent in the learning process. I once heard the analogy that higher education has the ability to "rearrange the furniture in your mind." I'd take that a couple steps further, and say higher education has the responsibility to enable you to build your own new furniture. After reflecting on it, I like this purpose of higher education since it is flexible enough to work with applied and liberal education. Certainly, independent higher-order thought would serve you both in and out of vocational settings, and as an individual and a member of society as a whole.

The purpose of student affairs, in my mind, is to partner with academic affairs in meeting the purpose of higher education. Where academic affairs may meet the first part of the purpose, as described above, I believe student affairs is intended to assist students with the second part, developing their independence. To continue the furniture analogy, academic

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affairs teaches students how to create new furniture, student affairs enables students to place it in their own minds. I believe student affairs accomplishes its goal by creating and maintaining environments where students may engage in new and novel experiences which enable the formation of independent thought.

It is my role as a student affairs administrator to help ensure student affairs professionals create this space for student development. To this end, I acknowledge that I must have a sufficient understanding of a student's mind and its development as well as an understanding of the dispositions and biases of my student affairs colleagues. I challenge student affairs professionals who maintain dominant and normative narratives in their work, limiting students' exposure to diverse thought processes.

I connect with my role as a student affairs administrator as someone who was invited to test pre-existing thoughts by student affairs practitioners before me. My student affairs involvement as an undergraduate allowed me to more fully integrate my academic learning into my daily life. I was able to make-meaning of my experiences. While I was unable to confront some aspects of my identity as an undergraduate, my mind was prepared for the day that I would. Student affairs practitioners had fulfilled their purpose in enabling me to independently tackle conflict later in life.

Ultimately, I view higher education as one route to adulthood, where students are assisted in the development of their independence by student affairs professionals and guided in their intellectual development by academic affairs professionals. These are my thoughts today, but they almost certainly will not be my thoughts tomorrow. That temporality however makes them no less useful as a place to begin tomorrow's thoughts.