

Reflecting on Year One  
Summary of Learning  
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Author Note

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## Reflecting on Year One

### **Introduction**

Throughout the past year, my graduate program has taught me more than I ever expected to learn, in ways that I did not originally anticipate. While I had the understanding that the coursework would be more rigorous than in comparison to my undergraduate education, I did not realize the amount of learning that would take place. Further, the immersive education in a cohort program has allowed me to have conversations about the theory I learned in class and the practice in my assistantships with my peers, which in turn has allowed me to critically evaluate and reflect on my own learning, strengths, and weaknesses. This process has helped me better understand myself and reshape my vision of who I want to become as a person and as a professional.

### **Achievement of Program Learning Outcomes**

Through the courses on leadership, student development theory, and diversity, I've had the opportunity to explore program learning outcomes that relate to practice, leadership styles, and social justice issues, as well as begin to navigate strategies relating to a variety of issues regarding the workplace, my practice, and myself (PLO 1, 2, 3, 4). Further, in each course, my professors have encouraged me to think as a scholarly practitioner who utilizes research to make informed decisions, and in this process work in a collaborative and effective manner (PLO 6, 7, 8). That said, I look forward to continuing to develop each of these outcomes throughout the following year as I finish the second half of my graduate education and continue to learn about the theory behind the practice in my everyday work. I am excited to continue practicing how I might bridge the theory with the practice and learn more about how my views and background interact with what we are taught in class.

In reviewing these program learning outcomes, I've come to the realization that I've had

the opportunity to at least touch on all but one of the outcomes —engaging in meaningful outcomes-based assessment of collaboratively designed student learning and development programs and initiative (PLO 5). I realize, however, that this is primarily because half of my course load this coming year will be dedicated to this program learning outcome. I look forward to developing a stronger theoretical understanding and practice experience of outcomes-based assessment through the Research Seminar course throughout this coming year. Further, while I've had the help of integrative inquiry to learn about the importance of emotional intelligence and a stronger understanding of self, I look forward to continuing to understand how I can apply self-regulation practices in my advising of students through the counseling course (PLO 2).

### **Achievement of Personal and Professional Goals**

In reviewing my personal goals, I've realized that my views on who I want to become and the career that I want to have has shifted slightly since the program started. Through understanding the specific work-environments that I value, I've come to learn that work-life balance is frequently espoused but not often practiced in our profession. That being said, I hope to identify strategies to successfully integrate my work with my life. I am fortunate to have had supervisors that were supportive in both this endeavor and my personal development. I've come to find that it is more than likely that there will be periods in the year where work will feel like its taking over, but I also know that there will be times where my personal life will need to become a priority and, therefore, that the key is integration, rather than attempting to juggle the two at all times.

My professional goals, while largely remaining the same in the broader concepts, have shifted focus in their execution. Originally, I hoped to develop a strong network with my colleagues and mentors. Throughout the past year, I've noticed that the difficult portion isn't necessarily growing this network, but sustaining it and staying connected with those with whom

I've networked. In a similar light, while I originally wanted to understand the politics at play within a Student Affairs office, I now want to understand how I might navigate these politics; as no two Student Affairs offices are alike. Finally, while I originally wanted to develop an understanding of what it means to be a good professional, I now hope to identify areas of growth and continue my development so that I can strengthen myself as a professional. As a theme, I've come to realize that I originally had hoped to gain a definition of who I wanted to become. Now, I look forward to taking action on these learnings and mastering how to use what I've learned. In many ways, I view this as an area of personal growth, as I've become more comfortable with ambiguity (personal goal 4) and now aim to develop tools that will help me succeed, instead of obsessing over finding a vision of what my perfect self should be.

Throughout the next year, I plan on staying connected and following up with the contacts that I develop at conferences. Through my graduate assistantships, I hope to continue practicing my personal goals as well as my professional goals of learning my personality as a professional. I've come to realize that my goals are likely not going to be achieved at the end of graduate school, and that they will instead evolve as I enter the field as a professional.

### **Conclusion**

The past year has allowed me to develop a strong understanding of the theoretical and historical foundations of the profession. In this process, I have reaffirmed my passion for developing student leaders and fostering student success. This past year has also helped me discover a new found comfort with ambiguity. I look forward to continuing to grow in the coming year as I start navigating the profession and my career in higher education and student affairs takes off.