



SAN DIEGO STATE  
UNIVERSITY

M.A. in Postsecondary Educational Leadership (PSE)  
M.A. in Postsecondary Educational Leadership and Student Affairs (SA)

Pre-Assessment Evaluation

Your Name: John Weng

1. What does it mean to you to be a postsecondary educator or student affairs professional?

To me, a postsecondary educator and student affairs professionals take on similar roles through different manners. A student affairs professional educates in ways that are usually less concrete than understanding the semantics of another language or the structure of a molecule. A student affairs professional engages with students in a very symbiotic manner to the academic professor. A student affairs professional augments a student's area of study such that the collegiate experience is enriched through the development of a student's soft skills and personal growth. This may require a one-on-one connection with the student in certain advising capacities or could be a larger policy from senior level administration. Regardless, the student affairs professional aims to enrich the development of a student.

2. What do you expect postsecondary educators or student affairs professionals to know and be able to do?

From my experiences as an undergraduate, student affairs professionals need to be able to connect with their students on some level—sometimes personally, and other times theoretically. In advisor capacities, student affairs professionals should be able to connect in a way such that they establish a certain level of rapport for effective counseling and advising. In doing so, they gain an increase in effectiveness in their roles of working with their students. Many student affairs professionals, however, have roles that impact students' day-to-day lives yet do not interact with students on a consistent basis. In these scenarios, it is prudent for a professional to be able to accurately connect with the students in a more theoretical sense. This theoretical connection occurs through assessing their needs to best serve them.

3. What do you hope to learn from engaging in the PSE or SA program?

I confidently attribute my success as a student leader to the help and support of my advisor and mentor in student government. She challenged me when I was going through low points and supported me when I needed it. When it came time to decide between SDSU and NYU, the biggest drawing point that ultimately helped me decide to attend San Diego State was the opportunity to grow in a hands-on fashion with



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assistantships that professionally interested me. I wanted an opportunity that would help me gain skills that would allow me to make the same impact that my advisor had made on me. Something that I've experienced in the time since I've started my assistantships is the conversation on the inconsistencies between the theories we will learn in class and practice. Through my assistantships, I hope to learn how I can put these theories to practice, even when they may be inconsistent in real life.

4. What are four personal goals you have for yourself while in the PSE or SA program?

First, I'd like to become better at managing work-life balance. I've been told how easy it is to become overwhelmed with work in the field of student affairs as well as in graduate school. As someone who is prone to let work take over his life, I really want to take this as an opportunity to prepare myself for the future. Secondly, I'd like to advance in my ability to identify and address any triggers I may have. Randy Timm, has told us that part of being able to deal with a trigger is first identifying that one is being triggered. As someone who is very passionate and very type-A, I want to be able to objectively address a situation, without interjecting. Third, I'd like to become better at handling my stress. Too frequently I find myself burned out after the end of a task because of the stress I pile upon myself, only to realize that after the fact. Similarly to my triggers, I want to be able to identify the stressors and address them in more effective manner. Last but not least, I want to become more patient with ambiguity. I am detail driven, and often not goal oriented enough. During values exercises, I find myself struggling to understand my values because I am often too caught up with the minor details involved. I want to become more comfortable with ambiguity that arises in my life.

5. What are four professional goals you hope to achieve upon your completion of the PSE or SA program?

Professionally, I'd like to develop a strong network with my colleagues, mentors and people that I have an opportunity to interact with. I think that my peers are what have helped shape me into the person that I am today and I look to strengthen the network that I have already created from my undergraduate career. In addition, I'd like to learn my personality as a student affairs professional. I'd like to learn where I "draw the line" in terms of my relationships with the students and how I interact with them in person or over social media. Thirdly, I want to better understand the politics within a student affairs office and the impact of the differences at different schools. My short time at SDSU has already been a massive culture shock and I'd like to understand how to navigate as a professional in different settings. Finally, I'd like to develop a better understanding of what it means for me to be a good student affairs professional so I can learn ways to improve myself continuously.



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6. What steps do you feel you need to take to accomplish both your personal and professional goals?

Throughout my short time at SDSU, I've come to learn the importance of reflecting and understanding myself before it is possible to improve upon myself. A lot of the goals that I've set for myself, both professionally and personal, involve understanding myself in a particular moment whether it be stress, or my relationship with other people. One step that I've already been taking is starting to write reflections a significant event, something that causes me to think or confuses me. I really look forward to having a faculty advisor and developing mentoring relationships with my supervisors. Through my advisors and mentors, I'm hoping to gather feedback so I can continue to grow as a professional.

7. How can you best facilitate in your learning in the PSE or SA program?

I've come to realize that a lot of my realizations and learning occurs when I process thoughts. Earlier today, when presenting to a group, I caught myself thinking about the importance of a values based education and realizing that SDSU emphasizes values based education. This train of thought occurred in a short 5 seconds before I had to start speaking again. That being said, institutionalizing certain theories and embodying certain practices can start the same way. I think that in addition to the reflecting that I've mentioned above, it will also be important for me to practice processing, either with others or myself. In addition to that, I look forward to learning more through opportunities like the integrative inquiry classes where I can learn more about processing and information consolidation.

8. How can the faculty help facilitate your learning in the PSE or SA program?

One thing that I think that the faculty has already done is providing clear student learning outcomes; a concept that I was not aware of at all until recently. While I understood that we had certain general education requirements in the past, it wasn't until speaking with my supervisor at UCSD, Marlene, that I realized student learning outcomes are similar to program learning outcomes in student affairs. It reframed education for me in a very different lens. It made me very excited for my readings on education and the practice of outcomes based education for transformational learning, something I am attempting to understand at my assistantship. This example provided a powerful realization for me that having these guided open-ended conversations really helped impact my learning. That being said, I think having discussions about the readings and facilitating conversations and thoughts would be something that would be extremely beneficial and helpful for the learning process.