

Reflecting on NASPA 2015  
Course Learning Spring 2015  
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Author Note

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## Reflecting on NASPA 2015

### **Introduction**

My introduction to student affairs was through the NASPA Undergraduate Fellows Program, or NUFP, at my undergraduate institution. At a predominantly research and science oriented institution, there wasn't a lot of funding for auxiliary programs, and thus the majority of my NUFP experience revolved around my interactions with my mentor. That being said, when I finally received an opportunity to attend my first annual conference at NASPA as a fully funded summer graduate intern, I was beyond excited. As a part of my summer internship, I would receive full funding to attend the conference and the opportunity to work on it and experience the behind-the-scene moments involved with planning a large scale conference. Throughout this time, I've had the opportunity to reflect on my leadership skills as a member on the team, and work collaboratively with a diverse team that I did not have previous exposure to (PLO 2, 8). I've also had the opportunity to work on my work-life balance and handling stress, two of my personal goals, while also developing a stronger network and an understanding of what it means to be a good professional in the field.

### **Links to Program Learning Outcomes**

My role during NASPA 15 was one that was atypical for regular conference attendees. Instead of attending a slew of concurrent sessions, I also attended a variety of meetings that involved leaders from across the country to discuss issues that affect the field and the organization. This not only deepened my understanding of what NASPA is as an organization, but also provided perspective to my involvement thus far at the regional level. While I typically served as a graduate assistant at work, it was refreshing to be starting anew as an intern. It was important for me to remember that, since I was new to the organization, at many times it was better for me to withhold my opinion and attempts to lead the group to instead observe and learn

the multiple perspectives that I previously didn't know existed (PLO 2). Further, in this process, I was able to meet and work with a brand new staff of thirty people. While I was expecting the need to network and meet new people throughout the conference, I realized that it was equally important to establish relationships with the people that I would later be working with. Fortunately, the staff at the organization has been accepting, something that helps me to look forward to working with the team throughout the summer.

### **Links to Personal and Professional Goals**

Given that this was my first national conference, I was surprised when I learned that I would know enough people at the conference for my graduate institution to hold its own reception. That being said, this conference really challenged my need to balance my professional life and my personal life. Given that I would be working long hours in meetings and logistical planning, it became important for me to also plan time to see the colleagues that would also be in attendance and friends that I would not usually have the opportunity to network with. I found that, in being a new intern, it became even more important for me to critically evaluate each of my opportunities and reflect on my growing workload and ability to take it on. In doing so, I was able to find time to continue developing my network at the conference. A particularly impactful moment was attending the Faculty Summit, where I met numerous involved faculty members in NASPA. Through it, I was able to identify a key characteristic of being a strong professional: continuously contributing to the field and ensuring that future generations of professionals have the tools they need to succeed. I look forward to the opportunity of continuing to develop as a professional so that I may be able to contribute my knowledge to new professionals one day as well.

### **Conclusion**

My first NASPA annual conference definitely lived up to the hype that many peers had

told me about. I enjoyed the opportunity to reconnect with members who had departed from the area and reestablishing my connection with people. I also thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to navigate the topics of work-life balance, stress management, and developing a stronger understanding for the field through my time at the annual conference. I look forward to continuing my involvement as a member of the organization through the summer internship and in the future as a fulltime professional as well.