

Summary of Learning

Post-Assessment

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Author Note

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Summary of Learning

Introduction

Throughout the past two years, 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 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.

Post-Graduation Plans

I have recently been offered a full-time position at John Muir College of UC San Diego serving as the Coordinator of Student Activities. In this capacity, I work closely with the student leaders of John Muir College in advising their programming and initiatives. The Coordinator of Student Activities also coordinates and develops leadership development programs for the College and serves as a liaison between the students and campus-wide resources and services. This role serves as the lead staff member for assessment of College programs and represents the College to the rest of UC San Diego on campus-wide initiatives relating but not limited to College-specific Welcome Week and Triton Day activities. This role involves advising with a set of student leaders, something which will allow me to take a direct role in their learning and development as individuals. I know that I will be able to apply the theories I've acquired as a student to this position and use them to develop my students. I plan on working closely with the rest of my staff to understand how our programs are impacting students, if there are ways to

improve, and how to implement those changes in a manner that streamlines with the needs and expectations of the College. With that information, I look forward to a chance to share my challenge and success stories in my engagement with NASPA, my professional home. As the lead staff member for assessment in the College, I also hope to share the strategies I utilize to foster student learning and development with my peers at the rest of my institution.

Readiness to Pursue Post-Graduation Plans

My original intention for attending a graduate program was to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to impact students in a similar way that my undergraduate mentors and advisors were able to impact me; and while every single course had different ways of impacting my development and informing my education, my counseling course and student development theory course have been by far the most influential in preparing me for my new role. As I will be working closely with students and spending over 40% of my time interacting with them, a strong theoretical foundation in student development theory from ARP 621 provides me formalized theory behind each of my interactions with my students. The counseling background of ARP 622 has provided me with the skills that are necessary to work with students. The culture of John Muir College is heavily student-oriented, and counseling principles such as Person-Centered Therapy allows for me to engage with student leaders in a manner where the students' opinions and thoughts dictate the outcomes of their respective organizations and programs. The assessment skills gained in ED 795A and ED 795B have also informed my formal theoretical understanding of assessment while my assessment graduate assistantship was able to provide insights into its practical aspects. This will serve me well, as I now serve as the lead assessment staff member for the College. This role aligns closely with my personal and professional goals, as the flexible nature of this role will require me to closely manage my time and stress as well as continuously develop my personality as a professional and navigate a brand new environment

within the realm student affairs.

While the program has provided a strong foundation for me to succeed in my new professional role, there are also areas that the program itself didn't necessarily develop, including components on program development and coordination and financial management. In both of these cases, however, I have been afforded opportunities to gain some full-time experience while working in the Associated Students at UC San Diego. In my capacity as the Program Advisor, I managed a budget of over \$3,000,000 and coordinated large campus-wide programs. My previous experiences working in Greek Life at San Diego State University also helped provide additional program development experience. A way that the program could have further developed this could have been by creating intentional opportunities in graduate assistantships so that students can have a chance to gain these experiences. Alternatively, students could also develop an elementary understanding through integration of program development components in courses.

Mastery of Program Learning Outcomes and Goals

The following reflection of master of program learning outcomes were based off the outcomes in the Program Fact Sheet drafted in January of 2015 (SDSU 2015). For a visual representation of the following reflections, please see Appendix A. A review of my personal and professional goals have also been included to better reflect on and understand how the program was able to contribute to my personal and professional goals.

Program Learning Outcome 1

My understanding of the theoretical foundation of student success started in ARP 620, where we were subjected to a variety of opportunities to understand the historical foundations of the field. In particular, through the book review assignment, we were allowed an opportunity to dive into a particular topic within higher education. My thought process was challenged when

the authors framed current thought processes as a Newtonian approach instead of a phenomenological view (Love & Estanek, 2004). With a broad sense of the historical foundations of the profession put into place, I was afforded an opportunity to bridge the gaps between theory and practice in ARP 621 during the Theory Application paper. During this assignment, I was able to closely study a segment of a student's development and learning and apply the theories I was learning in the classroom to a specific student. I believe that the program adequately addressed this specific outcome, as I've gained a strong theoretical understanding of student development with a historical perspective of higher education as a whole.

Program Learning Outcome 2

When it comes to self-awareness and self-regulation, a variety of courses contributed to my understanding and ability to apply the concepts to my personal leadership. A particular example is ARP 760, where I lead a team of interns in the planning of Careers in Student Affairs Month for NASPA which allowed me to practice some of the skills I learned in my first year and utilize the theories I learned in ARP 621 and ARP 610 to better understand where my interns were coming from and how to best support their growth during their time at the association. I became cognizant and self-aware of how I might take up space and what role I might need to take on in order to foster growth in other individuals. That being said, the program could have better supported the self-awareness component through integration in our coursework. During the start of my program, Integrative Inquiry was provided as an optional online course, whereas the current first-years have the exposure integrated into ARP 610. I think that this type of integration would allow for better development in terms of self-awareness and self-regulation.

Program Learning Outcome 3

The theoretical concept of leadership and leadership styles were first considered in ARP

610, where we studied leadership from a theoretical and practical perspective. In the observing leadership assignment, I was able to directly observe an Associate Vice President at San Diego State University and understand her thought and decision making processes for a few days. From there, a variety of my other courses also helped me understand where I might have continued areas of development. An example can be seen in ARP 622, where we studied the different ways people communicate. I was able to better understand how I process information and how other people process and share information in order to better lead them. Strategies to work a variety communication styles were then explored and discussed in order to best support people from different communities. That being said, the actual class time in the leadership course could have provided more strategies and guidelines in working with people, rather than purely providing framework.

Program Learning Outcome 4

I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to directly identify ethical leadership and social justice issues and consider different perspective in ARP 747 through the Position Paper assignment. In this assignment, I analyzed an issue that might affect postsecondary educational leaders: the issue of access based on race and ethnicity in postsecondary education. Through other courses such as ARP 623, I was also able to study ethical issues facing college campuses across the nation. When thinking about the issues pertaining to ethical leadership, ARP 623 has challenged me to think critically about access and fairness in decision making as a practitioner. I believe that the program has done a good job in considering the issues faced by practitioners and leaders in higher education, but it could have better strengthened ties between ARP 610, where we studied leadership; and ARP 623, where we learned how these leadership theories play out in ethical leadership.

Program Learning Outcome 5

Outcomes-based assessment was thoroughly covered and discussed through the ED 795A and 795B course sequence, where I was able to directly engage in assessing the Master's Program's Graduate Assistantship Program. Through the guidance of the faculty members, I was able to develop a theoretical understanding of the assessment work I had already been doing while working for the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs at UC San Diego in assessment. Throughout this course, I worked with a team in developing outcomes, aligning outcomes, creating an assessing instrument, and collecting and analyzing data in order to gain meaningful insight into the impact graduate assistantships might have on current graduate students in the program. That being said, I think that the assessment course was treated as a very isolated element of the Master's program, and it could have improved on its integration with other elements of the program. Integration with other courses could facilitate an understanding of how we might assess student development that's informed by the student development or leadership theories.

Program Learning Outcome 6

Studying the application of research to practice was commonly discussed when I first started the program and was being oriented into my graduate assistantship at San Diego State University. This process, however, was informed by a variety of elements. One of the main areas where I was able to study research in higher education was in ED 690, where I started developing a better sense of research in higher education. Through the annotated bibliography assignment, I was able to bridge research in assessment to the assessment practice I was doing in my assistantship to develop a sense of purpose for the work we did in the office. Later on, in ARP 747, the Position Paper assignment asked us to utilize research to inform our decision making, but in a non-argumentative fashion. This allowed me to utilize the research skills I had developed and forced me to use research to understand instead of to argue. In ARP 623, a

variety of higher education issues are discussed each week and, in these discussions, literature is considered as a way for us to be informed on how issues emerge on college campuses today.

While I think that I have been intentional in creating venues for myself to apply research to practice through utilizing my assistantships as components of study in my course work, a more developmental space for people who work in the profession can be created, one where students can discuss how the learning being done in the classroom can be applied to their practice.

Program Learning Outcome 7

Communicating effectively occurs in a variety of modalities ranging from oral to written. That being said, the cohort-based model and cohort-centered learning that took place in the past two years have allowed me to continuously refine my communication even while grappling and deconstructing complex theories and concepts at a graduate level. This communication occurred through writing assignments in the classroom, but also orally during in-class discussions with my peers. In ARP 760, my communication skills were challenged, as I had to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences. While interning at NASPA, I needed to be able to lead interns in the DC office and one who worked remotely in Denver. The internship required me to tailor my communication to be effective with senior-level administrators as well as undergraduate students just learning about the profession. I needed to be able to quickly code-switch from speaking with higher education practitioners to association managers and marketing managers. This internship effectively prepared me to enter the workplace and continue refining my communication skills with my colleagues. I think that the program has provided an adequate amount of opportunities in this area and does not need further improvements.

Program Learning Outcome 8

Similar to Program Learning Outcomes 7, the program has provided me many opportunities to work collaboratively with a diverse set of group members. As a way to

challenge myself, I've continuously worked with different members of the cohort as a way to gain experience working with people who are different from myself. The opportunity that I found the most rewarding in this sense was the Outcomes-Based Assessment project for the ED 795A and ED 795B course sequence. During this course, I started working full-time and my groupmates all shared a full-time workload. Being people that I hadn't worked with in the past who all worked at different institutions including UC San Diego, San Diego State University, and Cuyamaca Community college, it was extremely challenging to identify strategies to work effectively with my peers on a project. Through the course assignments, we have identified strategies for working with each other; among them calendaring, communicating work preferences, and utilizing technology to help simplify the collaborative efforts. I think that the program has provided ample opportunities to work collaboratively with each other.

Personal Goals

Throughout the past two years, I've had a variety of opportunities to enhance my personal goals. Through my coursework and assistantships, I have had to reconcile how I'd like to handle my work-life integration and handling stress through managing my calendar and constant communication with my team and supervisors. I have had the chance to navigate issues that might trigger me as an individual and utilize concepts such as those in Person-Centered Therapy to focus on my students. In this entire process of learning how to accomplish the goals I set for myself, I have also learned to become comfortable with ambiguity. I have embraced the idea of aiming towards an outcome and focusing on the process in the moment with a vision of the future instead of letting the details of how to achieve my goals consume my thought process.

Professional Goals

Graduate education has placed me in an environment where I have been focused on my professional development. While conferences have allowed me to strengthen my network, the

cohort model has allowed me to develop a strong network with my peers in the program as well. Through my coursework and interacting with professionals and peers, I have attained a better understanding of how I like to interact with others and what it means for me to be a professional. The coursework relating to the practice of student affairs, such as ARP 623, has allowed me to identify how I might be able to continuously grow as an individual through resources that are provided by professional associations. Intentional conversations with postsecondary educational leaders and my graduate assistantships have also taught me how I might be able to navigate the politics that occur with being a leader in the profession.

Conclusion

In the past two years, I have been given the opportunity to grow tremendously both as a scholar and as a practitioner. Through the courses in the program and my graduate assistantships and full-time opportunities, I have had the chance to develop a strong theoretical foundation for developing students and serving as a leader in postsecondary education. My understanding of the student affairs profession has been strengthened tremendously, and I have gained many theoretical and practical skills that I will be able to take with me as I start my first full-time role as the Coordinator of Student Affairs at John Muir College. I believe that I have met the program learning outcomes set forth by the program and will be able to contribute to student learning, student development, and higher education as a whole. I look forward to continuing my growth and learning as my graduate education at the Master's level comes to a close and my time as a new professional begins.

References

Love, P., & Estanek, S. (2004). *Rethinking student affairs practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

San Diego State University (SDSU). (2015). Program Fact Sheet. Retrieved from
http://interwork.sdsu.edu/main/system/files/files/student_affairsDOCs/1-23-15%20FactSheet%281%29.docx

Appendix A

	ED 690	ARP 620	ARP 610	ARP 621	ARP 747	ARP 622	ED 795A	ARP 760	ED 795B	ARP 623
PLO 1- Explain how the theoretical foundation of student success can be implemented and evaluated in daily practice		x		x						
PLO 2- Apply self-awareness and self-regulation practices towards one's own leadership strengths and identify areas of continued development		x	x	x		x		x		
PLO 3- Identify varying leadership styles that are prevalent and explain strategies to work with those styles			x			x				
PLO 4- Identify ethical leadership and social justice issues in postsecondary education and propose solutions and strategies to address these issues		x	x		x					x
PLO 5- Engage in meaningful outcomes-based assessment of collaboratively designed student learning and development programs and initiatives	x						x		x	
PLO 6- Apply research to practice in order to advance access, equity, and student success	x				x					x
PLO 7- Communicate ideas and concepts effectively	x		x	x		x		x		
PLO 8- Work collaboratively with diverse group members in diverse settings		x	x		x		x	x	x	