Book review: Becoming socialized in student affairs administration: A guide for new professionals and their supervisors

Larry D Long, Michigan State University
From the Editor
The profession of advising fraternities and sororities is one that can lead to great feelings of connectivity and the feelings of accomplishment that can come from working toward a common goal. However, at times, an equally strong disconnect can occur and leave us feeling isolated. Whether we are a one-person office, traveling as a consultant, or serving an inter/national organization while working from home (or anything else in between), without the benefit of a team, or a network, it is easy to feel adrift in the profession.

Building your own personal advising network is the responsibility of all advisors, new or experienced; however, the task can seem daunting when there is already so much to do. Building a network of trusted advisors, and serving as an advisor for others in the field, is an important part of our professional lives and necessary for development.

In the words of Essentials Board members, and February edition co-leads, John DiSarro and Liz Osborne, “regardless of our role, we rely on all of these allies to support and advise undergraduate members of fraternities and sororities. Therefore, building an advising network is essential to provide the maximum positive impact for the students with which we work.”

Fostering Working Relationships with NPC Member Groups: A Guide for Campus-Based Professionals
The key to any successful working relationship is the ability to have open communication and dialogue between all parties, where information and concerns are shared on a regular basis. This is especially true for people who work with fraternity and sorority chapters, as the need and sometimes urgency to share information and to have the correct people engaged can be critical to a situation. The challenge for the campus-based professional is knowing whom your organizational contacts should be and what circumstances necessitate contact with the inter/national organization beyond the local level. >>Read full article

Best Practices for Working with NIC Organizations
Campus-based professionals networking with headquarters staff members from North-American Interfraternity Conference (NIC) fraternities? There are those who would say that “mutually exclusive” defines this relationship. Ouch. Then again, I like the phrase, “And diplomacy bowed deeply to candor.” I also believe in our community and that while reasonable minds may differ on topics and subjects, reasonable minds may also find many areas of agreement. As we strive to achieve the latter, let us begin with several presumptions (based upon my experience). >>Read full article

In A Half Mile, Turn Right
With the advent and increasing use of global positioning systems (GPS) over the past decade, many of us have become dependent. We can pull out our smart phones or turn on the GPS and, in an instant, know where we are, where we need to go, and which roads we need to take. As John Wooden (2005) once said, “a destination is meaningless without directions on how to get there” (p. 17). Most people do not need GPS to get to the grocery store or to meet up with friends. Surely we would not use it to help us cook dinner or brush our teeth. It is the long journeys where we need the GPS. It is when we get into tricky situations that we reach for help. The voice guides us along our path, and when we decide to go our own way (or not follow the directions), the voice kindly recalculates the directions and adjusts to our needs. >>Read full article

New professionals enter the student affairs profession from a variety of avenues. Some new professionals may enter the field after working as an undergraduate paraprofessional, while others may enter the field after completing a student affairs graduate program. No matter how they enter the profession, new professionals have to become socialized to the customs and expectations of their institution. The editors of Becoming Socialized in Student Affairs Administration (2009) describe socialization as acquiring the knowledge and skills to assume an organizational role. They contend that inadequate socialization may foster work-related stress and job dissatisfaction and eventually lead to attrition. The editors hoped to ease the socialization process of new professionals by highlighting what new professionals should expect during their transition into the profession. >>Read full article

Building Your Advising Network: Cultural Organizations

Ask those who’ve been in the profession if they were talking about cultural organizations ten years ago and most would probably say no. Now, these organizations are the fastest growing population within the fraternal movement. Well, ten years ago some advisors (like the authors of this article) were in high school and cannot imagine the fraternal world any other way than how it is now—diverse. However, many advisors are leaving graduate school and advising a Multicultural Greek Council with little background or training to do so. The basic principles detailed below are helpful hints for advisors looking to build positive working relationships with the inter/national cultural organizations with which we work. >>Read full article

Essentials Information

Essentials welcomes articles, ideas, and feedback from Association members throughout the year. Please contact Emilee Danielson, 2011 Editor, or review the online submission guidelines for more information.

Essentials is a monthly educational e-newsletter provided to AFA members and subscribers. Member login is required to view articles. If you have misplaced your member number, please contact the Central Office.

Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors | 9640 North Augusta Drive Suite 433 | Carmel, IN. 46032
Phone: (317) 876-1632 | Fax: (317) 876-3981

This email was sent to longl@gonzaga.edu. To ensure that you continue receiving our emails, please add us to your address book or safe list.

Go here to modify the contact information or communication preferences associated with your AFA membership.

opt out using TrueRemove®

Got this as a forward? Sign up to receive our future emails.
New professionals enter the student affairs profession from a variety of avenues. Some new professionals may enter the field after working as an undergraduate paraprofessional, while others may enter the field after completing a student affairs graduate program. No matter how they enter the profession, new professionals have to become socialized to the customs and expectations of their institution. The editors of Becoming Socialized in Student Affairs Administration (2009) describe socialization as acquiring the knowledge and skills to assume an organizational role. They contend that inadequate socialization may foster work-related stress and job dissatisfaction and eventually lead to attrition. The editors hoped to ease the socialization process of new professionals by highlighting what new professionals should expect during their transition into the profession.

The book is divided into four parts. The first part of the book, Effective Socialization of New Professionals: Processes and Importance, provides a framework for understanding the socialization process and describes factors that may affect the quality of work life of new professionals. In chapter one, Collins describes four stages of socialization and four realms of professional practice and then merges the concepts to establish a model for understanding the experiences of new student affairs professionals. The author maintains that the model can help new professionals understand what to expect as they begin their career in the student affairs profession. Rosser and Minoru Javinar conclude the section in chapter two by describing the importance of effectively socializing new professionals. The authors argue that improving the quality of work life of new professionals may lead to improved job satisfaction and organizational morale.

In part two, Contexts That Influence Socialization of New Professionals, authors discuss settings in which socialization occurs. Hirt describes the culture of seven types of institutions and provides examples of the challenges new professionals might face at a particular institution type. The lesson for new professionals is that every campus is unique. In chapter four, Freeman and Taylor describe the changing characteristics of college students. The authors argue that more women and students of color will be enrolled at institutions of higher education in the future and that new professionals should develop competencies to support these students effectively. The chapter concludes with recommendations for new professionals, supervisors, educators, and senior student affairs officers.

Part three focuses on strategies to ensure a positive transition into the profession for new professionals. Strategies for graduate preparation programs are described in chapter five. The following three chapters describe organizational strategies to facilitate the socialization process. These include orienting new professionals (chapter six), establishing effective supervisory and mentor relationships (chapter seven), and cultivating positive staff-peer relationships (chapter eight). Stan Carpenter and Linda Carpenter expand upon these strategies in chapter nine by describing the importance of becoming socialized at the divisional and institutional levels. The authors suggest that new professionals should make an effort to learn the traditions, rituals, and language of their institution early in the transition process. Janosik concludes the discussion of strategies for socializing new professionals by describing the importance of professional associations in the socialization process. The editors conclude Becoming Socialized in part four with a summary of the previous chapters and a discussion of implications for professional practice.

The editors were successful in developing an informative guide for understanding what to expect at each stage of the socialization process. The book is well-organized and rooted in the extant literature on socialization in student affairs administration. It also includes a variety of recommendations for new professionals, educators, and supervisors. As a book on strategies to facilitate the transition process of new professionals, one might expect there to be a discussion on dealing with job-related stress. Role stress and role overload are mentioned, but specific strategies for reducing job-related stress are not discussed. Another limitation is the narrow coverage of work-life balance. The authors primarily focus on staff-peer relationships and do not fully discuss the importance of having a life outside of work.

Aside from these limitations, Becoming Socialized is a great resource for new professionals and students who may be interested in pursuing a career in student affairs administration. The key lesson is that new professionals "should be active players in creating an intentional socialization process for themselves" (p. 220). The authors provide recommendations for ways new professionals can facilitate their own socialization, such as obtaining mentors, establishing a constructive relationship with their supervisor, and taking advantage of professional development opportunities. The book may also be useful for educators and mid-level and senior student affairs administrators. Educators might use the book as part of a course on professional socialization, and student affairs administrators might use the book for staff training initiatives and to hone their supervisory skills.