Now presenting...Writing effective conference program proposals (that get accepted)!

Raymond Quirolgico
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Objectives

- Learn the general process that conference planning groups follow for building a professional development curriculum
- Identify required components of program proposals
- Experience a "walk-through" of how an example program proposal is assembled (from brainstormed idea to online submission)
- Evaluate the relative merits of (an) example program proposal
- Review common errors of unsuccessful program proposals
- Discuss myths and misconceptions of program proposals and conference planning
(National) Conference Planning

- What gets planned years in advance
  - Location, hotel(s), service fees, catering, contracts
- What gets planned 1-2 years in advance
  - Planning team, theme, major speakers, curriculum, costs
- What gets decided within 12 months of the conference
  - Programs, events, speakers, special features
- What gets finalized within 3-6 months of the conference
  - Individual programs, conference logistics
What a program proposal is...

- Proposal that is reviewed by peer committee
- A specific kind of professional and scholarly writing
- A format that takes patience and practice
Title & Abstract

- Title: attract the audience
  - usually limited to 10-15 words
- Abstract: printed for audience
  - usually limited to 250-350 words
Title [samples]

- Engaging Campus Agents of Change in Student Decision Making
- Creating a Climate for Change: Hazing Prevention
- Young Adults and Cancer: What You Don’t Know Might Hurt Them
Abstract [samples]

- The Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs Organizations (MCSAO) Questionnaire is a new tool designed to help student affairs organizations assess and plan for strategic multicultural organizational change. Tested at more than 20 institutions across the United States, the MCSAO builds on the conceptual work of Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2004) and Grieger (1996). This session will discuss the design, testing, and applications of this tool; and introduce a new model of organizational multicultural competence.
Description

- Learning Outcomes/Objectives
- Rationale/Content
- Timeline
- Justification for AV/room set-up
- References
- Format of Program
- Connection to conference goals/theme(s)
Description

- Learning Outcomes/Objectives
  - Active verbs to describe learning domains (creating, evaluating, analyzing, applying, understanding, remembering)
Description

[sample Learning Outcomes/Objectives]

This program will invite audience participation in group discussion to achieve the following learning outcomes:

- identify different perspectives of social justice advocacy,
- identify “conversation killers” and suggest ways of resolving those dead ends,
- define basic tenets and assumptions of a true moral conversation, and
- identify personal qualities that must be practiced over time for truly effective advocacy in social justice work.

This program explicates the concepts discussed in the May/June 2010 About Campus article, “What is the Best Way to be a Social Justice Advocate? Communication Strategies for Effective Social Justice Advocacy” and is intended to equip participants with a basic toolbox of conversational leadership to practice in their own professional (and perhaps personal) lives.
Description

- Rationale/Content
  - Usually the longest section of the proposal
Two interesting facts struck the program presenters about this year’s proposal submission process for the ACPA 2011 annual convention in Baltimore: (1) proposals were due September 10, one day before the nine-year anniversary of 9/11; and (2) proposals were due between the Jewish celebrations of Rosh Hashanah (Head of the Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). Combined with the stated target of the Contemporary Issue, “Leadership in Challenging Times,” the presenters pondered what kind of times do we face in higher education in this Jewish year 5771 (or 2010-2011)?
Knowing what we know about the diversity of our campus populations, the rapidly changing world of technology in our global economy, and the undisputed rise of social networking, a two-week review of one presenter’s Facebook, Twitter, and RSS feeds revealed the following “current event” topics being considered by colleagues, family, and friends: same-sex marriage, gays in the military, blame for political fallout and judicial rulings, drilling for oil, recall of eggs and food safety, stem cell research, death sentence for the mentally ill or disabled, burning the Quran, a mosque at Ground Zero, boycotts of entire political parties, boycotts of entire home states, rape used as a weapon of war and genocide and terror, and even a woman throwing a cat away in the garbage. In addition to our more localized campus issues of student conduct, student leadership, student satisfaction, learning outcomes, strategic planning, we must consider higher education’s responsibility to educate future leaders who will inherit this world in this new year and every new year to follow.
In a time when many prominent scholars question the value of “social justice” as an unsubstantiated claim that masks a political agenda but when so many student affairs practitioners stake their commitment to social justice, is it possible to find a way to address the world’s most heated topics and atone (meaning reconcile or find harmony, with literal roots “at one” meaning unity and agreement) our lasting differences? Can we engage all members of the communities we serve, even the naysayers who object to the concept of social justice, in true civil dialogue to advance leadership in all its forms?
This program proposes a type of higher education leadership in our challenging times that requires self-reflection, counseling skills, practice (and more practice), and careful mediation and facilitation. The kind of leadership we will explore is conversational leadership to bring people together in engaged dialogue, even when their competing claims of social justice may represent opposing belief systems and conflicting forms of advocacy.
Description

- Timeline: of the proposed session
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elapsed Time (in minutes)</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00:05</td>
<td>Welcome and Introductions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presenters, Goals of Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:10</td>
<td>Difficult Conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Examples from the audience of truly challenging incidents of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>facilitating understanding across opposing viewpoints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:20</td>
<td>Social Justice Advocacy Perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 minute definitions of each perspective, with summary of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>advantages and disadvantages of each approach:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Radvocate, Madvocate, Sadvocate, Fadvocate, Gladvocate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Description [sample Timeline - 2/2]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elapsed Time (in minutes)</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00:30</td>
<td>Conversational Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expectations, assumptions, and requirements of facilitators of</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>moral conversations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How to recognize and “defuse” the dialogue “bombs” that kill a</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>conversation (5 minutes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:40</td>
<td>Personal Qualities of Social Justice Advocacy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Humility, Faith, Self-Denial, Charity</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:50</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:60</td>
<td>Concluding comments and quick survey evaluation of program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Description

- Justification for AV/room set-up
Description

[sample Justifications for AV/room set-up]

• None. (Paper handouts will be supplied by the presenters and distributed if necessary.)

• Participants need to be seated at round tables to have a writing surface for the journaling activity.

• Presenters will show a student-produced QuickTime movie highlighting the multimedia social marketing campaign of the program. A screen and electrical power supply are required (presenters will bring own computer and projector).
Description

• References
Preliminary References
(expanded references will be provided at the program, if accepted)


Description

- Format: the type of program you are proposing
Description [sample Format]

...Presenters will share results and student affairs practice implications of two studies investigating...

...Participants will engage in an interactive discussion about the possibilities and limitations of...
Description

- Connection to conference goals/themes
Titile: Rad, Mad, Sad, Fad, Glad: Conversational Leadership for Social Justice

Professional Competencies and Contemporary Issues:
- Personal Foundations
- Leadership in Challenging Times
Example: Conference Themes
(ACPA 2012, “Create Possibilities”)

1. High-Impact Practices
How are Student Affairs divisions and individual departments working with Academic Affairs to enrich the learning process for our students? How has assessment supported the effectiveness of these initiatives on various campuses? How does Student Affairs contribute to critical thinking, cognitive, and writing skills? What do these practices mean for international students and globalization? How is technology and social media incorporated into these practices?

2. Transitions
What are we doing to improve and how are we assessing year-to-year retention to graduation for students? How has the economy affected our students? What are we doing for students transferring from 4-year to 2-year institutions? How are we assisting veterans transitioning from the military to the classroom? How are we addressing the needs of our veterans and new traditional students who may be coming to our institutions because of career changes (internally and externally motivated)? How are we addressing the increasing Latino/a population and the invisibility of Native Americans on many campuses?

3. Civility on Campus
What new and innovative approaches have been researched and implemented? How do we continue to confront discrimination against diverse populations at our institutions? How are student violence and the increasing number of institutions that are being required to allow handguns on campus impacting the work we are doing around civility and social justice? How are campuses recognizing and honoring civility on campus? How are social media and virtual communities (Facebook, Twitter, online gaming) impacting civility on campus? Additionally, beyond student issues, we often forget about the incivility that many of us see among staff and faculty. How are we addressing violence and incivility among our peers and colleagues? What resources do we provide when stress relating to budget cuts, political agendas, and personal goals interfere with the student learning process?
Other

- Target Audience
- CEUs/“Degree of Difficulty” or Skill Level
- Presenters (biographical statements)
- Type of Program
- Keywords
- Disclaimers
Example: Program Type
(ACPA 2012, “Create Possibilities”)

Half Day Pre-Convention Workshop (3 hours)
Full Day Pre-Convention Workshop (6 hours)
General Convention Program (60 minutes)
Convention Institute (2 1/2 to 6 hours)
Promising Practices (60 minutes)
Sponsored Programs (60 minutes)
Cosponsored Program (60 minutes)
Research Papers (75 minutes)
Ancillary Programs (Meetings and Socials)
Round Tables (60 minutes)
Research Poster Sessions (Display)
Sponsored Round Tables (60 minutes)

Deadline: September 12, 2011
Target Audience: Graduate Students, New Professionals, and Mid-Level Professionals

CEUs: This session does not qualify for CEUs

Type of Program: We are proposing a standard-length (75-minute) general convention program.

Type of Program: We are requesting consideration for sponsorship from the Standing Committee for Multicultural Affairs for a half-day (3-hour) pre-convention workshop.

Keywords: Social Justice, Marketing, Retention and Success

Disclaimers: The research study being discussed was funded by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, with the understanding that some of the grant monies would be matched by the presenters' institution to support dissemination of findings at professional conferences.
Robert J. Nash is a professor and philosopher of education. Robert J. Nash has been a professor in the College of Education and Social Services, University of Vermont, Burlington, for 38 years and was instrumental in the establishment there of the graduate program in Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration. He specializes in philosophy of education; ethics; higher education; and religion, spirituality, and education. He has taught courses in several academic programs and applied disciplines. He holds two bachelor’s degrees, three master’s degrees (in English, Liberal Studies and Applied Ethics, and Moral Theology), and a doctorate in the Philosophy of Education. He holds faculty appointments in teacher education, higher education administration, and interdisciplinary studies in education. He administers the Interdisciplinary Master’s Program, and he teaches ethics, religion, higher education, and philosophy of education courses, and scholarly personal narrative writing seminars across four programs in the college including the doctoral program in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. He has supervised over 100 theses and dissertations. He has published over 100 monographs, articles, book chapters, essays, and reviews. He is a member of the editorial board for the Journal of Religion & Education, and one of its frequent contributors. Since 1996, he has published seven books, several of them national award winners, including a series of three books for the Teachers College Press: “Real World Ethics:” Frameworks for Educators and Human Service Professionals (the first full-length work on applied ethics pedagogy published in the United States, and reissued as a Second Edition in 2002), Answering the ‘Virtuecrats:’ A Moral Conversation on Character Education, and Faith, Hype, and Clarity: Teaching about Religion in American Schools and Colleges. (Both of the two latter books were named Choice books for their respective years, and the third book was awarded a Critics Choice Book of the Year Award for 1999 by The American Educational Studies Association.) Robert has also written Religious Pluralism in the Academy: Opening the Dialogue (a book cited by the Chronicle of Higher Education) and Spirituality, Ethics, Religion, and Teaching: A Professor’s Journey, published by Peter Lang in 2001 and 2002 respectively, and Liberating Scholarly Writing: The Power of Personal Narrative in 2004. He co-authored, with Dr. DeMethra Bradley and Dr. Arthur Chickering, How To Talk about Hot Topics On Campus: From Polarization to Moral Conversation, published by Wiley/Jossey-Bass in 2008. His two most recent books are Helping College Students Find Purpose: The Campus Guide to Meaning-Making, published by the Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series in 2010, and Teaching Adolescents Religious Literacy in a Post-9/11 World, co-authored with Penny A. Bishop, published by Information Age Publishing in 2009. This book was named a winner of the 2010 Critics Choice Book Award of the American Educational Studies Association (AESA), and the committee of AESA scholars that reviewed the book cited it as an outstanding contribution to scholarship in the Foundations of Education. Dr. Nash has done a variety of consultancies throughout the country for a number of human service organizations and colleges and universities. He has also made a series of major presentations at national conferences and at universities on the topics of ethics, character education, religious pluralism, scholarly personal narrative scholarship, and moral conversation. He is a frequent, featured speaker at the national level. In 2003, he was named the Official University Scholar in the Social Sciences and the Humanities at The University of Vermont, only the second faculty member in the history of the College of Education and Social Services to be so honored.
Getting started…
Example: Proposal Evaluation
(ACPA 2012, “Create Possibilities”)

Area 1: Content

4: Outstanding
The proposal fully demonstrates thoroughness, quality, and clarity. Strong evidence that new information is coming from either empirical research or experiential practice.

3: Good
The proposal clearly articulates thoroughness, quality, and clarity. Some evidence that content is new and supported by empirical research or experiential practice.

2: Average
The proposal is thorough and clear, but no evidence of new information is being presented.

1: Adequate
The proposal is limited in its thoroughness, quality, and clarity.

0: Poor
The proposal does not demonstrate thoroughness, quality, and clarity.
Example: Proposal Evaluation
(ACPA 2012, “Create Possibilities”)

Area 2: Innovative Approach

4: Outstanding
The program proposal fully demonstrates innovative and/or creative approaches to professional practice, theory, or research.

3: Good
The program proposal clearly articulates innovative and/or creative approaches to professional practice, theory, or research.

2: Average
The program proposal needs to more clearly define innovative and/or creative approaches to professional practice, theory, or research.

1: Adequate
The proposal demonstrates limited innovative and/or creative approaches to professional practice, theory, or research.

0: Poor
The program proposal does not represent innovative and/or creative approaches to professional practice, theory, or research.
Example: Proposal Evaluation
(ACPA 2012, “Create Possibilities”)

Area 3: Theoretical Foundation

4: Outstanding
The proposal fully demonstrates relevant conceptual and theoretical foundations.

3: Good
The proposal clearly articulates relevant conceptual and theoretical foundations.

2: Average
The proposal defines some relevant conceptual and theoretical foundations.

1: Adequate
The proposal indirectly refers to relevant concepts and theoretical foundations.

0: Poor
The proposal does not demonstrate relevant conceptual and theoretical foundations.
Example: Proposal Evaluation
(ACPA 2012, “Create Possibilities”)

Area 4: Significance
4: Outstanding
The program proposal fully articulates educational and professional significance.
3: Good
The program proposal clearly articulates educational and professional significance.
2: Average
The program proposal addresses educational and professional significance, but it is not clearly tied.
1: Adequate
The program proposal demonstrates limited educational and professional significance and needs further clarification.
0: Poor
The program proposal does not demonstrate educational and professional significance.
Example: Proposal Evaluation

(ACPA 2012, “Create Possibilities”)

Area 5: Relevancy
4: Outstanding
The program proposal fully demonstrates a clear connection to one or more professional competencies/critical issues. In cases where none are specified, the program proposal content still is relevant and beneficial for ACPA members.

3: Good
The program proposal clearly articulates a clear connection to one or more professional competencies/critical issues. In cases where none are specified, the program proposal content still is relevant and beneficial for ACPA members.

2: Average
The program proposal indicates a connection to one or more professional competencies/critical issues and/or its relevancy to ACPA members, but it is not clearly outlined in the proposal.

1: Adequate
The program proposal demonstrates a limited connection to any of the professional competencies/critical issues and needs further clarification. Relevancy of content unclear.

0: Poor
The program proposal does not demonstrate a clear connection to one or more professional competencies/critical issues. The program proposal content is not relevant and beneficial for ACPA members.
Example: Proposal Evaluation  
(ACPA 2012, “Create Possibilities”)

Area 6: Organization

4: Outstanding
The program proposal fully demonstrates a well-planned presentation that would be engaging to attendees.

3: Good
The program proposal clearly articulates a well-planned presentation that would be engaging to attendees.

2: Average
The program proposal is a somewhat well-planned presentation. Proposal relies heavily on small group work and discussion.

1: Adequate
The program proposal is not a well-planned presentation. Proposal relies heavily on small group work and discussion.

0: Poor
The program proposal does not demonstrate a well-planned presentation that would be engaging to attendees.
A realistic perspective...

(ACPA 2012)

(Strong Proposal) The theoretical foundation is more clearly articulated. The presenter provides more detail regarding previous research both in his actual proposal and in his reference list. It is clear how the presenters will interact and engage with the participants during the presentation. But majority of time is dedicated to presentation of research. (This program was 75 minutes.)

(Average Proposal) The proposal highlights three learning outcomes in the abstract, but only speaks of two of them in the body of the proposal. Consistency in providing detailed information on each of the learning outcomes will strengthen the proposal.
Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Editing
  - Format, word count, spelling & grammar, jargon
  - AV/Room set-up unjustified
- Audience is not targeted
- “Come meet and discuss…”
- Learning outcomes are weak or mismatch content
- Reliance on conference theme
- Working poorly beyond your own department/campus
Common Corrections to Make

- http://public.wsu.edu/~brians/errors/errors.html


- NYTimes.com “After Deadline” column by Philip B. Corbett
Closing thought about writing