Student Affairs Professional Competency Areas as Applied to Case Management

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Abstract
Case Management on college and university campuses has become a growing trend and important practice. When establishing case management offices and positions, administrators may wonder what skills a student affairs professional brings to a field rooted in social work and behavioral intervention. This article describes a clear connection between the functions in which student affairs professionals are trained and the work that is required for effective case management. Using the Student Affairs Professional Competencies as a framework, the authors identify the relevance of those areas and the role they play in case management.

Introduction

As a unique discipline within the academy, the field of student affairs is a fairly recent development. As modern-day institutions developed in the early 20th century, it became more and more critical to hire administrative staff to manage the aspects of the student experience on campus that fell outside the focus of faculty teaching and research. One of those aspects is student behavior and transition to university life.

As the 20th century wore on, the profession of student affairs grew increasingly complex and began to develop its own areas of research specialization. Initially focused on a very homogeneous population (primarily white males between the ages of 18 and 22), the changing face of higher education soon included a vast research base into the variety of student experiences on college and university campuses, including but not limited to: students of color, students with disabilities, women, members of the LGBTQ communities, and non-traditional students.

As professional organizations developed, they began to take on the challenge of establishing common standards for the work, and encouraging the establishment of best practices within the field. In 1986, the Council for the Advancement of Standards for Student Services/Development Programs published a set of standards for a variety of functional areas within the field. This organization is presently known as The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS).

In the intervening years, these standards expanded to the current list of 45 functional areas and corresponding standard sets within those areas. Recently, the Higher Education Case Managers Association (HECMA) has partnered with CAS as one of its member organizations to have a voice in standards development across higher education (CAS, 2016).

The American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) created a joint committee in 2009 in order to establish a baseline of professional competency areas for the work of student affairs. NASPA and ACPA are the two largest professional organizations within the field of student affairs today.

In this article, we will examine the work of student affairs case management through the lens of these professional competency areas. Our review is not meant to be comprehensive, but rather to briefly examine the ways in which the work of case management fits within the larger context of student affairs. The competency areas are as follows:

- Values, Philosophy, and History
- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
- Advising and Supporting
- Student Learning and Development
- Assessment, Evaluation, and Research
- Ethical and Personal Foundations
- Human and Organizational Resources
- Law, Policy, and Governance
- Leadership
- Social Justice and Inclusion
- Technology

Values, Philosophy, & History in Student Affairs

The Values, Philosophy, and History competency area involves knowledge, skills, and dispositions that connect the history, philosophy, and values of the student affairs profession to one's current professional practice. This competency area embodies the foundations of the profession from which current and future research, scholarship, and practice will change and grow. The commitment to demonstrating this competency area ensures that our present and future practices are informed by an understanding of the profession's history, philosophy, and values. (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 18).

Case management as it currently exists on modern campuses is also a fairly new discipline within the field of higher education. While there was a slow-growing movement to establish Behavioral Intervention Teams prior, the tragedy at Virginia Tech in April of 2007 placed a great deal of national attention on the need for institutions to focus more attention on students who were potentially at risk of causing harm and violence on campus.

In 2008, Virginia Tech hosted a meeting for interested campuses to discuss "the changing landscape of higher education and specifically the evolution of case management" (HECMA Timeline, 2016). This meeting led to greater collaboration among higher education organizations and was one of the factors that led to the formation of HECMA, the first professional organization devoted to the field of higher education case management.

The current president of HECMA, JJ Larson, explains the distinction between clinical and non-clinical case management in higher education: "At HECMA, we delineate [higher education case managers] based on function — not professional skills or licensure. These areas are clinical or non-clinical. When HECMA began defining our work in 2012, we used the terms 'student affairs' [case managers] and 'clinical' [case managers]." (Personal Communication, Mar. 9, 2016).

The creation and revision of the Professional Competency Areas by ACPA & NASPA (2015) is an important milestone in the history and

professionalization of student affairs. The original document was created in 2010 and revised in 2015 to determine the professional competencies that are being used on campuses today. To date, no one has applied these competency areas to the discipline of higher education case management. We seek to examine the work of case management in this environment through the lens of Student Affairs Professional Competency Areas.

Student Learning and Development

The Student Learning and Development competency area addresses the concepts and principles of student development and learning theory. This includes the ability to apply theory to improve and inform student affairs and teaching practice. (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 30)

Understanding student learning and development is critical to the practice of student affairs case management. It is important to recognize that individual students' needs and development can vary based on their experience prior to coming to college (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010). The skill set of a student affairs case manager requires just that; the ability to meet individual students where they are and co-create action plans for their success. While the day-to-day operations of case management are specific and individualized, student affairs case managers pull from a larger breadth of student learning and development theories, literature, and models. The approach for case managers with an educational background in student affairs has grounding in a variety of competencies.

Case managers with student affairs training have a foundational understanding of identity models and student development theory, which serve as crucial ideology for engaging with students, and should be woven into the specific approach for each student case. Arthur Chickering's (1969) *Theory of Identity Development* was the first to examine the development of college students, and has been widely used since its inception (Evans et al., 2010; Evans, 2011). Chickering & Linda Reisser (1993) revised Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of student development that assist in the formation of college student identity, including: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity. Chickering (1969) posits that the vectors should be viewed as prominent paths for individuals' journeys, rather than steps of a linear progression (Evans et al., 2010).

Student affairs case managers may use Chickering's work as a guiding theory when working with students of concern. For example, two common vectors that students of concern present with are

managing emotions and establishing their identity on a college campus. Other foundational theories that provide insight to student affairs case managers while working with students of concern are:

- **Nevitt Sanford's Theory of Challenge and Support (1962).** Sanford "proposed three developmental conditions: readiness, challenge, and support... The amount of challenge a student can tolerate is a function of the amount of support available" (Evans et al., 2010 p. 30). For student affairs case managers, understanding this theory is vital to their work. It helps to gauge where students are in their readiness to manage difficult situations in conjunction with the amount of support currently available through the university or the students' immediate community.

- **Nancy Schlossberg's Marginality and Mattering (1989).** This work stresses "the importance of considering the concepts of marginality and mattering when examining the impact of the college experience on student development" (Evans et al., 2010 p. 31). Students want to know and feel that they matter, and that any concern or issue that they have is important to the university. Student affairs case managers have a role in supporting the needs of students.

- **David A. Kolb's Theory of Experiential Learning (1984).** This theory is "focused on discussion of learning styles, the relationship between learning and development, and the implications of learning styles for higher education" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 138). Student affairs case managers must have the ability to work with various learning styles and acknowledge that students' knowledge is often created through experiential learning, even in situations that are not always beneficial to the students in the long run. The work of a student affairs case manager then becomes reflective observation and helping students incorporate current learning into a new action plans for themselves.

- **Urie Bronfenbrenner's Developmental Ecology Theory (1979).** This theory "explains development as interaction between person and environment" (Renn & Patton, 2011, p. 243). It illuminates the relationships of the students over time and the influence of their various environmental systems (Evans et al., 2010). Many student affairs case managers are responding to behaviors and actions of students in which the college environment has a reciprocal influence; the case manager examines the impact of the behavior on the community and environment, as well as the effect of that community and environment on the individual.

These models and theories provide student affairs case managers with a framework to more fully comprehend the complexity of a student of concern within the campus environment. The field of student

affairs has developed deep pockets of literature and scholarship pertaining to student development that offer keen insight and knowledge into the work and function of student affairs case management. A future area of inquiry for the competency of Student Learning and Development would be delving further into each theory outlined. The authors of this competency could provide case study examples demonstrating how student affairs case managers might use theory and their educational background to work best with students of concern.

Leadership

The Leadership competency area addresses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of a leader, with or without positional authority. Leadership involves both the individual role of a leader and the leadership process of individuals working together to envision, plan, and affect change in organizations, and respond to broad-based constituencies and issues. This can include working with students, student affairs colleagues, faculty, and community members. This section is organized by the leadership learning concepts of education, construct knowledge, and articulation; training, skill identification, and enhancement; development, personal reflection and growth; and engagement, active participation, and application. (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 27)

Student affairs case management is found in a variety of student affairs units, one of which is the Office of the Dean of Students. This structure allows for leadership and support from the top of the organization (NaBITA & ACCA, 2012). Several duties of student affairs case management are closely aligned with the function of a Dean of Students Office. Some of those responsibilities include: communicating with Behavioral Intervention Teams (BITs), building rapport with students and families, and understanding higher education law and relevant policies. A Dean of Students Office has familiarity and connectivity with the functions of student affairs case management, which is useful for providing guidance and vision to this functional area. As one of the newest functional areas in student affairs, there must be intentionality when determining the location, leadership, and support of student affairs case management. Strong leadership and senior level support is crucial for the success of this budding area.

The positions of individuals leading the student affairs case management office vary in title. For those located within student affairs, however, one may often see a title of Assistant Dean of Students (Shaw & Westfall, 2015) or Director of Case Management. The University of California (UC) system, which consists of 10 public university campuses, has provided annual data of the case management offices on each campus. In 2015, there was a response rate of 100 percent; this data is inclusive of each of the 10 UC campuses. Based

on the UC Systemwide Case Manager Survey (2015), each case management office (department names vary) is located within and supported by student affairs. The survey results indicate that on seven of the 10 campuses, case managers report to an Assistant or Associate Dean or Associate Vice Chancellor, and on two of the 10 campuses, they report to a director within the student affairs division. One campus reported that it currently does not have a case manager position. This data shows that the majority of the offices receive leadership from a director, dean-level administrator, or vice chancellor position within student affairs.

Leaders of case management offices serve as advocates and champions of tremendously emotionally challenging work. It is important for leaders to not only provide vision, direction, and management, but also to understand and impart an ideology and culture of self-care for case managers. The work of student affairs case management professionals can lead to early burnout, and Judith Herman (1992) posits that practitioners, first responders, and counselors can often experience vicarious trauma. Leaders must foster an office environment that cultivates and honors the well being of staff members. Potential future topics of inquiry within the leadership competency are: exploring the leadership role of case managers on campus, discussing case management in practice when working with high profile student leaders, and discovering the lived experiences of case managers who served as the first in their positions.

Assessment, Evaluation, and Research

The Assessment, Evaluation, and Research (AER) competency area focuses on the ability to design, conduct, critique, and use various AER methodologies and the results obtained from them, to inform practice, and to shape the political and ethical climate surrounding AER processes and uses in higher education. (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 20)

There is an inherent challenge in student affairs case management as it relates to assessment, evaluation, and research. Proving that something did not happen may be a practical impossibility. Of course, information can be gleaned by data assessment from a different angle. Tracking demographic information as it relates to students of concern could help identify populations of higher need. Tracking graduation rates of students of concern and comparing them to measures of severity could inform when and how interventions are carried out. By paying close attention and asking the right questions of the students, the work of student affairs case managers can be looked at critically, and approaches can be improved.

Additionally, since the discipline is a fairly recent evolution, there is very little research that examines its efficacy or outcomes. We are at the beginning of the work and have not yet amassed enough data to

identify long-term trends. Case managers can use research done in a more generalized manner in areas of public health, and seek to apply that information to the work of a college or university community.

As it stands, practitioners have begun to look at the data they have collected during the past few years to see if there is information that can be gleaned in the short term. The University of California system has collected this data from each of its 10 campuses annually in an attempt to assist practitioners in determining budget priorities and effective caseloads. Within the system, such information has been used by individual campuses in benchmarking their efforts and justifying the need for new positions. This will inevitably lead to more work being done on a scholarly level to determine how students of concern behave specifically within the context of our communities.

Technology

The Technology competency area focuses on the use of digital tools, resources, and technologies for the advancement of student learning, development, and success, as well as for the improved performance of student affairs professionals. Included in this area are knowledge, skills, and dispositions that lead to the generation of digital literacy and digital citizenship within communities of students, student affairs professionals, faculty members, and colleges and universities. (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 33)

In today's modern world, technology and its effects on society cannot be understated. The digital revolution has created seismic shifts not only in the workplace, but also in all aspects of western society. In the work of student affairs case management, technology most profoundly impacts the areas of recordkeeping digital privacy/leakage.

The Education Advisory Board (EAB) specifically recommends the use of technology for keeping records in a secure manner. "A growing trend for teams [is] to use a vendor database for recordkeeping. These third-party systems aim to make data entry, case tracking, and reporting more consistent and efficient for teams" (EAB, 2013). Some campuses may use secure spreadsheets for tracking students' names and relevant information. Campuses interested in more complex data tracking can seek a database specifically designed for the work of student affairs case management. Among the most commonly used third-party vendors are Maxient Conduct Manager and Symplicity Advocate. By creating a central repository of information, these databases allow users to share information across relevant campus constituencies.

The proliferation of social media and its widespread use among students has required practitioners to pay attention to threats posted in online spaces. J. Reid Meloy and Mary Ellen O'Toole (2011) state that, "leakage in the context of threat assessment is the communication to a third party of an intent to do harm to a target. Third parties are usually other people, but the means of communication vary, and include letters, diaries, journals, blogs, videos on the Internet, emails, voice mails, and other social media forms of transmission" (p. 1). Therefore, student affairs case managers would benefit from remaining current and proficient in the types of social media currently popular among student populations and the manner in which they are used. Failing to maintain this technological proficiency could result in relevant information being missed and/or misinterpreted in evaluating potentially harmful situations.

Law, Policy, and Governance in Student Affairs

The Law, Policy, and Governance competency area includes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions relating to policy development processes used in various contexts, the application of legal constructs, compliance/policy issues, and the understanding of governance structures and their impact on one's professional practice. (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 22)

This professional competency area requires practitioners to identify and apply emerging case law, new legislation, guidance from federal and state agencies, and institutional policies and procedures to their work. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) does not apply to the work of student affairs case managers, as it governs the disposition of patient records. While many institutions employ case managers who are trained and licensed as treatment providers, these practitioners are not treating patients when they are positioned within student affairs divisions. The work of student affairs case managers comes under the purview of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This law governs the maintenance and disposition of student records within educational institutions. Familiarity with the intricacies of FERPA is a critical skill set for student affairs case managers, particularly as the law applies to the sharing of information within and outside of educational institutions.

As far as how FERPA applies to the history of case management work, the review panel convened in the aftermath of the mass shooting at Virginia Tech found that a misunderstanding and misapplication of FERPA among staff and faculty members was a key failure of the institution's response (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). University officials in the office of Judicial Affairs, the Cook Counseling Center, campus police, the Dean of Students Office, and others, explained their failures to communicate with one another or with Seung-Hui Cho's parents due to their belief that such communications are prohibited by the federal laws governing the privacy of health and education records. In reality,

federal laws and their state counterparts afford ample leeway to share information in potentially dangerous situations (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007).

Additionally, many institutions have placed an increased focus on compliance after being fined by the U.S. Department of Education for violations of the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act, better known as the Clery Act. Fines may be levied on postsecondary institutions for failing to adequately warn members of their campus communities about crimes that occur on or near their campuses. Case managers need to have intimate familiarity with the Clery Act's mandates and of their responsibilities as Campus Security Authorities (CSAs) due to the high likelihood of receiving information that may affect the safety and well being of the larger campus community.

Student Affairs Case Managers also have responsibilities under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), and the Campus SaVE Act. These laws prohibit discrimination based on sex in educational institutions and specifically requires responsible employees, which includes student affairs case managers, to report incidents of discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, and dating violence to the appropriate investigative office at their institutions.

Finally, many state legislatures have taken legislative action in the wake of large-scale tragic events, and as a result specific responses are now required by institutions in those states. For instance, they have begun requiring discussion of students of concern and the formation of formal teams, such as BITs, which can respond to emergent student issues. The Higher Education Mental Health Alliance (2013) noted:

> The most violent episodes — such as shootings at Virginia Tech in 2007 and Northern Illinois University in 2008 — have drawn the most anguish and media attention, sparking more formal campus efforts to anticipate and respond to threats. In fact, in these two states, state laws now mandate that public campuses convene formal teams to assess and respond to potentially violent threats, with more states expected to follow their lead. (p. 1)

Organizational and Human Resources

The Organizational and Human Resources competency area includes knowledge, skills, and dispositions used in the management of institutional human capital, financial, and physical resources. This competency area recognizes that student affairs professionals bring personal strengths and grow as managers by challenging themselves to build new skills in the selection, supervision, motivation, and formal evaluation of staff; resolution of conflict; management of the politics of organizational discourse; and the effective application of strategies and techniques associated with financial resources, facilities management, fundraising, technology, crisis management, risk management, and sustainable resources. (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 24)

Engagement with students in distress and those who are concerned about them benefits from strong conflict management skills, as well as keen political acumen. The work of student affairs case managers includes interacting not only with students in distress, but also with those who have been affected by their conduct or who have been the target of concerning behavior, such as faculty, staff, and community members. At times, those parties may be a part of the intervention plan, so student affairs case managers must be able to effectively craft and implement steps that the affected parties feel comfortable taking. Coaching others on how to respond to a student in distress requires the ability to assist in the development of others' own skill sets. Additionally, managing the expectations and fears of staff or faculty members is an art form that requires professionals to creatively confront the conflict and effectively speak on behalf of the department to demonstrate that although the parties may be in disagreement, the resolution devised by the case management office is fair, effective, and sound. As stated by NaBITA & ACCA (2012), "a quality case manager will often encounter rigid rules that make little sense, and that will require a little thought to arrive at a 'creative but helpful solution.'" (p. 12)

It is also worth noting that negotiating response action plans frequently involves administrators who may not understand the nature of the work and/or who hold senior-level positions within the institution. The ability to navigate those conversations with knowledge and confidence is essential to building trust and rapport during a time when tension and fear can exist.

The network of expertise and support within higher education contributes to the success of student affairs case managers. In a joint white paper, NaBITA and ACCA (2012) note:

> A student affairs-based case manager has the advantage of a built-in connection to the various departments within student affairs. The result is a case manager who has more information and better working relationships with student affairs. This, in turn, provides better access to support services and treatment for the students on their caseload. This is especially helpful when working in crisis situations. (p. 16)

Directors of student affairs case management offices need to be highly skilled in selecting, supervising, motivating, and evaluating

the staffing infrastructure need. Currently, there is limited empirical knowledge about a typical staffing structure for case management offices within colleges. A recent assessment done at the University of California System, however, found that there are, on average, 3.5 case managers at each institution (Day, 2015). It has been the experience of these authors that the need for these offices grows every year. Therefore, directors need to be skilled in budgeting and advocating for funding, and they need to be strategic planners who are capable of forecasting developments within the field.

Advising and Supporting

The Advising and Supporting competency area addresses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to providing advising and support to individuals and groups through direction, feedback, critique, referral, and guidance. By developing advising and supporting strategies that take into account self-knowledge and the needs of others, we play critical roles in advancing the holistic wellness of ourselves, our students, and our colleagues. (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 36)

The Advising and Supporting competency outlines the ways in which student affairs case managers provide support, referral, and guidance to students as well as to faculty and staff members. When receiving and reviewing cases, these case managers are responsible for triaging the concerns and crafting intervention plans. As part of those interventions, they often meet with students and engage in conversations that are complex, complicated, and emotional. Student affairs case managers listen, empathize, assist, and empower students to make the decisions that are best for their situations. NaBITA & ACCA (2012) note that, "successful case managers have the ability to maintain a positive outlook and willingness to work through obstacles, solve problems, and think outside of the box." (p. 12) Engaging with students who have recently been diagnosed with mental health issues, students who may be facing homelessness, or students who have experienced remarkable trauma requires collaboration with appropriate departments, as well as effective coordination for holistic care.

An important aspect to being an effective student affairs case manager is understanding the scope of the position and knowing when and how to make necessary referrals. While student affairs practitioners have a broad skill set with regard to student development and wellness, they may not be licensed counselors. Non-clinical case managers are distinctly different in education and training from clinical case managers positioned within health services. It is especially crucial to have the foundational knowledge needed to understand the nuances of confidentiality, privacy, and when information must be shared for the safety of the campus.

In the wake of the tragedy at Virginia Tech, institutions realized the importance of information sharing and the danger of silos. Therefore,

it is important that student affairs case managers create partnerships with mental health professionals, police/public safety officers, and other campus departments. Analyzing behavior and assessing threat is only effective when all the relevant information is available for review. As Jen Day Shaw and Sarah B. Westfall (2015) note, "achieving a complete picture of a student's behavior and life increases the effectiveness with which the team can operate as they assess risk" (p. 147). Additionally, referring students to the appropriate experts when needed is a critical step to providing students with support and part of a successful intervention plan.

The partnerships and level of competency required under this competency creates an opportunity for student affairs case managers. Coordinating with counseling and psychological services in the aftermath of a crisis is critical because of the expertise of individuals in those offices in broad crisis management and their experience working with students who are experiencing interpersonal crises.

Social Justice and Inclusion

For the purpose of this competency area, "social justice" is defined as both a process and a goal that includes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to create learning environments that foster equitable participation of all groups and seek to address issues of oppression, privilege, and power. (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 30)

The foundational student affairs document, *The Student Personnel Point of View,* identifies the philosophy of the work and notes that colleges and universities have "the obligation to consider the student as a whole — his intellectual capacity and achievement, his emotional make-up, his physical condition, his social relationships, his vocational aptitudes and skills, his moral and religious values, his economic resources, [and] his aesthetic appreciations." (American Council on Education, 1937, p. 1)

Campuses across the country are becoming increasingly diverse. Facilitating the holistic development of students requires an understanding of power, oppression, marginalization, and privilege. According to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), more students are enrolling in degree-granting institutions, and the number of enrolled students increased by 24 percent between 2002 and 2012 (NCES, 2016). Higher education is bringing in more diverse groups of students across race, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, ability, and gender, and the *Principles for Good Practice in Student Affairs* (1996) notes that student affairs professionals are to build supportive and inclusive spaces.

Effective student affairs case management acknowledges the complexity of students' lives and the impact of their intersecting identities.

Competency in social justice and inclusion is important when serving students who are in crisis. Understanding the identities of the students we serve, as well as their interactions with systems of oppression, is essential to providing support and creating successful action plans when they are in distress. Students from underrepresented groups, such as undocumented students, those with disabilities, international students, LGBTQ students, and those experiencing mental health challenges may experience barriers or bias based on their personal identities. Here, student affairs case managers have the opportunity to support and advocate for students, as well as to provide consultation that fosters more inclusive environments. These case managers should review cases given their specific context, and they should acknowledge that students' identities and experiences at the institution are important in creating effective action plans and providing support. The Social Justice and Inclusion competency is especially important when reviewing cases and assessing students' behavior and threat level.

Creating inclusive spaces and working to dismantle systems of oppression on campus while supporting students in crisis requires the commitment of all levels of staff and faculty. This is not the work of one functional area alone, and is a value that must be evident in the mission and goals of all institutions of higher education. Campus climate can be perilous for vulnerable students. Student affairs case managers have the opportunity to advocate for these students and work to address the hostile environments present within our institutions and structures.

Personal and Ethical Foundations

The Personal and Ethical Foundations competency area involves the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to develop and maintain integrity in one's life and work. This includes thoughtful development, critique, and adherence to a holistic and comprehensive standard of ethics and commitment to one's own wellness and growth. Personal and ethical foundations are aligned because integrity has an internal locus informed by a combination of external ethical guidelines, an internal voice of care, and our own lived experiences. Our personal and ethical foundations grow through a process of curiosity, reflection, and self-authorship. (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 16)

Individuals in the field have a blend of personal and professional experiences and perspectives that provide each with a framework upon which ethical foundations are formed. In this section, you will find a short personal narrative from the authors outlining their connection of student affairs case management to their personal and ethical foundations as student affairs professionals.

Akirah: Many have asked how I came to enter the work of overseeing a student affairs case management office. The structure of higher education was built long ago, and much of the foundation has not changed. When you fast-forward to now, with the changing student demographics, national climate, and increasing incidents of intentional violence, there is a need for additional holistic care, responsiveness, and overall services to students in the university setting. Student affairs case management offices that are non-clinical, keep a pulse on the student body, understand current campus issues, and possess the skills necessary to advise and support students.

I come to this work with an open heart and sense of high responsibility to meet students where they are and to assist in crafting a web of care and support throughout the campus. As a leader, it is my personal duty to stay abreast of the most recent laws, legislation, and trends that will have an impact on student affairs case management, continue to critically think, question, and create protocols to assist in the care and well being of students and the campus. I do this with integrity, compassion, and intentionality. Every student with whom I have met throughout my career helps to guide the practices from lessons learned. Each case is unique, and every student narrative holds authority and is significant to critically challenge me as a practitioner to show up as my best self to this work, day in and day out. This includes paying attention to self-care and wellness when working in an area that requires great emotional attention and crucial decision-making for the safety and well being of the students, the campus, and myself.

Alfred: There is likely no one who works in the field of higher education who isn't deeply affected by the tragedies that have occurred on campuses like Virginia Tech and Columbine High School. It has unfortunately been the leitmotif of my career as a professional in the field of student affairs. The interview for one of my earliest jobs in the field happened just days after the Columbine tragedy. The impact of the event had clearly affected most of the people with whom I was interviewing, and towards the end of the day, I was asked how we can continue to show up in any useful way to our jobs in the wake of such awful circumstances. My response then remains my response today: Our role is to provide our communities with our wisdom and support, and to catch students when they fall.

Becca: The work of student affairs case management can sometimes feel overwhelming, because we meet with students who may be experiencing the profound effects of trauma, who may be experiencing mental health challenges, or who may be acting in disruptive ways across campus. There are a handful of functional areas that work primarily with students during the lowest point of their college careers. As a student affairs professional, I have been drawn to those areas. My sense of responsibility to my community drives my career path to one that allows me to be an active bystander in all that I do. In working with students in distress, I am able to play a role in intervention, response, and repair. The work that I do in student affairs case management speaks

to my deep values of integrity, community, and resilience. By helping others, I serve my purpose and work to make the campus a safer place.

Conclusion

In the coming years, the specialization of case management within the area and context of student affairs work will become more common. Applying the tenets of Student Affairs Professional Competencies is one of the foundational steps that can be taken in establishing consistent standards of excellence in this particular work. While still in its infancy, this area will undoubtedly become a cornerstone of both graduate-level higher education programs and best practice at colleges and universities throughout the nation.

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