

child care services and student enrollment and retention. Further research needs to be done to examine the relationship between an adequate, inexpensive, conveniently-located child care situation and students' ability to continue their education.

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THE REALITY OF BEING A FIRST YEAR PROFESSIONAL

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The purpose of this article is to inform graduate students in student affairs of the circumstances surrounding the adjustment to the first professional position. The authors' goal is to promote awareness, rather than prescribe a course of action.

The transition from graduate school to the first student affairs position involves more than physical relocation. Social and institutional factors also play a prominent role in this transition. The first job provides an opportunity to apply the theories learned and practiced in the student affairs graduate program. However, the first year professional may find this knowledge is less important than management, interpersonal, and budgeting skills (Spencer & Carlson, 1987).

Preparation programs stress one or more of three areas: student development, administration, and counseling (Saddlemire, 1987). For example, the CAS Standards and Guidelines for Student Service/Development Programs (1986) advocates that a curriculum with a student development emphasis include coursework in Organizational Behavior, American College Student and Environment, Helping Relationships, and Career Development. Some graduates discover that in their new positions few colleagues are familiar with student development theories and, therefore, they often are not incorporated into departmental goals (Julian, 1987).

The political environment of a university may affect the use of student development theory (Julian, 1987). Webster defines politics as "the total complex of relations between people and society." Another definition is offered by Ambrose Bierce: "the conduct of public affairs for private advantage" (Julian, 1987). For example, chief administrators establish goals for the institution but, the motive behind these goals and the manner in which they will be operationalized may not be clear. In addition, goals differ throughout units of the organization. The use of student development theory in student affairs units may not be effective if the institution is not committed to the welfare of the student.

Graduate students often fail to realize the importance of politics in an organization when entering the first position because they lack training in how to be effective managers. As new professionals, an awareness of the elements of an organization is essential. The political environment of an organization influences the institution's receptiveness to one's ideas. For instance, both

formal and informal organizational charts exist (Kuh, 1983). The formal, written charts, however, may not resemble the unspoken chain of command of the informal charts. The new professional should be aware of the existence of both charts since they can affect program implementation. Also, the recent graduate should know the history of both the university and the department because this can affect the success of programs. If an idea has been tried before and has failed, the acceptance of that idea may be faced with hesitancy unless the first year professional proposing the idea can devise a new and better strategy.

Some student affairs professionals enter the field because they enjoy the student lifestyle (Spencer & Carlson, 1987). The practical experiences acquired during graduate school do little to dissuade this feeling of eternal "studenthood." However, university administration has norms that are different than those of students. Time constraints and work ethics for professionals differ from those of graduate students. In addition, one is no longer a paraprofessional and thus relationships with students change. With good interpersonal skills, one is able to gain the respect of students and administrators while encouraging the development of the mentor-protege relationship.

This issue of respect continues to the work setting. The first year professional may find him/herself in a position of supervising an office staff that may not be receptive to the ideas and orders of someone new, especially if age and experience are factors. For example, a secretary may have twenty years of experience in the department and have worked with only one supervisor in that time. The individual entering this situation needs to be aware of the existing norms and attempt to operate within them. Overwhelming the staff with new ideas and rules will not aid implementation. The respect of the staff is the key to cooperation. Success will occur through effective interpersonal skills such as decision making, leadership, and mediating skills (Spencer & Carlson, 1987). The new professional may spend more time mediating staff conflicts than s/he ever imagined (Julian, 1987).

Finally, knowledge of the budgeting process is important for recent graduates. Through assistantships and internships in graduate school, students have little, if any, responsibilities in budgeting. This lack of experience may result in little knowledge of how to manage resources. When entering a job, it is likely that the budget will already be in place for the fiscal year. Also, the new professional should know who the caretaker of the budget is. Furthermore, the first year professional needs to identify the flexibility of the budget when planning a program.

The issues of management, interpersonal and budgeting skills can contribute to a student affairs professional's decision to leave the field. Holmes, Verrier and Chisholm (1983) reported an attrition rate of 60 percent by the sixth year for student personnel workers. Another factor is the limited advancement possibilities for professionals holding only a master's degree. One should

remember that in order to achieve the ranks of higher administration, the doctoral degree is mandatory (Saddlemire, 1987). Therefore, those who are seeking quick advancement opportunities tend to find positions outside student affairs.

This article is not meant to discourage graduate students in hopes of acquiring a position in student affairs. Rather, the goal of the authors is to convey some of the realities of the university work setting. Graduate students should take advantage of courses outside of their programmed curriculum to develop skills in management, budgeting, and interpersonal relationships. Although these courses will provide a foundation, adjusting to the job may depend more upon the new professional's adaptability to a university work setting.

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