

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. DONALD HOSSLER

Josh Powers

As the students of the Indiana University College Student Personnel program welcomed a new academic year this past Fall, a warm welcome was also given to a new faculty member, Dr. Donald Hossler. As the new coordinator of the Master's program, Dr. Hossler enriches an already well-known program, which boasts such scholars as Dr. Robert Schaffer, Dr. Elizabeth Greenleaf, Dr. Nancy Evans, Dr. Phillip Chamberlain, and Dr. George Kuh as distinguished faculty members, both past and present.

Dr. Hossler arrived at Indiana University from Loyola University in Chicago, where he served as a faculty member in Education. His recent research efforts include studies on enrollment management (*NASPA Journal*, 1985), and student college choice. Later in the year, Dr. Hossler will have a monograph on the topic of enrollment management published by *Jossey-Bass*, as well as a second book on the topic by late in the spring.

Dr. Hossler's introduction to the field of Higher Education and Student Affairs is self-described as "backward" in nature. In an interview last year, Dr. Hossler described his background, his philosophy on Higher Education, his goals for IU's Student Personnel program, and what he perceives as trends in the field.

Question: How did you get your start in this field?

Dr. Hossler: My entrance into the field, as I believe it is with many people, was rather backward. I graduated from California Lutheran College in Thousand Oaks, California, with a bachelor's degree in psychology. I was very involved in extra-curricular activities, such as serving as a resident assistant and chairing the college's judicial affairs committee. I had plans to become a teacher at that time, and after I graduated I taught fifth and sixth grades in Thousand Oaks. During that time, I also took on the position as freshman basketball coach at Cal Lutheran. After two years of working with college students, I began to think about working on a college campus.

An opportunity to work on campus came up when a Director of Residence Life position opened in one of the men's halls at Cal Lutheran. For the next ten years I gained experience in student activities, residence life, as the Assistant Dean of Students, and then as the Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs. During this time, I earned my Doctorate in Higher Education at Claremont Graduate School. In 1981, I accepted a faculty position at Loyola.

Question: What sparked your interest in Indiana University's Student Personnel program?

Dr. Hossler: I became aware of the opening while speaking with Dr. George Kuh. I was quite happy teaching at Loyola at the time and I was not looking for another position. However, after speaking with Dr. Kuh, the position sounded very challenging, so I submitted my application. I told my wife and friends that I was pursuing the position at IU because it seemed as though it was a professional opportunity worth exploring. Yet, I was very happy at Loyola and had plans to stay.

My decision to accept the position was influenced by my visit to the campus during my interview. After seeing the rich resources the University has to offer, I became much more aware of the high caliber of the program. On a personal level, I believed that I would be able to balance family and work more easily at IU. My schedule at Loyola incorporated night classes, which meant that I was home late each night. At IU, balancing my time is realistic, and so I am able to spend more time with my family. Finally, I realized the strong tradition of excellence that makes Indiana University a very nice environment for faculty members.

Question: What trends do you see in the field of College Student Personnel?

Dr. Hossler: Over the last twenty or twenty-five years, we have seen a slow shift in the perception and direction of the field. Historically, the student affairs profession was an entirely counseling-based profession. In fact, if one looks at the history of most student affairs and higher education programs, the roots are in guidance and counseling programs, reflecting the fact that most student services professionals viewed themselves primarily as counselors. However, the emergence of the student development literature moved the focus somewhat away from counseling. At the same time, a large body of research on the college student began to emerge, primarily based on sociological and psychological literature. This research provided another body of literature upon which the student affairs field could draw.

In the last ten or fifteen years, however, there has been a shift from counseling to a student development focus as the basis for the profession. Furthermore, in the last few years, colleges and universities have entered an age of increased accountability to the public and governing bodies. This is due to declining financial resources and increased competition for those resources. As a result, this has created a stronger managerial thrust in the profession. Student affairs administrators must be able to demonstrate that they are good financial managers, know how to supervise people, run programs efficiently and effectively, and evaluate those programs.

A stronger managerial emphasis is creeping into the profession that was not evident when the field was viewed primarily as a counseling-based profession. The shift toward student development and student impact, plus the increased importance of managerial or administrative skills is having an impact on the profession.

Question: As chairperson of IU's Master's program, what goals and directions have you set?

Dr. Hossler: I see no major changes to be made in the program at this time. It is a fine program, and it did not receive its reputation by accident. However, there are some areas that I have been interested in fine-tuning. I have discussed these

changes with my colleagues, Dr. Chamberlain, Dr. Kuh and Dr. Nuss. Perhaps the program's curriculum should provide greater opportunity for electives. Presently, it is a very prescriptive program, which does not allow for electives to be taken within the School of Education. I would like to give students the opportunity to take as many as six hours within the school, so that if a student is interested in specialty areas within education he or she could pursue that interest without losing credits. Students could take education finance or law courses or study some other specialty topic. Here at IU Dr. John Bean is probably one of the top five researchers in the area of student attrition. I would love it if he would offer a master's level seminar in this area of study. Yet, if we offered such a course now, there would be little incentive to take it since it would have to be in addition to everything else. My goal is to offer these types of courses without adding significant hours to the curriculum.

I would also like students to demonstrate competency on either mainframe or microcomputers before they graduate from the program. Computer skills would prove extremely helpful to our graduates. At this time, the easiest way for students to achieve competency on the computer is by attending a BACS (Bloomington Academic Computer Systems) course for non-credit. Such courses usually consist of three to four sessions that give students exposure to data processing skills. This change in the program, as well as others, would only be fine-tuning an already excellent curriculum.

Question: How have your personal goals changed or developed since your arrival at Indiana University?

Dr. Hossler: I believe my scholarly interests have remained the same. I feel I am pursuing them just as avidly as before I arrived here. Again, the rich resources aid a faculty member in engaging in serious scholarship. This is no exception for me; everything from interaction with colleagues to small grant programs has been invaluable. In that sense, there have been no changes in my scholarly goals.

In one sense I have changed. That is, my view of my own responsibility for this program has been strengthened. When I arrived at IU, I realized the excellence of the program, but I did not fully comprehend its rich tradition. I recall speaking to a friend and saying, "I am beginning to feel a caretaker's responsibility for this program, and I will try and do my best to better it." This has been the most unanticipated change for me: the feeling of responsibility and a little bit of burden to do everything I can to maintain, if not enhance, the excellent reputation of the IU Student Personnel program.

Question: Recently, many students in the program and faculty members, such as yourself, attended a Midwest conference at Miami University of Ohio. What are some of your thoughts on other schools' programs and is there anything they are doing that you would like to try at IU?

Dr. Hossler: I came home from the Midwest meeting feeling that we really do have a strong program here at IU, and I feel fortunate that we do not face some of the problems other schools are encountering. However, I did come back from the conference with some ideas, which I feel might enhance our curriculum. For example, I think we might emphasize evaluation in the U580 course (capstone, or

final Master's level course). Faculty members at this conference discussed the fact that Master's students seldom become researchers, rather they are frequently involved in program planning and evaluation. A stronger emphasis on program evaluation, rather than an emphasis on research, is more practical for graduates.

Another observation that struck me as helpful was the comments of faculty members concerning the application of critical thinking to our field. It seems that many faculty members engage their students in critical thinking, so that students really learn to think through an issue and realize the implications of that issue. The ability to ask good questions is perhaps a skill more important than any other. I am not saying that IU does not encourage such skills, but I would like to see a greater emphasis placed on critical thinking.

I would also like to emphasize to the students the importance of staying well-informed of developments in our field. This means reading the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and journals in our field as a way of ensuring re-education and re-tooling. Paramount for faculty is the need to emphasize this notion in the classroom.

Question: Are there any concluding remarks you would like to make? Is there something we have not addressed?

Dr. Hossler: I would like to say that I am very glad to be at Indiana University. Sometimes people make moves and then wonder whether they have made the correct decision. There are no second thoughts in my mind. The students and my colleagues have made me feel very much at home. Indiana University, this program, and Bloomington all make this a very nice place to be.

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APPLYING MORAL DEVELOPMENT THEORIES TO RESIDENCE HALLS INTERVENTION TRAINING

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The moral development theories of Kohlberg and Gilligan are examined, and an application of a combined theoretical framework to residence hall intervention strategies is made.

Introduction

The need to focus on personal development as a primary aim of education has been advocated by many writers (Straub & Rodgers, 1978). Furthermore, Smith (1978) observed that the collegiate experience has the potential to make a significant difference in whether a student's moral thinking stabilizes or moves successfully to higher levels of moral reasoning. Cognitive development theories are useful in understanding the differing developmental positions of students (in this application, Resident Assistants and residents) as well as in devising and implementing strategies to facilitate students' progress along the developmental continuum. This approach can be viewed as a method of facilitating student development which represents an alternative to the usual practice of programming. This article will describe an application of moral development theory to a residence hall intervention training workshop and the underlying potential for moral development.

The Theoretical Basis

Before applying specific moral development theories to practice, it is first important to identify the theories used for the intervention workshop as cognitive developmental in nature. Thus, the general characteristics of cognitive development theory are integral to the application of the moral development theories of Kohlberg (1971) and Gilligan (1982).

According to King (1978), cognitive developmental theory uses an "informational processing" view of development. In other words, the core focus of cognitive development is one of "how" a person reasons or processes external stimuli rather than "what" the actual thought outcome is (Rodgers, 1980). The developmental phenomena is based on a structure or set of assumptions that defines how an individual will typically perceive, comprehend, organize, and evaluate life experiences. An individual is thought to develop invariantly through developmental stages in a qualitative, sequential, hierarchical, and universal manner (Stonewater & Stonewater, 1983). Finally, as Rodgers (1980) noted, developmental change occurs as a result of cognitive conflict or dissonance between an individual's current thought process and that of more advanced,