

## Robert H. Shaffer

Dr. Shaffer, former chairperson of the Departments of College Student Personnel Administration and Higher Education, retired on June 1, 1981. To thank and recognize a truly remarkable individual, the 1982 edition of the *Journal of the Indiana University Student Personnel Association* is dedicated to Dr. Robert H. Shaffer. He served Indiana University for 39 years as an administrator and professor. His enthusiasm, optimism, and guidance as a scholar, mentor and friend touched the lives of literally thousands of students at Indiana University. As a colleague to both students and professionals, his humor, zeal and vitality were contagious. The editors chose to record some of Dr. Shaffer's thoughts on his professional and personal life, rather than attempt to document his contributions on an international level and his service to professional organizations by listing titles and accomplishments. The excerpts which follow, from an interview with Dr. Shaffer on January 21, 1982, reflect his genuine concern for others, his unselfish dedication to the profession of student personnel, and his unique insights into higher education.

*Dr. Shaffer, how have you adjusted to retirement, or do you even feel retired?*

My first year of retirement is probably the busiest year I have ever had. This is due in part to my poor judgement. Assuming I was going to have all this time, I accepted a lot of speaking engagements. In the fall I had 12 different speaking engagements combined with a lot of doctoral students who needed some guidance to finish (dissertation) work. In addition, I was also writing a couple of chapters for a book.

I am leaving for six weeks this spring to go to Mexico, then my wife and I hope to travel to mainland China this summer to spend three or four weeks.

Now, in regard to retirement, I recommend it to anybody! In fact, I'm trying to organize a retire-now-and-work later plan!

*How did you get involved in student personnel work, and were there any individuals that influenced your decision?*

I entered college to do youth work. The Dean of Men at DePauw University came back from the 1934 NASPA convention and said "Bob, each of us at NASPA agreed to call in some student on the campus and discuss 'deaning' with them. I'm talking to you about being a dean someday." Whether or not my interest in the profession resulted from that conversation, I do not know. Certainly it did not inhibit my decision.

I actually entered the field through vocational guidance. Harry Kittson of the Teachers College-Columbia University appointed me to the editorial board of *Occupations Magazine* and encouraged me to be a vocational counselor. It was through this I got started in the National Vocational Guidance Association (NVGA). While Harry Kittson was encouraging me to get involved with the NVGA, at the same time Gilbert Wrenn encouraged me to get active in the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) by appointing me secretary. When the unification movement which created the American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA) emerged, my activity in those two associations was the political base which got me elected as the first president of APGA.

*If you had it to do over again, and you could not choose higher education, what career would you choose?*

If I had to pick a career over again, I very frankly wouldn't change anything. I have been at Indiana University for 39 years. For my own professional advancement maybe I should have moved to another institution. It is true that in the future, in order to get the large promotion it may be necessary to change institutions. I sense this is a change in the educational environment. During my era Indiana University was a growth environment, growing from 4,000 to 33,000 students. I could always look forward to advancement, but now with a decline in enrollment, a person could be doing a top-notch job and never be promoted.

*What are the best and worst decisions you made during your career at IU?*

I made a number of bad decisions. Probably, I was not assertive enough at the administrative level to interpret the work of student personnel. I assumed that people knew what a Dean did, and yet the fact is the Trustees and others did not know. I remember once during a minor confrontation with the Board of Trustees, one of the members said "But Bob, you don't have to stir them (students) up!" This occurred when I was arguing that freedom of speech and a very active discussion of issues, in this case the Vietnam War, was good for the campus. The attitude of this board member was that at least one should try to keep the lid on. I started the idea of a Peoples' Park in Dunn Meadow, modeled after Hyde Park in London, without clearance from the Trustees. My idea was that any issue, no matter how controversial or repugnant, could be discussed there. Some people felt this was improper. I, of course, was very proud of it and wrote and spoke about it nationally.

I think the best decision I made was to be absolutely open. This was at some pain many times. Openness meant one made decisions in public, explained the reasons for a decision, and advised people in advance of the decision to be made. Those people who made decisions behind other's backs always lived in a state of fear and guilt.

*You have been both an administrator and professor. How would you compare and contrast the rewards and satisfactions of these roles?*

I enjoyed my administrative role and felt I was relatively successful. Those who felt I was limited thought I devoted too much time to students. This was a criticism in the 1960's when I spent many hours each week at demonstrations and discussions. I was disappointed at the attitude of many students who felt anyone who was a friend of an administrator must either be dumb or a traitor to the student movement. Yet, I often had militants calling me on this campus, warning me something was about to happen, but saying "Look, don't take this personally." I appreciated this relationship.

I don't know how to compare the administrative with the professorial role. A person wins a few and loses a few. You have students who think you are a lousy teacher, and maybe you are; and you have some administrative colleagues who think you are a lousy administrator, and maybe you are. Likewise, you think the same about them sometimes!

The difference today is that you must be more open. It is necessary to go to your top administrator, in my case it was the President, and articulate your activities, successes, and weaknesses to get some reaction. I frankly never did that, except in one case. I went into President Herman Wells and said "Look, I haven't had a chance to see you for about six months to talk about some of these problems. In the meantime, I had to do the things I had to do." President Wells just laughed and said, "Bob, I have my ways of letting people know when I am not satisfied with what they are do-

ing." In effect, he told me to get out. Now that was a very good relationship!

As far as teaching, if a professor shows interest in the student's development, that student responds both with a feeling of challenge as well as some feeling to live up to that interest or perceived potentiality. I always loved teaching. A student who does well is a reward in itself. With reference to students in general, the key as I perceive it is to avoid being paternalistic, which maybe I didn't avoid, but rather hold out to students that we are both professionals, and thereby, colleagues. I hope this philosophy has characterized our relationships in this department where we are all in the same boat in the learning process.

*You have been a mentor to many students here at IU. Do you have any thoughts to share about the mentor role?*

Mentoring, of course, is a new name. It used to be called the "old-boy syndrome." I think mentoring is an outgrowth of our student personnel field. Both Betty Greenleaf and I, maybe improperly, did have a very maternal and paternal relationship to our students because they were "our" people, as we saw them rise in the profession. We tried to keep a close relationship.

I have a feeling that as tough economic situations present a challenge to the traditional beliefs of our student personnel and reorder our priorities, we are going to need to reinforce each other in terms of morale, career decisions, and help each other make changes even in mid-life.

*You have had a chance to travel extensively during your career, and to consult with individuals in many countries. What are the important aspects of consulting?*

Consulting work is a two-edged sword. All the work we did in Afghanistan has just blown up. In fact, it is rather tragic. Anyone who has had an association with the West or Indiana University is not only physically in danger, two students we worked with have been executed, but many students are also out of work or exiled from the country. Dr. Eberle and I are supporting some of these students, helping them get relocated in Europe or in the United States. That's the tragic part.

Now, it's fun to visit Bangkok, Taiwan or Thailand where the contribution you may have made is still there. For example, the student union at National Taiwan Normal University is outstanding even by standards in this country. In Bangkok the student personnel program under the direction of one of our former students would do credit to any university in this country.

In Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt it's fun to visit the students, but in a way discouraging. The students haven't been able to make progress that we would like by our standards. They feel frustrated, and I in turn feel frustrated. How do you help someone who has what we would term a "Western orientation," but the local culture both politically and economically prevents them from making progress that is desirable?

*Traditionally the three functions of the university have been teaching, service and research, and your career has certainly been characterized by service. Do you think this is still emphasized by universities?*

I have never felt there should be a division between the functions of the university. I don't like the method of constructing a dossier for promotion in which these three functions must be divided. During my Assistant Dean tenure, I was advisor to several student groups. I think these types of activities must be viewed as enjoyable, rather than a burden. This is what concerns me so much about the current scene,

where the demand for excellence in research is almost a requirement for promotion. Whether or not you like research to the exclusion of service or spontaneous teaching, when you say, "No, I won't do something because I have to get this damn research done," I'm afraid it is a negative feeling. I am concerned it will hurt some of our young people today. I can't remember doing research under the feeling that I *had* to do research. Any research I did was from interest in the substance, rather than the pressure to publish.

To show how much things have changed, when I was promoted from associate to full professor, I literally did not know my name had been nominated for promotion, nor did I have anything to do with the preparation of the dossier. Today, the individual must initiate the dossier and take a responsibility to see that the appropriate information substantiating one's eligibility for promotion or tenure is displayed.

If it is a fact of life that you will be judged, then you should not be so naive as to assume that nothing can be done about it. I urge every young professional to have a conference a minimum of once a year or more with decision-makers involved with promotion or tenure. For example, if you have to approach a senior colleague in another department who is on the promotion committee to discuss criteria for promotion, then do it.

*If you were writing an autobiography, what accomplishments would you want to mention?*

There are probably four things I would be sure to mention in my autobiography as accomplishments. First, I took a great interest in foreign students. I have been proud of the fact that Indiana University is known throughout the country as a great place for foreign students. American students needed interaction with foreign students for their own benefit. The typical Hoosier is by nature very ethnocentric. Second, I am very proud that two years after my Deanship ended, I was elected Secretary of the Bloomington Faculty Council, a position which normally goes to a faculty member that is held in high regard by other faculty. For a Dean who just two years prior was often the target of many faculty resolutions, I thought they (faculty) recognized I was open and above board, and also had the interest of the university and faculty at heart. Third, I thought as a young person I made a contribution as one of the founders and first Presidents of APGA. Finally, the many contacts that I have been able to maintain with former students is also important. Our Christmas card list is probably much too long at 20 cents a piece for postage!

*If we could rent a space large enough, like the Rose Bowl, and gather all your colleagues, friends and former students, what legacy would you leave them?*

The legacy I hope to leave is that we have a very important field. Any field that is devoted to helping people be better will be in demand. One never need fear the future of this field if one sticks to this objective—that one is sincerely interested in helping others; faculty, students and colleagues alike, be better and achieve their goals. I do feel that administrative structure will change in various places. Don't pin security on a job title or administrative structure. Pin security, rather, on the functions one performs, knowing they are important to the institution and the people served. Finally, I hope that the student personnel field of all fields is characterized by the interest and willingness to help every other colleague be the best professional person they can be. If this spirit prevails, then I don't worry about the future of our field. It will be worthwhile.

## AGGREGATE PERCEPTIONS OF "SUPPORTIVENESS" IN A STUDENT PERSONNEL PREPARATION PROGRAM

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*Sanford suggested that when students are confronted with challenges, they should concurrently receive support. Interpersonal relationships, particularly with faculty and peers, appear to be a critical source of this support for graduate students. This study assessed aggregate perceptions of the "supportiveness" of a graduate department by eliciting responses regarding the real and ideal frequency of support interaction. Students were generally satisfied with support from peers, but reported less satisfaction with faculty support.*

Most graduate students experience considerable stress as they adjust to their new student role, face financial pressures, assume new work responsibilities, and cope with academic demands. Tension and anxiety seem to be a natural part of the graduate school experience (Baird, 1969; Katz & Hartnett, 1976; Lange, 1980; Winston, 1976). Sanford (1962) has suggested that students, when confronted with tension-filled challenges, must concurrently receive support to meet such challenges satisfactorily. Interpersonal relationships, particularly with faculty and peers, appear to be a critical source of this support for graduate students (Butler, 1972; Evans, 1980).

Although the cited studies underscore the importance of support, few attempts to characterize the "supportiveness" of graduate departments have been made (Baird, 1969; Katz & Hartnett, 1976). Gathering such information would seem to be an essential first step toward improving the effectiveness of graduate education. This paper reports one attempt to objectively assess support in a college student personnel preparation program. Faculty academic support, faculty nonacademic support, peer academic support, and peer nonacademic support were the four areas chosen for examination.

One method of assessing environments, used successfully with undergraduate departments, involves aggregating student perceptions. Pace (1969) and Moos (1976) using the College and University Environment Scale (CUES) and the University Residence Environmental Scale (URES) respectively, were able to reliably assess perceived sociopsychological climates. Moreover, these aggregate perceptions can be used to describe and distinguish environments. Simply gathering data on students' perceptions of the existing environments, however, did not seem to adequately address the purposes of this study. An ideal standard was needed against which to compare the real support level for a measure of "supportiveness". In other words, the focus of this study was to determine whether the existing level of support adequately satisfied student needs or wants. The authors acknowledge the ambiguity between