



The Intersection of Theory and Practice in Student Affairs

How to Balance Purpose, Priorities, and Planning

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Agenda

- About Amelia & NASPA
- What's Going On? - Current Trends in Higher Education and Student Affairs
- The Intersection of Theory and Practice in Student Affairs: Things to Remember and 3 Practical Strategies
- Spotlight on Schlossberg and Bronfenbrenner
- Advice for the Future
- Resources
- Questions

About Amelia

Optimist | Researcher | Connector | Friend



About NASPA



- 100-year-old association that provides professional development, advocacy, and research for over 14,000 members
- Focused on common functional areas within student affairs (housing, advising, conduct, assessment) as well as broader higher education themes (access, persistence, and degree completion)

What's Going On?

Leading Questions about the Current State of Higher Education
and Student Affairs



The Current State of Higher Education: 5 Macro Questions

- How are institutions' preparing for their financial stability over the next 2-3 years?
- How are institutions balancing free speech and safety?
- How is COVID-19 spurring temporary and/or permanent shifts to residential campus operations?
- How are professionals monitoring students' progress in virtual and/or blended learning environments?
- Do we need new talking points for debates about the value of a college experience?



The Current State of Student Affairs: 5 Micro Questions

- How are divisions realigning financial and personnel resources across functional areas?
- How are professionals providing emergency support to students?
- How are institutions managing career preparation?
- How are institutions dealing with racial inequities and injustice?
- How are professionals delivering programs and services in virtual and/or blended learning environments?



Frequent Focus Areas in Student Affairs over the Past Year

- **Career Services**
virtual career fairs, internships, student employment
- **Orientation**
virtual tours, direct phone calls to students
- **Crisis Management**
contact tracing, furloughs, reductions in force, dispersing CARES Act funding
- **Advising, Coaching, and Mentoring**
virtual tutoring services, transfer student options
- **Mental Health and Counseling Services**
telehealth options, policies regarding student health records
- **Student Engagement**
providing safe options, fraternity and sorority life, helping students manage isolation
- **Student Conduct**
new Title IX regulations, honor code violations
- **Housing and Dining Services**
lower capacity, modified options, in-person service delivery

Student Affairs Professionals' Voices - May 2020



75% Report that Working Remotely Is Difficult

Challenges: communication, suitable work location; workload, family responsibilities, mental health



Many Desire Professional Development

Areas: virtual program development, virtual meeting facilitation, video production, supervision, crisis management, wellness and self-care



Professionals Expect Several Virtual Practices to Continue

Practices: chat communication, digital document sharing and signing, telehealth and counseling, engagement via social media



Most are Concerned about Higher Education

Concern areas: future of higher education (72%); institution's sustainability (53%); student affairs offerings (31%)



Some Are Concerned about Quality

Areas: low utilization rates; budget cuts; designing effective and accessible hybrid virtual/in-person events for the future

**NKU Question:
How do you recommend
we integrate student
development theory
with our work?**

“From the paternalistic faculty authority figure who supervised Harvard students in 1936 to the contemporary student affairs professional who uses developmental theory to understand students' personal growth and learning, student development has always existed in some form as a goal of educators. (p.5)”



Integrating Student Development in Our Work: Things to Remember

- **Each student's journey is ever-evolving.**

Phased or staged theories are just as important as ecological theories.

- **There is not a perfect theory to apply in every situation.**

Although some of our core responsibilities remain, new challenges and opportunities are emerging.

- **It is important to examine more than just outcomes.**

Needs assessments and process assessments are just as important as outcomes-related metrics.

- **Learning happens everywhere.**

Not only are students developing - so are we as professionals.

3 Strategies for Integrating Student Development Theory in Our Work

Indicators from Higher Education Trends

3 Strategies for Integrating Student Development Theory



Set Clear Goals

Example: Expanded Definition of Student Success



Prioritize Communication

Example: Effective Communication with Students

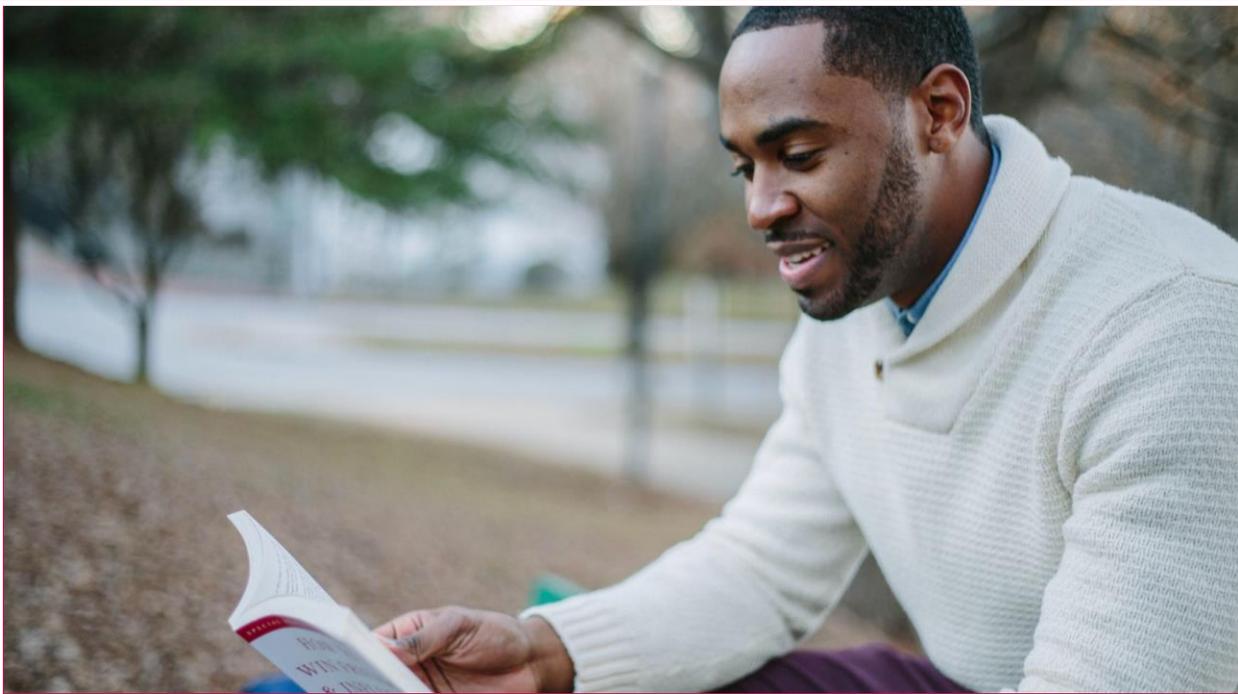


Seek and Share Knowledge

Example: Understanding Your Data Identity

Strategy #1

Set Clear Goals





Student Success Is Everywhere at Our Institutions



Positions

Student Success Coach
Director of Student Success



Programs

Campus-Wide Student Success Initiatives
Student Success Summit



Departments

Office of Student Success
Student Success Center



Metrics

Student Success Goals, Objectives, and Indicators



Mission

Strategic dedication and commitment to student success

How Are We Currently Defining Student Success?



Retention



Persistence



Graduation

NKU Question:
Which are the most important theories to consider as a part of our work in student affairs?

Schlossberg's Transition Theory



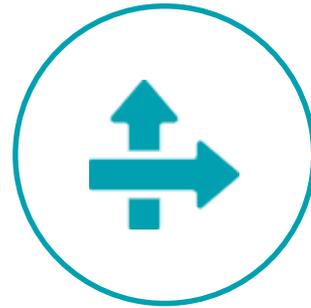
Schlossberg's Transition Theory



- A framework created to connect adults to the help needed to cope with the ordinary and extraordinary process of living (Evans, et al., 213)
- A transition is described as any event or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles (Evans, et al., 215)
- Types of events: anticipated (occur predictably); unanticipated (not predictable or scheduled); nonevents (expected to occur but do not)



Schlossberg's Transition Theory



Situation



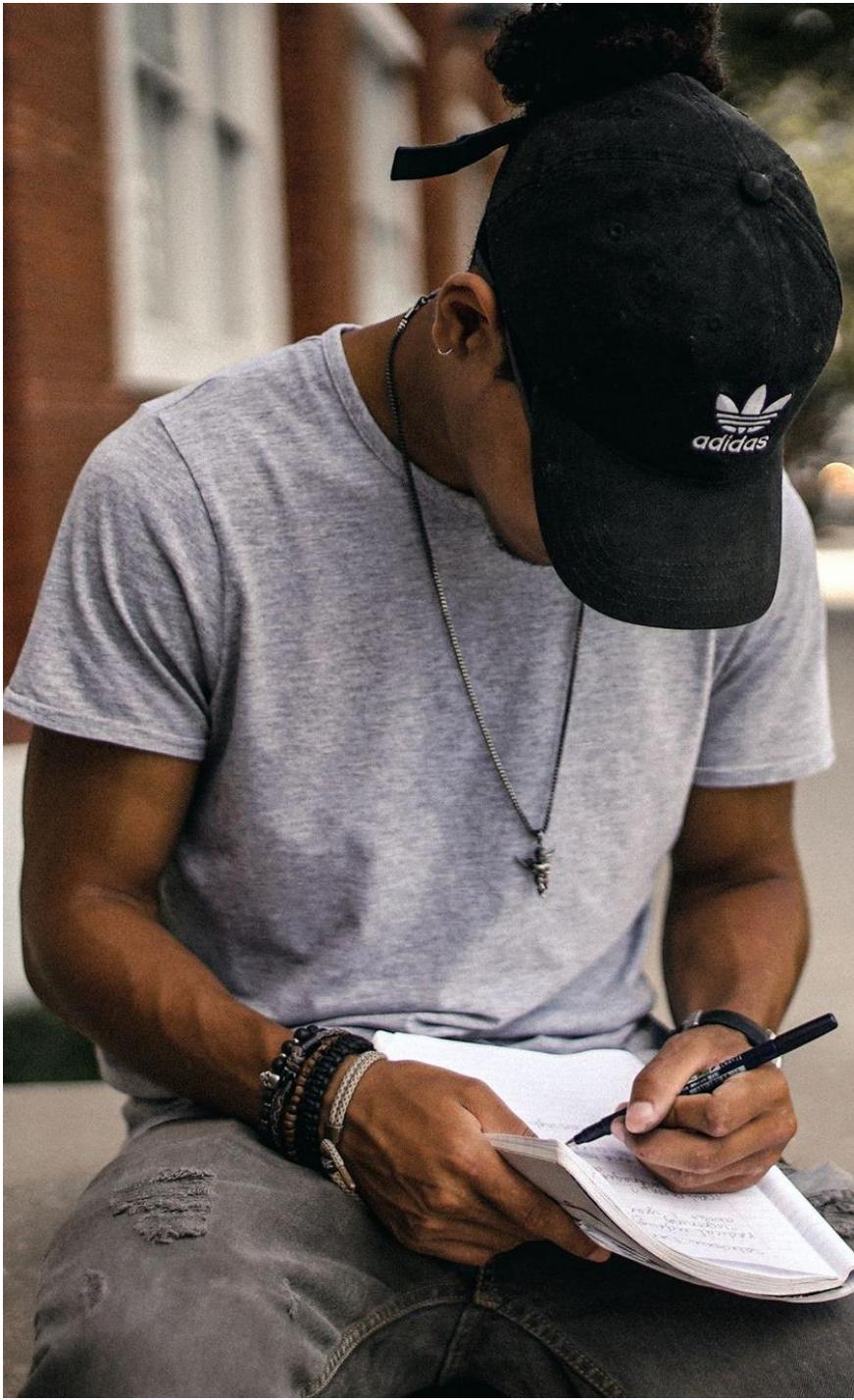
Support



Self



Strategies



Let's Expand Our Descriptions of Student Success - A Successful Student:



Understands how to balance competing individual and community priorities



Knows how to manage resources for which they have and share responsibility



Realizes their unique contributions and can leverage abilities to improve their conditions

**NKU Question:
In what ways do you see
student development
theory intersecting
with our daily work?**

45%



of students reported feeling so depressed that it was difficult to function during the past 12 months

65%



of students reported feeling overwhelming anxiety during the past 12 months

“If social injustice contributes to poor mental health outcomes for people, even as professionals we have to figure out how we speak to that and really validate that.

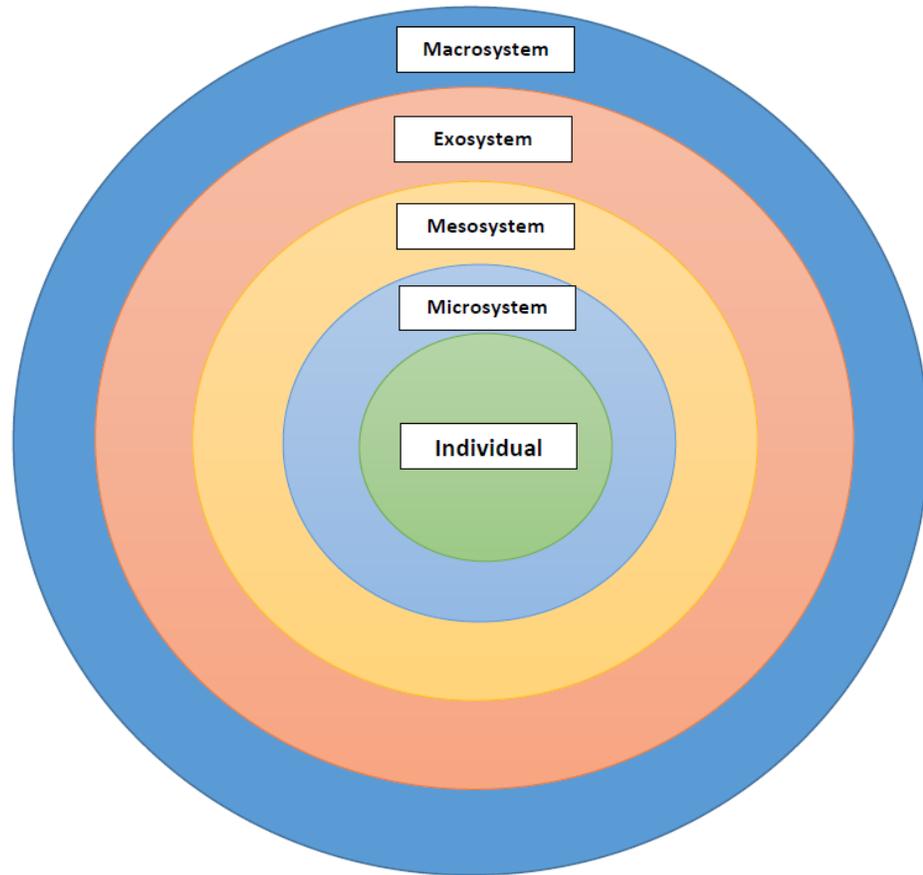
Those are things that go into being proponents of mental health on a campus -- not just dealing with the individual.”

Sharon Mitchell, president of the Association of University and College Counseling Center Directors

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory



Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory



Microsystem: groups that have direct access to the student (examples: family, roommate, peers)

Mesosystem: relationships between groups in the microsystem

Exosystem: factors that affect individual's life but do not have a direct relationship (examples: industry, local politics)

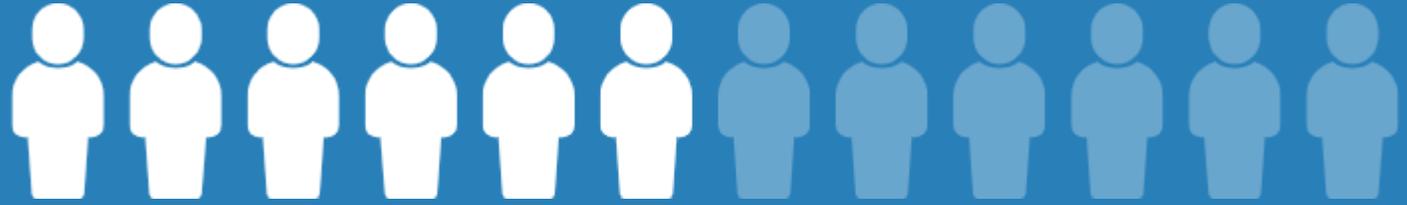
Macrosystem: larger culture that affects the individual and others (examples: attitudes, legal system)

Strategy #2

Prioritize Communication



50%



of students say they do not always read emails from their institution or academic department

40%



of students say they do not always read emails from their advisors

Key Factors for Communicating with Students via Email

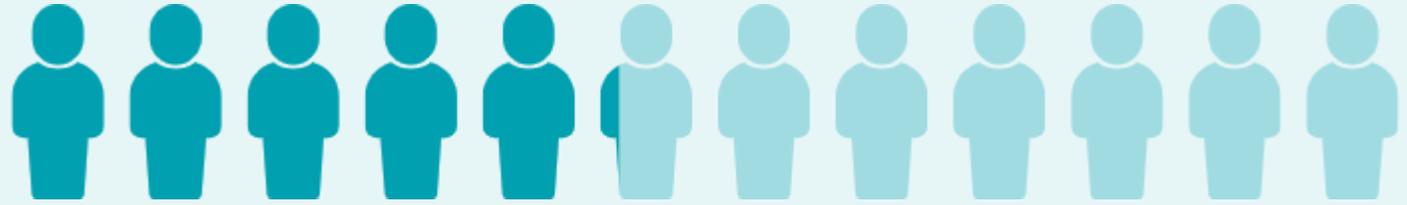
- Governance structures, policies, and processes
- Building awareness about email communication standards among faculty, students, and staff
- Data to assess the effectiveness of the email strategy
- Value of pairing email with other modalities
- Functionality of technology platforms

Strategy #3

Seek and Share Knowledge

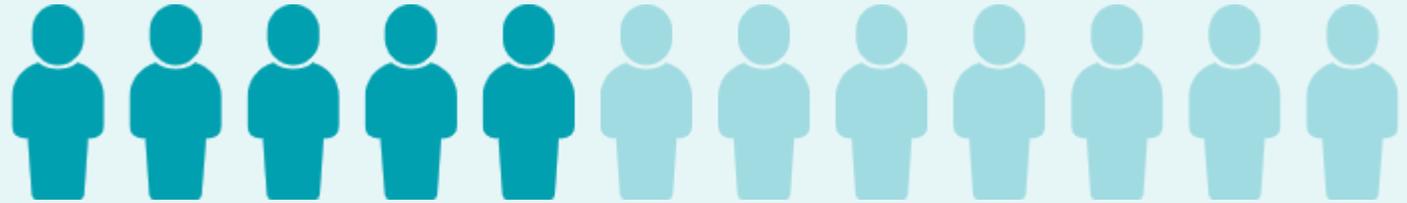


43%



of respondents indicated no collaboration with financial aid

41%

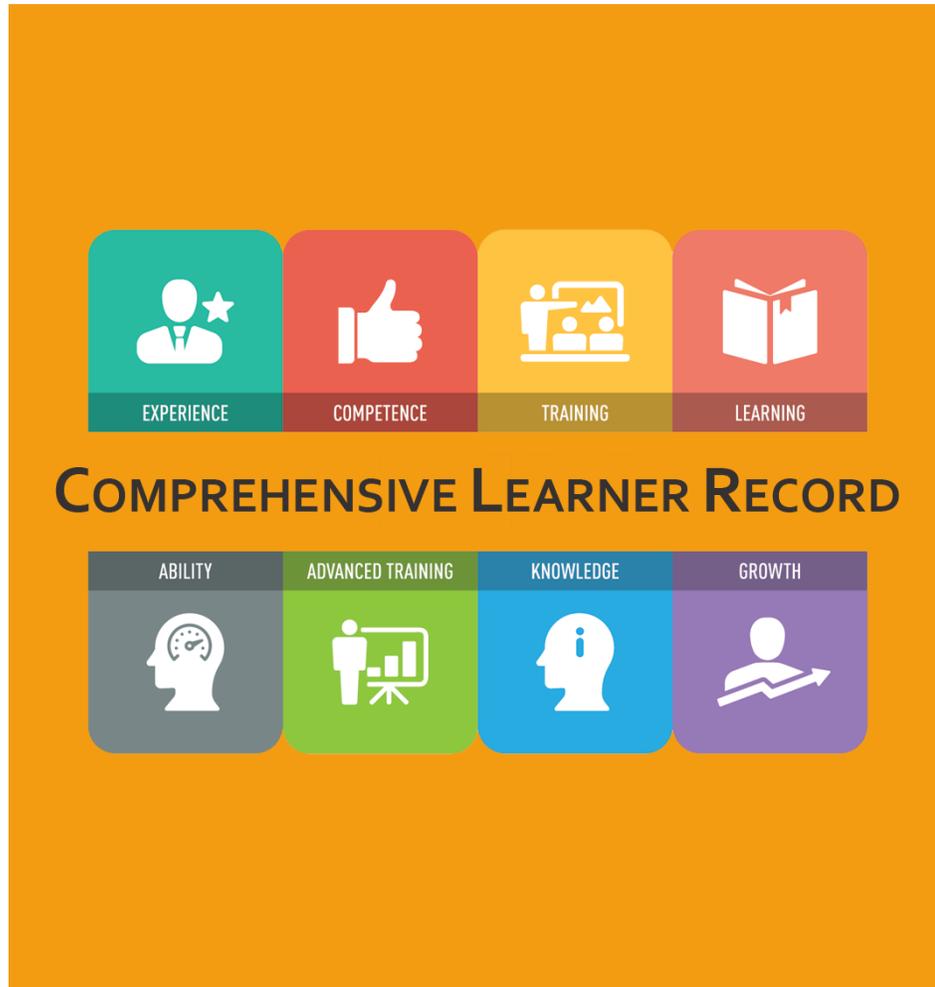


of respondents indicated no collaboration with the registrar

NKU Question:

How do we get academic affairs to value student development theory and recognize the importance of our work in educating the whole student?

Learning Happens Everywhere



- Comprehensive learner records contain data from co-curricular transcripts, badges, e-Portfolios and other digital instruments
- Institutions are using data from these records to show the impact of engaging in out-of-classroom activities on students' performance
- AACRAO, NASPA, and NILOA are partnering to help 100+ institutions create comprehensive learner records

The Data Identity Framework

A Six-Component Guide to Helping You Find Your Data-Related Strengths

The Data Identity Framework

Curiosity & Inquiry

Ability to Formulate and Ask Clear Questions

Research & Analysis

Ability to Select and Use Appropriate Methodologies

Communication & Consultation

Ability to Clearly Discuss Findings with Multiple Audiences

Campus Context

Knowledge of Current Issues and Trends within the Institution

Industry Context

Knowledge of Current Issues and Trends in Higher Education

Strategy & Planning

Ability to Select and Execute a Course of Action

Understanding the Framework: 4 Principles



- Each component is a valuable part of one's data identity. Therefore, the components are not provided in a sequential or ranking order.
- Within each component, some professionals will have much more experience and knowledge while others have less.
- All 6 components are valuable to engaging in collaborative work on a campus.
- The level and frequency at which professionals engage in activities related to each component will vary.

Data Identity Framework Sub-Components



Curiosity and Inquiry

Issue Clarity

Question Formation

Historical Context

Stakeholder Impact



Research and Analysis

Methodology

Technical Expertise

Data Integration

Computation



Communication and Consultation

Delivery Type

Audience

Interpretation

Follow-Up

Data Identity Framework Sub-Components



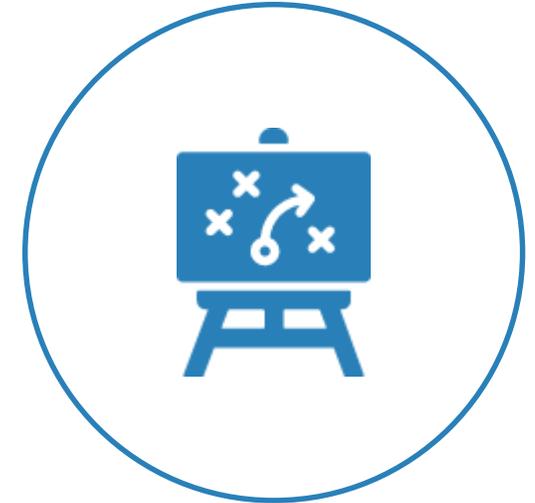
Campus Context

Student Information
Programs and Initiatives
Strategic Plan
Campus Mission



Industry Context

News and Events
Sector Knowledge
Functional Knowledge
Student Trends



Strategy and Planning

Role Alignment
Project Management
Resource Allocation
Progress Monitoring

Example Personas (3 of 15)



The Curator

Research and Analysis +
Communication and
Consultation



The Connector

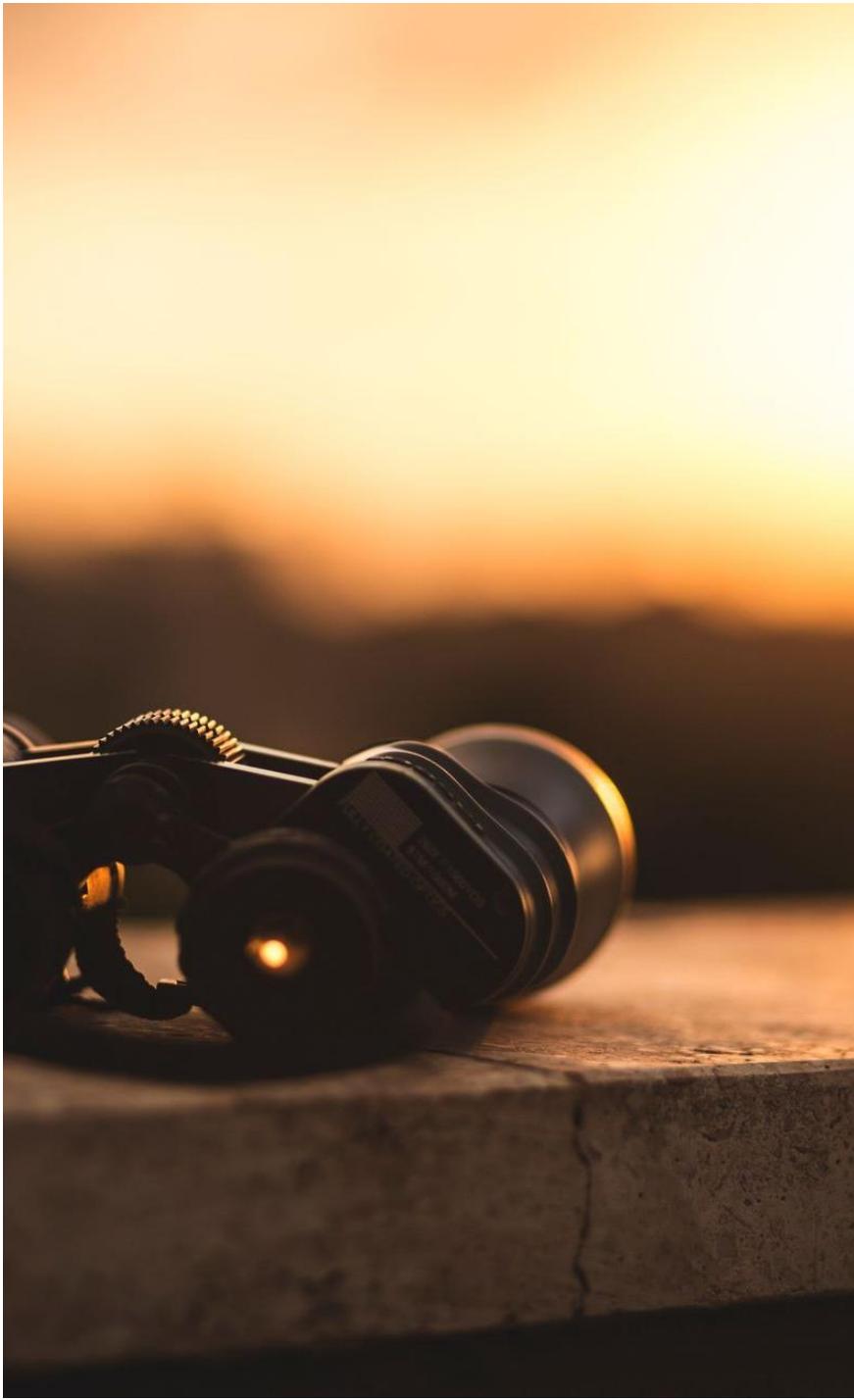
Curiosity and Inquiry + Campus
Context



The Mission Monitor

Strategy and Planning +
Campus Context

Looking Ahead



NASPA Task Force on the Future of Student Affairs: Early Discussion Themes

- Sustainability of the Profession
- Acceleration of Online Student Affairs
- Student-Focused Topics
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion-Focused Topics
- Preparation, Professional Development, and Continuing Education

**NKU Question (revisited):
How do you recommend
we integrate student
development theory
with our work?**

Integrating Theory and Practice in Student Affairs in the Future: Amelia's Tactical Advice

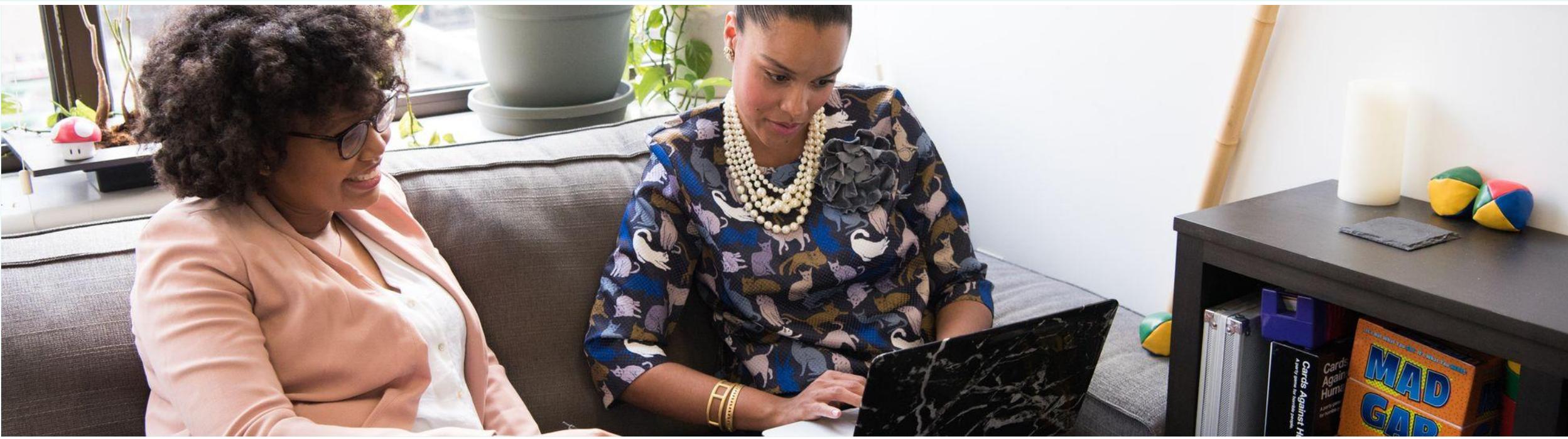


- Pay attention to campus, state, and federal policy.
- Increase your knowledge of enrollment management.
- Continue seeking new models of student development theory.
- Embrace your data identity.

Resources



- **Book: (2021) Square Pegs and Round Holes: Alternative Approaches to Diverse College Student Development Theory (Bonner, Banda, Smith, and marbley)**
- **Achieving the Dream Toolkit: Holistic Student Supports Redesign (Chapter 8 - Data Distribution Strategy Worksheet)**
- **Book: (2018) Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education (Grawe)**
- **NASPA Task Force on the Future of Student Affairs**



“There are a lot of people who are in the same boat. Use it as an opportunity to build connections and keep the lines of communication open. We get to that point sometimes when we are afraid to ask for help. We are afraid to say this is not working. Try to reach out to get the help you might need.”

AMANDA PROPST CUEVAS, FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

“Some of the best data you'll ever gather is from conversations with students. A constant source of data for me is conversations with our students. Just casual and informal about how their day is going, what their classes are, and what we can do to make things better.”

PATRICK BIDDIX, UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE





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