JCC Connexions

Quarterly Newsletter About the Journal of College and Character

Vol. 4, No. 4, November 2018

Focus Authors

Current JCC Issue

Newsletters

Blog Posts

Featured Article

Inside This Issue:

Krista Soria (cont.)	2
NASPA Anniv. Collection	2
Inside, Outside	3-4
Dalton Institute	4
Convergence	4
Upcoming NASPA Session	
JCC Current Issue	
New Spaces & Roles	6-8
Fostering Moral Dev.	9-10
SRHSKC	10
Blog Posts	11
Staff	12
JCC Ambassadors	12





College & Character

Krista Soria Is Leading Scholar on Civic Leadership & Diverse Citizenship

Krista Soria, our Focus Author for this issue of *Connexions*, is the lead author of "Leadership Experiences: Educating for Diverse Citizenship," published in the *Journal of College and Character*, November 2018. Her co-author is Christine VeLure Roholt.

<u>Their article</u> examines the association between first-year students' participation in cocurricular leadership experiences and *diverse citizenship*, the extent to which students are open to diversity, value diversity, and engage in efforts to improve their communities.

Results suggest that first-year students who participated in leadership experiences were significantly more likely than first-year students who did not participate in leadership experiences to express diverse citizenship. Accordingly, the findings suggest that first-year students with co-curricular leadership experiences value interacting with others with different viewpoints, have witnessed a change in their own knowledge or beliefs by becoming more aware of the perspectives of those from different backgrounds, and think it is important to become aware of the perspectives of individuals from different backgrounds.

The authors encourage higher education leadership educators to see the value of their work in developing citizens who can work across differences to bring about social change.



Krista provides background information about the research in her blog post. She argues that first-year students should not be reluctant to engage in collegiate experiences including taking advantage of leadership opportunities to improve their campuses and surrounding communities. She emphasizes that researching experiences of first-year students is especially helpful because researchers can better isolate potential influences of programs on student behaviors. They are more like "clean slates" than upperclasspersons are. After researchers can account for other experiences and predispositions that they bring to college life, they can better isolate the unique effects of these programs on outcomes.

Soria Is Leading Scholar... (cont. from page 1)

Krista is a prolific writer. She has published over 50 peer-reviewed journal articles on a wide variety of topics in higher education and has edited several books on college students' community engagement and involvement on campus and campus climate, including *Evaluating Campus Climate at US Research Universities: Opportunities for Diversity and Inclusion* (published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2018).

Authors included in this volume examine *campus climate*, defined as students' perceptions of how welcoming and respectful their campus environments are for students from different social identities. The volume also highlights initiatives that empirical evidence has shown improve

NASPA.

campus climate. Krista has also recently authored a book on social class in higher education.

Last spring she was <u>featured</u> in *The Minnesota Daily*, a student-led publication at the University of Minnesota campus, for her work as the university's data analyst. In the feature she was lauded for her work in comparing university data to those of other schools and using her findings to pinpoint academic and campus climate issues. Working directly with campus departments and programs, she helps to identify and resolve problems through new initiatives.

In addition to working as a research analyst in the Office of Institutional Research at the University of Minnesota, she serves as an adjunct faculty at four colleges and universities in the Twin Cities area.

NASPA 100th

Anniversary

Collection Access JCC's collection here. Achieving Equity in Higher Education: The Unfinished Agenda Volume 16 Issue 2 (2015), Alexander W. Astin & Helen S. Astin

> The Principles of Strengths-Based Education Volume 10 Issue 4 (2009), Shane J. Lopez & Michelle C. Louis

ASPA 10

The New Student Activism: Supporting Students as Agents of Social Change Volume 18 Issue 1 (2017), Barbara Jacoby

Situating Race in College Students' Search for Purpose and Meaning: Who am I? Volume 16 Issue 3 (2015), Sherry K. Watt

Building Inclusive Community by Bridging Worldview Differences: A Call to Action From the Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey (IDEALS)

Volume 18 Issue 3 (2017), Alyssa N. Rockenbach

Food Insecurity as a Student Issue Volume 15 Issue 4 (2014), Clare L. Cady

An Ethic of Care in Higher Education: Well-Being and Learning

Volume 15 Issue 3 (2014), Richard P. Keeling

Do Environments Matter? A Comparative Analysis of the Impress of Different Types of Colleges and Universities on

Character

• Volume 1 Issue 4 (2000), George Kuh

Interfaith Cooperation on Campus: Teaching Interfaith Literacy

Volume 12 Issue 4 (2011), Eboo Patel & Cassie Meyer

The Ethics of the Collegiate Locker Room

Volume 18 Issue 1 (2017), Larry D. Roper

"Feet, Pounds, Fahrenheit, Oh My!" Learning How Culture Counts

By Hsin-Yu Chen

"May your weight and height be as ideal as listed on your driver's license." Though this line circulated on social media as a joke, being asked about my weight and height in the US has in fact been a somewhat complex cultural experience.

When I first went to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to apply for my driver's license in Florida many years ago, a staff member gave me a form and asked me to fill it out. Most of the questions were straightforward, but there were two that gave me pause: one about weight and one about height. When I saw these questions, I was stuck, because I didn't know how to answer.

It wasn't that I was remembering the old joke; what stumped me were the units of measurement. I had always used kilograms (kg) for weight and centimeters (cm) for height—yet the form asked me to write my weight in

pounds (lb.) and my height in feet and inches! Back then, I didn't have a smart phone, and neither did anyone else in the DMV. And so, when I ended up asking for help converting the kilograms and centimeters to pounds and feet and inches, the staff, who did not know the conversion formula, were forced to discuss with each other. Ultimately, they compared my

height to that of others who seemed of a similar build with the result that my weight and height became known throughout the entire DMV.

We tend to take units of measurement for granted, mainly because they occur in so many different aspects of daily life. For that very same reason, though, it is one part of lived experience in the United States that I have spent some time getting used to. How big is my apartment if it is 900 square feet? How far will my car run on a gallon of gas? How fast is driving at 65 miles per hour?

How heavy is the 70 pound limit for USPS's flat-rate boxes? If the price for cherries is \$6.99 per pound, how many cherries do you get? Is 76 degrees Fahrenheit cool or warm weather? Should I bring a jacket? How many milliliters equal 16 fl. oz.? What does two feet of snow look like? How much or how big is a cup when reading a cookbook or an online recipe? Expanding from these measurements, why did the most common size of the folder I used in Taiwan not fit the paper I use in the US? (Answer: because in the US, letter-size paper is common, while in Taiwan, A4 size is more popular.) I have also found that the medium size of clothing in Taiwan is roughly a size small in the US, while US size 8 shoes are size 72 in Taiwan, which is very confusing.



There are, of course, formulas for converting these various units of measurement. But in the heat of conversation, when there is no time to calculate and respond, the unfamiliar unit can make you feel a little awkward. Suppose someone tells you, "I lost 5 pounds in two months." Is 5 pounds a lot or just a little bit? Does it mean that she lost weight very quickly or too slowly?

> When people ask me what the weather in Taiwan is like, I need to convert Celsius to Fahrenheit; otherwise, they won't understand how cold or warm it is. When people talk about gas mileage and compare cars to determine fuel-efficiency, I need to mentally convert from gallons to liters, and from miles to kilometers. Moreover, when people ask me to compare the price of gas in the US and Taiwan, it becomes even more

challenging—since not only do I need to convert gallons into liters and miles into kilometers, but I also need to think about the currency exchange rate from US to Taiwan dollars.

Sometimes, there can be so many calculations behind a simple question that my mental processing time might be a little longer than usual. After all, one's understanding of measurement is a crucially important tool for making sense of reality through grasping magnitudes. Moreover, it is a deeply rooted framework learned in early childhood. When the people who surround you in the place where you grew up use the same unit of measurement in daily conversation, your reactions come to feel natural and intuitive. It is this intuitive sense—almost a kind of second nature—that is challenged when we move to a different country and culture.

(cont. on page 4)

Inside, Outside, & In Between

By Hsin-Yu Chen

Feet, Pounds... (cont. from page 3)

It is true that, when you are living in an unfamiliar place, you are frequently able to get a feeling for what is though, he was pulled over—because, in Canada, 90 is meant based on context and people's facial expressions. Yet there will always be those occasions when you can't quite grasp the sense. Reflecting on this made me realize how much habits and familiarity can influence our engagement in conversation. It took living in a different country to make me realize how important units of measurement are to achieving true ease of social interaction.

Understanding and getting used to different units of measurement is an important part of adjusting to a new culture. I remember one friend shared his experience of driving from Ohio to Canada to see Niagara Falls. He was using cruise control and set the speed to 70 because the speed-limit sign showed 70. He enjoyed the

Theme of 2019 Dalton Institute is "Isolation or Inclusion: Building a Culture of Connection on Campus"

The 2019 Dalton Institute will explore "Isolation or Inclusion: Building a Culture of Connection on Campus" January 31-February 2, 2019, at Florida State University.

A focus question that addresses this theme is "Are we more connected than ever, or are students and staff alike becoming more isolated into like-minded groups?"

Convergence Continues to Focus on Training and Equipping Professionals

By J. Cody Nielsen

<u>Convergence</u>, headed by its founder and director <u>Cody</u> Nielsen, provides resources to higher education at large to alter policies, practices, and campus infrastructures that encourage religious, secular, and spiritual growth and inclusion. Its specific charge is to assist professionals in their roles as catalysts for change on campuses, equip-



ping them with resources, skills, and new support networks.

Among Convergence's upcoming training activities are regional training sessions at the University of St. Thom-

road trip and the beautiful scenery. Once he crossed the border, he was excited to see the sign change from 70 to 90, and so he stepped on the gas. Before long, not 90 miles per hour, but 90 kilometers per hour! Traveling so fast, my friend not only violated the law, but he was driving at a dangerous speed. This is just one example showing that although units of measurement might seem like a tiny detail, they have a profound influence on many areas of daily life.

Hsin-Yu Chen is an adjunct assistant research professor of anthropology at The Pennsylvania State University. Her research brings a transdisciplinary and cross-cultural perspective to studying skin color's meanings and ramifications for identity development, social inequality, human behavior, lived experiences, and health outcomes. In addition to being a contributor to this column, she is JCC contributing editor of Cross Currents on Campus.

Keynote speakers are Annemarie Vaccaro, professor, University of Rhode Island; Patricia A. Perillo, vice president for student affairs at Virginia Tech; and Darris Means, assistant professor at the University of Georgia.

values@admin.fsu.edu https://studentvalues.fsu.edu/

Register here.



as in St. Paul, MN, November 27, 2018; the University of Central Florida in Orlando, FL, February 27, 2019; and at the University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, May 2, 2019.

Additionally, Convergence presents research and best practices in the conference setting, such as the recent Parliament of World's Religions on November 1-7 in Toronto, ON. Upcoming are the NASPA Religious, Secular, and Spiritual Identities Conference on December 9-11, 2018, in New Orleans, LA; Hillel's Global Assembly on December 10-13, 2018, at Denver, CO; the Dalton Institute on January 31-February 2, 2019, in Tallahassee FL, and NASPA and ACPA annual conferences in March 2019.

info@convergenceoncampus.org

www.convergenceoncampus.org

JCC Hosts Session on Civic Learning & Democratic Engagement at 2019 NASPA Conference

The JCC will be hosting a general session on civic learning

Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement at Tuffs Uni-

and democratic engagement at the 2019 NASPA annual conference in Los Angeles. In this session, **Nancy Thomas**, who co-authored with **Margaret Brower** "Conceptualizing and Assessing Campus Climates for Political Learning and Engagement in



versity. She will be joined by **Stephanie King**, NASPA's assistant director for civic engagement, knowledge community, and social justice initiatives at NASPA, and by **Pete Mather**, senior associate editor of the *JCC* and professor of counseling and higher education at Ohio University. The specific time and location for the session are not yet available.

Democracy" in the November 2018 issue, will present her research. Nancy is director of research on higher education's role in American democracy, including the National

In addition to this session, Pete will be also be participating in a session on publishing in the NASPA Journals.

Journal of College & Character Volume 19, Number 4, 2018 **INVITED FEATURED ARTICLE** Conceptualizing and Assessing Campus Climates for Political Learning and Engagement in Democracy **Nancy Thomas and Margaret Brower** PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES Leadership Experiences: Educating for Diverse Citizenship Krista M. Soria and Christine VeLure Roholt Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Prospective Employment Decisions: Exploring Social Change **Through College Students Rachael L. Ellison** Operationalizing Humility: A Model of Situational Humility for Christian College Student Leaders Scott Barrett **OPINIONS AND PERSPECTIVES** Food Insecurity on College Campuses: Collateral Damage of a Societal Crisis **Gina Shipley and Mary Christopher CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ON CAMPUS** Learning Leadership Through Community Engagement: Exploring a New Undergraduate Major **R.W. Hildreth** WHAT THEY'RE READING Graduating with Honor: Best Practices to Promote Ethics Development in College Students

Reviewed by David Eberhardt

In Praise of Indecision: Encouraging Educators and Students to Embrace Life's Uncertainty

By Michael J. Stebleton

Is being undecided *really* that bad? Can *indecision* be viewed as an asset rather than a deficit? In this essay, I will explore **the merits of indecision as an intentional and temporary strategy towards, paradoxically, making better decisions.** More specifically, I will challenge student affairs educators and students to embrace indecision and learn to identify and embrace spaces of uncertainty.

This philosophical approach towards accepting indecision as a strategy can be applied to any context related to student, moral, and/or spiritual development decision -making. Much of my scholarly work in this area focuses on decision-making as it relates to life-career choices. In the May 2018 *Journal of College and Character* issue and column, **Kate Diamond** and I advocated for career development and exploration to be considered as a highimpact practice (Stebleton & Diamond, 2018). I shared a story about how I waited until my junior year to declare a major to illustrate that often students lack career direction (even though resources are readily available).



Admittedly, I labored to make a decision; yet, I actively engaged in exploring a range of opportunities during this time. What I take away from my experience is that some indecision can be productive and *actually* lead to better decision-making. In my case, I realized making a decision resulted in closing off potentially better options (Schwartz, 2004). For purposes of the essay in this column, I argue that educators can realize that a healthy balance between decision and indecision exists, knowing that uncertainty and chance can lead to productive outcomes for students. To be clear, the goal remains for students to move from indecision to decision, ultimately. From this perspective, wisdom in indecision holds significant merit (Krumboltz, 1992).

When educators discuss decision-making approach-

es, a controversial issue focuses on whether more traditional, linear decision-making models are more effective and efficient than non-linear, flexible strategies. Parents, teachers, and other sage-like figures in our lives frequently encourage us to make thoughtful and rational deci-



sions where we aim to be objective and predict likely outcomes. Based on this approach, decisions should be planful and linear while minimizing chance or outside factors that can deter future goals. *Indecision* as an intentional strategy for constructive planning receives minimal acknowledgement.

Worse yet, students garner little education from educators about decision-making processes often despite our best intentions. I recently saw a student flyer that questioned, "Dealing with College Major Indecision?" In the image, the student's head appears buried in his books, as if shame and embarrassment prevented him from showing his face in public. Unfortunately, indecision continues to be portrayed as a problem that requires fixing.

On the other hand, however, others argue that decision-making should be flexible, non-linear, creative, and not narrow, thus, resulting in greater satisfaction (Heath & Heath, 2013; Johnson, 2018). Proponents of this stance believe that indecision does not need to be fixed. John Krumboltz, professor at Stanford University and one of the authors of planned happenstance (a flexible approach), stated, "So if you are undecided about your future (as indeed every sensible person should be), don't call yourself undecided; call yourself openminded."

Indecision (cont. from page 6)

Alternative models serve as useful tools and should be shared with students. There exist at least three good reasons why a shift in decision-making philosophy warrants greater attention from higher education professionals. First, given the ever-changing complexity of our lives, most of us understand that long-term planning is neither linear nor predictable. In their book, *The Path*, **Michael Puett**, professor of Chinese history, and **Christine Gross-Loh**, journalist, suggested that our lives might be viewed as one big glorious mess (Puett & Gross-Loh, 2016). Realizing that life is chaotic and unpredictable, we can begin to re-frame some of the imposed expectations about making the "right" decision (Diamond & Stebleton, 2016).

Second, traditional rational models often fail—and we do not always realize it. Despite our best intentions, we frequently make poor choices! Research by psychologists reinforce the notion that important decisions contain flaws shaped by our own covert biases and irrational behaviors (Ariely, 2009; Kahneman, 2011).

Third, alternative approaches to decision-making lead to healthier outcomes for students. Today's students experience a historically high prevalence of anxiety and depression rates (Francis & Horn, 2017; Schwitzer & Vaughn, 2017). Many of students' anxieties tie directly to issues related to hyper-achievement, competition, and the pressures of decision-making and fulfilling unrealistic expectations (Choate, 2017; Eells, 2017). Allowing students to identify indecision as open-mindedness may actually be therapeutic for many students.

The planned happenstance learning theory allows for uncertainty and chance in decision-making (Krumboltz, 2009). Although this framework is not new, I contend the tenants of the model are arguably more important than ever before, given the seismic changes in our current and future work lives (Drum, 2017). Several of the core assumptions of the planned happenstance model include (a) recognizing that chance plays an important role in one's decision-making: students can be taught how to generate chance events; (b) reframing the concept indecision as being open-minded: indecision can be viewed as positive rather than negative; and (c) teaching and promoting skills to students such as curiosity (exploring new learning possibilities), persistence (exerting effort despite obstacles), *flexibility* (changing attitudes and circumstances), optimism (viewing new

opportunities as feasible), and *risk-taking* (acting in the face of uncertainty). Students can be taught these skills. Relatedly, many students—including first-generation, immigrant students, and/or other marginalized students—possess these competencies already and bring these assets to the academy (Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999; Yosso, 2005).

Teaching students to embrace indecision and uncertainty likely seems paradoxical, especially when students frequently receive messages to decide quickly on important life decisions, mainly related to academic majors and career pathways. Parents often advise students to declare a major and stick with it. Ironically, recent studies seem to suggest that switching a major does not lead to delayed graduation or persistence—in fact, it might improve those measures (EAB Student Success Collaborative, 2016).

"Student affairs educators, faculty, and administrators can begin to challenge and disrupt perceptions around decision -making, primarily as it relates to achievement and perfection issues."

Student affairs educators, faculty, and administrators can begin to challenge and disrupt perceptions around decision-making, primarily as it relates to achievement and perfection issues. The messages need to begin at orientation (if not earlier) and persist throughout the undergraduate experience in a variety of student learning contexts (e.g., residential halls, multicultural student centers, career development offices, and student counseling centers, among others). Student affairs educators can implement three actions steps as a way to move these ideas forward—and advance the dialogue around indecision.

- (1) Promote indecision as a way of being to students and families.
- (2) Advocate for intentional spaces of uncertainty in the planning process.
- (3) Explore a healthy balance between decision and indecision, acknowledging that too much indecision may create barriers and stall future planning.

Indecision (cont. from page 6)

In conclusion, it should be noted that this approach may not be appropriate for all students or all situations. Some students and educators may resist the unpredictability and open nature of this perspective. Moreover, some critics of this approach fairly contend that this perspective is a privilege or luxury that many students can ill afford, especially if they hope to meet their personal, family, and professional objectives (e.g., structured majors or training programs that limit exploration).

- *"Promote indecision as a way of being to students and families.*
- Advocate for intentional spaces of uncertainty in the planning process.
- Explore a healthy balance between decision and indecision, acknowledging that too much indecision may create barriers and stall future planning."

Though I concede that the indecision approach should not be universally applied, I still insist that many of the existing traditional decision-making models are flawed, less efficient, and place undue pressure on students. Alternatively, adopting more flexible, non-linear decision-making approaches will likely lead to healthier and more productive lives. As student affairs educators and faculty, we owe it to our students to explore all options to best support them as they move forward with their academic and personal lives.

Michael J. Stebleton is associate professor of higher education in the Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development (OLPD) Department at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. His research and teaching interests include career development, student development, student success, and persistence. His current work explores the experiences of marginalized college student populations.

References

- Ariely, D. (2009). *Predictably irrational: The hidden forces that shape our decisions*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Choate, L.H. (2017). "Never enough": Bridging the chasm between college women's achievements and their anguish. *About Campus, 22*(2), 21-27. doi: 10.1002/abc.21284

Diamond, K., & Stebleton, M. J. (2016). Embracing major and career indecision. *Student Affairs Collective*. Retrieved from: <u>https://</u> <u>studentaffairscollective.org/embracing-major-career-indecision-</u> <u>sacareer/</u>

Drum, K. (2017, Nov/Dec). You will lose your job to a robot – and sooner than you think. *Mother Jones*. Retrieved from: <u>https://</u> www.motherjones.com/politics/2017/10/you-will-lose-your-job-to -a-robot-and-sooner-than-you-think/? utm_source=pocket&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=pocket <u>hits</u>

- EAB Student Success Collaborative. (2016). How late is too late? Myths and facts about the consequences of switching college majors. Retrieved from <u>https://www.eab.com/technology/student-</u> <u>success-collaborative/members/white-papers/major-switching</u>
- Eells, G.T. (2017). Hyper-achievement, perfection, and college student resilience. *Journal of College and Character*, *18*(2), 77-82. doi: 10.1080/2194587X.2017.1300096
- Francis, P.C., & Horn, A.S. (2017). Mental health issues and counseling services in US higher education: An overview of recent research and recommended practices. *Higher Education Policy, 30* (2), 263-277. doi: 10.1057/s41307-016-0036-2
- Heath, C., & Heath, D. (2013). *Decisive: How to make better choices in life and work.* New York, NY: Crown Business.
- Johnson, S. (2018). *Farsighted: How we make the decisions that matter the most.* New York, NY: Riverhead Books.
- Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, fast and slow.* New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- Krumboltz, J.D. (1992). The wisdom of indecision. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 41*(3), 239-244. doi: <u>https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-</u> <u>8791(92)90025-U</u>
- Krumboltz, J.D. (2009). The happenstance learning theory. *Journal of Career Assessment*, *17*(2), 135-154. doi: 10.1177/1069072708328861
- Mitchell, K.E., Levin, A.S., & Krumboltz, J.D. (1999). Planned happenstance: Constructing unexpected career opportunities. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 77(2), 115-124.
- Puett, M. J., & Gross-Loh, C. (2016). *The path: What Chinese philoso-phers can teach us about the good life*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Schwartz, B. (2004). *The paradox of choice: Why more is less.* New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Schwitzer, A.M., & Vaughn, J.A. (2017). Mental health, well-being, and learning: Supporting our students in times of need. *About Campus*, 22(2), 4-11. doi: 10.1002/abc.21287
- Stebleton, M.J., & Diamond, K.K. (2018). Advocating for career development and exploration as a high-impact practice for first-year students. *Journal of College and Character*, 19(2), 160-166. doi: 10.1080/2194587X.2018.1445646
- Yosso, T.J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *8*(1), 69-91. doi: 10.1080/1361332052000341006

The Ballot Box

By Alan Acosta

Every couple of years in November in the United States, the country holds elections for its governments at all levels, city, county, state, and federal (it should also be noted that at various points in both two- and four-year cycles, there are primaries that whittle candidates down for the November elections). I absolutely love to vote. I am not kidding. I thoroughly enjoy it. I am one of those nerds who get excited and look forward to voting at every opportunity.

And it is not just voting that I love. I completely relish the entire process. I look forward to getting the sample ballot from my county's supervisor of elections. I duti-



fully look up all candidates to see their stance on the issues so I can make a decision as informed as possible. And when I go to my polling station (which I prefer to do on election day—kind of my own voting su-

perstition), I love filling in the scantron and putting my "I Voted" sticker on my shirt for everyone to see. I have voted in every election of which I am eligible, whether via early voting, absentee ballot, or day of, and it truly is an exhilarating process from start to finish every single time.

If you asked me to identify how I got ingrained with such a fervor for voting and elections, I am not entirely sure I could pinpoint it. My best guess would be to say it started when I was a kid. I have always been fascinated with U.S. Presidents. I still remember the book my mom bought me at the school book fair that gave a small profile of each U.S. President. I read it three times at least. In the book, it also talked in kid-friendly terms about the platform that most of the Presidents ran on, which spurred their election. That was when I started to get a sense that caring about elections and understanding what values each candidate espoused were important to living in a democracy.

From learning about U.S. Presidents as a child to college, my commitment to being a participant in democra-

cy grew. I had lots of examples of what it meant to be a citizen in my country. I vividly remember my parents

watching Presidential debates, discussing election results in my social studies classes, and I still get a smile on my face remembering that feeling of accomplishment when, in high school, I registered to vote for the very first time. I felt proud and excited. I was a voter.



Being in college profoundly expanded my civic engagement and understanding of how elections and democracy works. I was never involved in student government directly; however, I had several friends who were. Being able to observe firsthand on a much smaller scale how elections, candidates, and democracy worked was an invaluable learning experience. I saw how much work, effort, and energy they put into running for a position. I saw how passionate they were about making the student experience better or being more involved in their student organization or group. I saw how tirelessly devoted they were to the idea of being able to serve the student body, their peers, or the university and leave my institution in a better place than they found it.

It was also in college that I started to learn for the first time some of the less savory side of civic engagement. I found students who were only interested in having a particular SGA title or position and were not interested in helping anyone. I noticed that some blocks of students chose to vote for particular candidates solely based on their student organization involvement and not on their values, principles, or beliefs. And I discovered in some cases, people were willing to bend the rules to gain perceived power.

One of the most important pieces of learning I took away from my experience with civic engagement in college was how crucial participation was to the process. When it comes to voting in elections, one of the biggest reasons I have heard from others about why they do not vote is "My vote does not really matter anyway." While logistically, yes, no election outcome hinges on one single vote, every single vote matters. And it matters for many reasons. First, I was taught by my family, friends, *(cont. on page 10)*

The Ballot Box (cont. from page 6)

loved ones, faculty, and friends that it was not appropriate to complain about your experience in any community if you were not willing to be a participant in changing its direction, and voting is the best way to enact change. I decided to vote because I never wanted to be told people were enacting policies that affected me without my say. I also vote because with the high profile and sometimes political nature of the work I do in higher education, voting is one of the few safe places where I feel like I can freely express my personal and political opinions without fear of retribution. When I vote, I feel like I am making a positive, tangible difference in my community.

Often higher education professionals preach the importance of civic engagement to students. Lots of community organizations seek to partner with higher education institutions to encourage college students to participate in elections and vote. Yet the percentage of voter turnout among young people ages 18-29 has been significantly lower than older adults (Giersch & Dong, 2018). How do higher education professionals teach the importance of civic engagement to traditional college-aged students?

Or, more importantly, how do higher education professionals instill in students the same enthusiasm for voting I learned in my experience? There are no easy answers, and I am not sure I have many good solutions. Lots of institutions do voter drives, organize transportation to polling stations, and create websites or social media campaigns with voter information. Higher education institutions must continue to do these things, and they must also find innovative ways to help people create the internal desire to become life-long voters. The future depends on it.

References:

Giersch, J., & Dong, C. (2018.) Required civics courses, civics exams, and voter turnout. *The Social Sciences Journal*, 55(2), 160-170.

Alan Acosta is associate dean of students at Florida State University, managing student crises and helping create a welcoming campus community. He believes in the importance of helping college students to become ethical global leaders.

NASPA Hosts 2018 Religious, Secular, and Spiritual Identities Conference

By Keon McGuire

This fall, NASPA will host the 2018 NASPA Religious, Secular, and Spiritual Identities Conference (#RSSI), which will take place December 9-11 in New Orleans, LA.

Conference leaders hope to bring together a diverse group of educational professionals who work within (and in collaboration with other) postsecondary institutions on issues related to religion, secularism, and spirituality.

Learn more here.





JCC Connexions Blog Posts

(Please Click Below to Access the Blog Post)

- H. Chen & C. Yarnal & Others: "Should Students' Use of Leisure Time Matter to College Educators?"
- J. Dalton: "Do Colleges and Universities Perpetuate Income Inequality by Favoring The Wealthiest Students?"
- S. Edwards: "Why Not Define Student Religious Identity According to Beliefs Alone?"
- G. Eells: "College Students' Pursuit of Perfection Through Hyper-Achievement"
- K. Fosnacht & C. Broderick: "Is Religious Intolerance and Discrimination Becoming More Common?"
- K. Guthrie: "Undergraduate Certificate In Leadership Studies: An Opportunity For Seamless Learning"
- M. Jackson: "What Are the Challenges & Rewards of Being Student Affairs Professionals?"
- D. Jacobsen & R. H. Jacobsen "What Are Important Challenges to Connecting Faith & Learning in College?"
- B. Jacoby: "What Is the 'New Student Activism'"?
- F. Lane & J. Schutts: "Predicting the Presence of Purpose Through the Self-Efficacy Beliefs of One's Talents"
- P. Mather with replies from C. Broadhurst, G. Martin, & L. Harrison: "Student Activism and Advocacy"
- P. Mather, C. Bridges, & M. Johnson: "Research on Social Change and Social Justice"
- P. Mather, D. Means, & J. Montero: "Preview of Upcoming 2017 NASPA Session on Student Spirituality With JCC Authors"
- D. Morgan, H. Zimmerman, T. Terrell, & B. Marcotte: "Should Fraternities Be Banned From College Campuses?"
- G. Paine: "Caring About Students The Work of Student Affairs"
- A. Rockenbach: "Building Inclusive Campus Community by Bridging Worldview Differences"
- L. Roper & M. Albeit: "How Can We Address Sexual Misconduct on Our Campuses and in Society?"
- M. Swanbrow Becker & D. Drum: "When and How Should We Intervene in Students' Lives?"
- S. Seider: "Trigger Warnings: Just Good Teaching?"
- K. Soria: "How Are Leadership Education and Diverse Citizenship Related?
- S. Watt with replies from L. Roper and C. King: "Racial Conflicts as Learning Opportunities"
- M. Waggoner: "Should Colleges & Universities Care About Spiritual Beliefs of Students?"

Journal of College & Character

Editors

Jon C. Dalton, Co-Editor, The Florida State University Pamela C. Crosby, Co-Editor, NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education Peter Mather, Senior Associate Editor, Ohio University Mathew Johnson, Associate Editor, Central Michigan University Tiffani Riggers-Piehl, Associate Editor, Baylor University Jenny Small, Associate Editor, Independent Scholar Janett I. Cordovés, Associate Editor for Social Media, The Interfaith Youth Core

Contributing Editors

Hsin-Yu Chen, Cross Currents on Campus, The Pennsylvania State University Rebecca Crandall, Students' Spiritual and Secular Worldviews on Campus, The Ohio State University Michael Cuyjet, Opinions and Perspectives, University of Louisville David M. Eberhardt, What They're Reading, Birmingham-Southern College Barbara Jacoby, Civic Engagement on Campus, University of Maryland Cassie Meyer, Interfaith Cooperation, The Interfaith Youth Core Eboo Patel, Interfaith Cooperation, The Interfaith Youth Core Larry D. Roper, Ethical Issues on Campus, Oregon State University Birgit Schreiber, University of West Cape, South Africa

> JCC Ambassadors Sable Manson, University of Southern California Nestor Melendez, Guttman Community College, CUNY Kevin Wright, University of Cincinnati

JCC Connexions Contributors Alan Acosta, The Florida State University Hsin-Yu Chen, The Pennsylvania State University Michael J. Stebleton, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

For more information about these publications, email Pam Crosby, co-editor, at <u>icc@naspa.org</u> Journal of College and Character and JCC Connexions are published by NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education

Join the JCC Ambassador Team

A phenomenal, energetic team who loves reading, researching, and writing about all things connected and interconnected to character and values!

Some basic responsibilities include

- Responding to each blog post published on the *Connexions* (about four annually) after researching the topics and *JCC* articles relating to the post
- Actively engaging and encouraging engagement in discussion within the JCC site
- Promoting JCC issues on social media articles, blog posts, journal events, and newsletters
- Engaging in other initiatives as determined by the social media team



For more information and/or to apply, please contact Janett I. Cordovés, associate editor for social media and JCC Ambassador, at <u>janetticordoves@gmail.com</u>