JCC Connexions

Quarterly Newsletter About the Journal of College and Character

Vol. 4, No. 3, August 2018

Focus Authors

Current JCC Issue

<u>Newsletters</u>

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Featured Article

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College & Character

Sachi Edwards Writes Article on Need to Distinguish Religious Belief & Culture

In her <u>article</u>, "Distinguishing Between Belief and Culture: A Critical Perspective on Religious Identity," **Sachi Edwards** argues for the need to articulate a clear distinction between religious/ spiritual belief and religious identity/culture.

Sachi, our <u>Focus Author</u> for this August 2018 issue, writes that this articulation is needed so that scholars and practitioners can acknowledge the socio-cultural nature of religion and better understand the privilege/oppression dynamic associated with it. She describes the way Christian privilege and religious oppression are often independent of individuals' religious or spiritual beliefs, and presents possible implications of this over-emphasis on belief for religious minorities. She maintains that focusing on religious culture rather than religious/spiritual belief can help make campus-based interfaith initiatives more social justice oriented.

In her <u>blog post</u>, she further examines this topic by responding to these questions: "What are some problems with defining student religious identity according to beliefs alone?," "Are religious beliefs a primary determinant of religious identity?," and "Are students really free to choose their beliefs if religious identity is pri-

marily a social construction?"

Sachi's research primarily focuses on examining how worldview diversity manifests and is addressed in higher education policy, pro-



gramming, and pedagogy. Specifically, she is interested in understanding and articulating identity, privilege, oppression, and allyship related to religion and indigenous communities/ spiritualties as part of the larger critical social justice movement that seeks to support and uplift marginalized groups.

Currently, she is a lecturer in the colleges of education at the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa and the University of Maryland, College Park. Much of her ten years of experience in student affairs was spent facilitating diversity initiatives (religious and otherwise).

She holds an MA in religion from the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa and a PhD in higher education, student affairs, and international education policy from the University of Maryland, College Park.

NASPA 100th Anniversary Collection

Access it here.

The articles in this special anniversary collection from NASPA's signature journals represent a wide spectrum of research and reflect the evolution of higher education and student affairs. This collection of influential works have had a lasting impact on the field.



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

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)

Attitudes Longitudinal Survey (IDEAL

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 Impression of Different Types of Colleges and Universities on

<u>Character</u>

• 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

How Happy Is Your Happy Hour? The Challenge of Informal Conversation for Non-Native **Speakers**

By Hsin-Yu Chen

"Are you going to the happy hour?" I was asked on a Friday after a graduate-student seminar. I remember this vividly—it was the first time I had heard the phrase happy hour. I knew happy, and I knew hour, but when the two words were put together, I had no idea about what it meant!

Out of curiosity and a desire to experience American culture, I decided to join in. We went to a bar, ordered some food and drinks, then started casual conversation. I was glad I went, because it turned out to be a great opportunity for me to get to know and network with graduate students and faculty members. I learned about people beyond their professional lives. We talked about their pets and many other personal experiences. With time, people became more relaxed, and the topics jumped around from food to vacation to sports to technology to celebrities to movies and TV shows to restaurants to body parts to diseases to topics common in daily life and popular culture.

And yet, though I enjoyed the atmosphere, I also found myself unable to follow the conversation completely. I realized the importance of language skills for mingling into a culture or conversation. I even wished there had been assigned readings so that I could familiarize myself with the topics before jumping into conversation!

I know what you are probably thinking: happy-hour conversation is all related to daily life, so it should be easy to understand. It is true that the vocabulary used in these types of conversation is probably only elementary-level but that was just the problem.

Take a very common topic, dogs, for example. People might talk about dog breeds, whether Maltese, Pomeranian, Husky, Doberman, Dachshund, or Rottweiler. I knew the English names for some of the more common breeds, but certainly not for all of them. Now think about a second language you know. How many types of flowers can you name? What about pieces of gym equipment? How many movie-titles can you recognize when translated in your second language? At my first happy hour, there were sev-

eral times when people talked about a movie I had seen. But since I didn't know the title in English, I didn't realize I had seen it until I got more context.

What makes things even more challenging is the close link between language and culture. Consider food, the



most common aspect of daily life. Many Chinese ingredients and cooking techniques are difficult to translate into English. When people who grew up in the US talk about different kinds of cheeses and salad dressings, people like me, who grew up in Taiwan where cheeses and salads are not traditional foods, may have difficulty joining in the conversation. Other aspects of culture, such as songs, singers, celebrities, and toys, can represent a time period and shared memories.

> For those who did not grow up in the culture, however, such references can be disorienting. Similarly, there were many times when people were laughing, but I hadn't yet gotten the pun or joke. I understood that if I asked, people would be kind enough to explain it to me, but I also knew that asking too many questions risks ruining the pace and dynamics of conversation. Informal observation sug-

gests this may be one reason why international students stick together as they navigate the challenges of language and culture, making it seem as if international students only want to sit with other international students.

This phenomenon reminds me of Beverly Daniel Tatum's (2003) famous book Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? Of course, my reflection only scratches the surface and does not as deeply intersect with the racial, cultural, and other critical social issues this book addresses, nor did I take personality, such as introvert or extravert, and many other personal factors into account. That said, just discussing language and cultural aspects in social contexts like happy hour demonstrates how blending into and adjusting to a culture can be a complex process.

(cont. on page 4)

Inside, Outside, & In Between

By Hsin-Yu Chen

How Happy...? (cont. from page 3)

Although most instruments and scales that measure acculturation and assimilation take language proficiency into account, the intersection of language and cultural background makes matters more intricate. Most international students have to pass a basic English proficiency exam, such as TOEFL, and graduate students even have to take the GRE. We definitely have the basic skills, but informal socializing can still feel challenging.

Today, I don't need a thorough literature review to tell you that many individuals in the US culture see happy hour as post-work ritual where they can relax while drinking, chatting, and hanging out with friends and colleagues during the late-afternoon and early-evening hours. Many also see it as a medium for people to get together, build deeper relationships beyond the workplace, and try food and beverages for a cheaper price.

While it is important to emphasize that all people, including higher education mentors and their students, follow established laws and drink responsibly, in my experience, happy hour can be an important social event that provides enormous opportunities for learning about American culture, meeting and networking with others, practicing English outside of academic settings, enjoying food, and many other positive outcomes. Ironi-

cally, such casual settings may require us to step outside of our comfort zone.

I share my experiences in the hopes of making others aware that casual conversation may not be as easy as people think, especially for non-native speakers. So next time, when you wonder why some international students seem quiet during social activities, reflect that the reason may not because they are shy or uninterested in the topic, but rather their reticence is due to language barriers. Understanding others and their cultures takes time and effort. But only if we—whether we are international students or not—keep putting in that effort can we truly reap the benefits of inclusion.

Reference

Tatum, B. D. (2003). *Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Hsin-Yu Chen completed her doctorate in leisure studies with a specialization in 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.

Convergence Focuses on Training and Equipping Professionals

By J. Cody Nielsen

Convergence board members and staff focus on ongoing training and equipping professionals for greater capacity to support students' religious, secular, and spiritual identities. To meet that goal, Convergence has launched a series of regional trainings across the US and Canada.

After piloting two training sessions at USC and the University of Calgary, Convergence is planning sessions at Furman University (October 4), Suffolk University in Boston (October 11), Rochester Institute of Technology (October 16), St. Thomas University in the Twin Cities (November 26), Central Florida (February 27), the University of Toronto (May 2), Dennison University (TBD), and Wake Forest (TBD).

In addition to regional trainings that convene at a number of campuses in a local area, Convergence also provides training for professionals on a specific campus as a way to build coalitions and move forward on institutional policies

and practices while offering more indepth training for larger segments of the campus body.

Online resources, such as weekly blog posts, which tell stories from the field, and





current editions of *Convergence Magazine*, are available <u>here</u>.

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Introducing "New Spaces & Roles for Student Affairs Educators"

By Michael J. Stebleton

Critical and complex issues persist in higher education (e.g., student debt, persistence, inequities, access to mental health services). Student affairs educators and other higher education professionals continue to grapple with how to address these problems deftly, while at



the same time implementing innovative strategies to support students. In the upcoming series of *JCC Connexions*, I introduce a new column titled "New Spaces and Roles for Student Affairs Educators." My goals for this column are two-fold. First, I plan to challenge student affairs professionals to examine and expand their own roles as it relates to key issues that readers of the *Journal of College and Character* confront. Second, I intend to introduce ideas that may sound unconventional, paradoxical, and perhaps controversial at times. Institutional efforts are needed to manage most critical issues on campus, and student affairs educators—including fac-



ulty members and administrators—play important leadership roles, whether they presently acknowledge these opportunities or not. With both goals, I aim to extend the dialogue around how to invest in our most important resources on campus—our students and their successes.

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.

Jonathon Hyde Devotes His Efforts to Campus Safety and Nonviolence

Jonathon Hyde's involvement in campus safety is extensive. For example, he serves as co-chair of NASPA's



Enough is Enough Campaign, which is an initiative that provides resources and encouragement to campuses and communities in promoting peace and ending violence. This important resource supports students and staff who are committed to fostering awareness

and change regarding policies and laws that affect cam-

pus safety and climate. He will also begin his term as cochair of NASPA's Campus Safety and Violence Prevention Knowledge Community in spring 2019.

Jonathon's research interests include exploring issues regarding free speech, community policing on college campuses, and the impact of naming sports mascots after indigenous and other peoples on the well-being of individuals and society.

He holds a doctorate in educational leadership from the University of Southern California and two graduate degrees from Florida State University. He is associate vice chancellor and dean of students at Appalachian State University and serves on the Editorial Review Board of the Journal of College and Character.

Down the Rabbit Hole

By Alan Acosta

I need to say at the outset that I do not have an answer to the question I am about to ask. In fact, until recently, I had never thought about this question. But once I did, thinking about it sent me on a path of professional selfreflection into a hole like the one Alice entered to follow the White Rabbit.

In his popular podcast, *Revisionist History*, **Malcolm Gladwell** looks at issues often overlooked or misunderstood. In one episode, he discusses concern for football players who sustain repeated blows to the head and the



presence of chronic traumatic encephalopathy (Gladwell, 2018). I will not discuss here the potential health danger the game of college football

presents to student athletes (listen to Gladwell's episode for that thought piece). In that episode, however, Gladwell asks a question I cannot stop thinking about because it relates to issues I care about that higher education professionals and institutions face on many fronts.

How much information do you need to have about something before you decide it is true?

When I think about it, this question truly drives so much of what we deal with in higher education. How many institutional resources are allocated (or more interestingly, not allocated) based on the answer to this question? New positions are created or absorbed, programs introduced or ended, and initiatives started or stopped because institutional decision-makers saw what they decided was enough information about something, determined the information to be reliable, and, just as importantly, had the means and will to do something with that information.

To be fair, the process of deciding how much reliable information you need to act, such as trying to decide how best to make a particular student population feel more included on campus or how to allocate a signifi-

cant amount of money to a particular concern, cannot be easy. The implications and impacts of such decisions are potentially vast and far reaching.

For a moment, imagine you had one million dollars to address what you consider is the most significant student issue



on your campus (also envision a complete embrace by all internal and external stakeholders to whatever you propose). What would the issue be, and how would you use the money? What information can you trust to be reliable upon which you base your decision? And how much reliable information would you need before you thought it was the right course of action?

Institutional boards of trustees, presidents, provosts, and senior student affairs officers face this question on a regular basis, often as it relates to institutional funds. Professors, instructors, and graduate employees (teaching assistants, research assistants, etc.) confront it when deciding what readings to assign and how to measure effectively that ever elusive outcome, "student learning." Even our students must go through this process when deciding a major, picking a course schedule, and planning events as part of their extracurricular involvements. All of these disparate groups face the same process: deciding how much reliable information is enough before deciding something is true, and then once that is done, deciding what to do with that information.

With that question as a frame, I then started to critically think about how much reliable information I have utilized to decide if a wide range of higher education issues were true. How much reliable information did I need to think students of color have drastically different needs than their White peers? How much reliable information did I need to believe students with a non-binary gender identity or LGBTQ+ sexual orientation have greater concerns for their physical safety on college campuses than others? How much reliable information did I need to determine first-generation college stu-

(cont. on page 7)

Down the Rabbit Hole (cont. from page 6)

anisms to graduate? Try this in your own professional journey. How much reliable information did you need before deciding something was true?

I believe this kind of self-reflection on how much reliable information we need to decide what is true is really powerful to consider. Thanks in large part to significant advances in technology, we are often overwhelmed with information from many sources: conversation, TV, radio, social media, the internet, books, and countless others. I would guess we have more information at our fingertips now than at any other point in human history. How do we choose how much of that "data" to cipher through before we determine we have taken in enough and are ready to make a decision and act (or not act)? And how do we know the what we think we know is reliable?

As higher education professionals, we often claim to be teaching students to be critical thinkers, to embody life -long learning, to collect, evaluate, and consider various forms of evidence related to a topic in order to assess its

credibility. Do we really? Ponder these questions: do we, as higher education professionals, help teach students dents needed more structured institutional support mech- how much reliable information is needed to believe something? If so, how do we teach this skill? If not, why not? What—if anything—can higher education professionals, do differently? And how much reliable information is needed to consider before we believe our own answers to these questions?

> As I said at the start, I do not have the answers to these questions any more than I have an answer to Gladwell's. But I think it is important for us to jump down the rabbit hole.

Reference

Gladwell, M. (2018, May 24). Burden of proof. Revisionist *History Podcast*. Retrieved from http:// revisionisthistory.com/episodes/22-burden-of-proof

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 De-



cember 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.

Currently, #RSSI is seeking

conference proposals. Pre-conference proposals are due August 6, and program proposals are due September 1st. Learn more here.



Important Dates

- September 01, 2018: Call for Proposals Closes
- September 01, 2018: Call for Program Proposal **Reviewers** Closes
- September 30, 2018: Coordinating Presenter Notifications Sent (acceptance and nonacceptance emails)
- November 04, 2018: Early-bird Registration Ends
- November 28, 2018: Hotel Room Booking Deadline
- December 02, 2018: Regular Registration Ends

Avani Rana and Sean Ryan Named Co-Chairs of NASPA's Student Leadership Programs **Knowledge Community**



JCC and JCC Connexions are pleased to highlight two NASPA colleagues who have recently been named co-chairs of the Student Leadership Programs **Knowledge Community** (SLPKC).

ly with the KC's communi-

cation team and conference teams. While the communications team develops social media communications, podcasts, and messaging from the KC, the conference team manages all the events at the annual conference and assists with the regional conference if needed.

New initiatives coming out of this part of the KC are related to innovative webinars, an Instagram takeover project for sharing what different leadership programs are doing, a blog series for providing the leadership teams' expertise, and a continuation of the NASPA podcast. The conference team is already hard at work, supporting the upcoming regional conferences and submitting proposals

Avani serves with co-chair, Sean Ryan, who works directly with the collaboration team and the seven regional representatives within SLPKC. The collaboration team connects with individuals and groups outside SLPKC to bring in information and expertise about leadership development.

Working with constituents in the seven regions of Avani Rana works direct- NASPA, regional representatives provide opportunities and best practices for leadership growth. Because this is the first year regional representatives directly report to national KCs, SLPKC leaders are looking to organize



more meetups and sponsor different presentations on their regional conferences. On the collaboration side of the team, SLPKC recently updated their sponsorship structure to assess the best way to highlight programs and professionals through their spotlight and awards series.

As associate director of fraternity Life and experiential

for the annual conference. In addition to working with these teams, Avani will also assist the CAS standards review team to review Student Leadership Programs standards.



Leadership education at Dickinson College, Sean oversees the day-to-day operations and logistics of the college's fraternities and all campus recreation functional areas.

These functional areas include managing the

Avani brings to her new position extensive

experience in the field of leadership. She serves as director of leadership at The College of New Jersey, where she heads a comprehensive leadership program, coordinates leadership training for novice and experienced student leaders, and recruits, trains, and advises members who serve on the leadership advisory board. She is also charged with maintaining and communicating information to the campus community about leadership opportunities, events, and programs—among other responsibilities. She earned an EdD in education, culture, and society at Rutgers University.

operations of all 23 sport clubs; the climbing wall, as well as the challenge course that is associated with it; group fitness classes; a portion of the PE credit; outdoor education; and recreational programming. Sean also serves a member on the on-call rotation for the college and is member of the college's emergency response team. He is currently working on his doctoral degree in educational leadership from Central Michigan University.

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?"
- 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

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INVITED FEATURED ARTICLE

Reflections on a Career in Student Affairs

Janina Montero

PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

Developing the Moral Self: College Students' Understandings of Living a Moral or Ethical Life

Tara D. Hudson and Amber Díaz Pearson

Distinguishing Between Belief and Culture: A Critical Perspective on Religious Identity

Sachi Edwards

Grounded in Their Work: Interpreting Perceptions of Professional Values by Participants in Student Affairs

Preparation Programs

Daniel A. Bureau

OPINIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

The Cultivation of Wonder in the Premedical Learning Environment: Nurturing Ethical Character in the

Early Formation of Health Professionals

Gail Geller, Meredith Caldwell and Maria W. Merritt

INTERFAITH COOPERATION

Interfaith Capacity Building

J. M. Conway

WHAT THEY'RE READING

Practice for Life: Making Decisions in College

Reviewed by Kent Andersen

Highlights From Selected Articles in the Journal of College & Character

August 2018



Reflections on a Career in Student Affairs

Janina Montero, University of California - Los Angeles

In this <u>article</u>, **Janina Montero** presents a personal and professional reflection on her 40-plus-year career in higher education and student affairs within the context of current national events. In light of the fact that 2016 election and its ongoing aftermath have created new challenges and responsibilities for the profession, she proposes three guideposts for scholars and practitioners: the preeminence and urgency of the academic mission, remarking thresholds, and affirming peace.

Developing the Moral Self: College Students' Understandings of Living a Moral or Ethical Life

Tara D. Hudson, Kent State University

Amber Díaz Pearson, Duke University

Tara Hudson and **Amber Díaz Pearson's** <u>research</u> examines how undergraduate students at two U.S. universities, one faith-based and one independent, understand the meaning of living an ethical or moral life. Findings reveal that moral and ethical questions are relevant to students' lives and suggest that many students have a fairly well-developed sense of moral identity. Because of the relationship between moral identity and moral action, understanding the meaning college students make of living a moral or ethical life illuminates the grounding of their participation as citizens of our democratic and pluralistic society.

The Cultivation of Wonder in the Premedical Learning Environment: Nurturing Ethical Character in the Early Formation of Health Professionals

Gail Geller, Johns Hopkins University Meredith Caldwell, Johns Hopkins University Maria Merritt, Johns Hopkins University

Premedical education environments on American undergraduate campuses can be relentlessly competitive, and potentially undermine virtues of moral character critical to success in medical school and, later, clinical excellence. In response to these state of affairs, **Gail Geller**, **Meredith Caldwell**, and **Maria Merritt** propose a <u>new line of inquiry</u> exploring the *capacity for wonder*, the propensity to encounter everyday experiences with a sense of radical appreciation. This personal disposition, if cultivated in the premedical learning environment, may support the development of six specific virtues among future medical students: courage, curiosity, humility, gratitude, respect, and compassion.

Journal of College & Character

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For more information about these publications, email Pam Crosby, co-editor, at jcc@naspa.org 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>