THE STUDENT AFFAIRS INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE OF CHRISTOPHER SPELLMAN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA GREENSBORO

Introduction / Overview

My name is Christopher Spellman, and this is my research / summary paper about my internship experience at the University of North Carolina Greensboro during the summer of 2019. I am currently majoring in Leadership at Old Dominion University with a minor in Human Services. I intend to complete this interdisciplinary studies degree in the spring of 2020. The purpose of me pursuing this Leadership degree is to equip me for a leadership position in Higher Education Administration. It is my hope to become the Vice President / Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs at a higher education institution. I plan to achieve this goal by obtaining a master's degree in Student Affairs / Higher Education Leadership. Once received a master's, I will be advocating for student engagement and the leadership development of college students through various student affairs offices. After several years of doing this, I look to pursue an ED. D., in Higher Education Leadership that will qualify me for a Vice President / Vice Chancellor role at a college or university. The reason that it is important for one to know my anticipated career path is so that one can understand the importance of me doing my internship at the University of North Carolina Greensboro. My role at UNCG fell under their Division of Student Affairs, in which I reported directly to the professionals in their department of Housing and Residence Life. My position title was, 'Coordinator of Residence Life,' which is the equivalent to a Hall Director at Old Dominion. This step was developmental in the fact that I took off my undergraduate hat as a Resident Assistant, or supervisee, and put on the post – graduate school hat of Hall Director, or supervisor. This role sits two layers above my undergraduate residence

life position, and the professionals around me treated me as if I were operating in their professional roles long term. In this research / internship summary paper, I will share how my experience aligns with the various strands of Old Dominion's Leadership major, I will share how I navigated through my internship experience by networking, and I will summarize what I've learned while interning at the institution.

Leadership Major vs. Internship Experience

My Kinesthetic Approach to the Program's Components

Introducing my 'kinesthetic approach.'

"In order to have the things tomorrow others won't have, you must be willing to do the things today others won't do," – (Harrell, 153). This quote resonated with me and challenged me to apply it to the content learned in my course work. I took this quote and told myself, "In order to have a holistic understanding of my courses through the leadership major, I must be willing to go the extra mile to put these skills into practice today." I am a kinesthetic learner in the sense that I enjoy doing a skill in order to learn and develop it, rather than listening to someone attempt to teach or show me the ins and outs of that skill. I like to call this principle, 'My Kinesthetic Approach.' In this next section, I will explain what the different components of the leadership major are and identify the ways I exercised them through my kinesthetic approach at UNC Greensboro.

Unpacking the Leadership major.

The best way to compare the various strands of Old Dominion's Leadership major and how it aligns with my internship experience at UNC Greensboro is to unpack the several components of the Leadership major. The program overview touches on many of the major's elements, and explains the purpose of this major by stating, "The Leadership major, offered through the College of Arts and Letters Interdisciplinary Studies Program is a flexible academic degree that focuses on characteristics and skills necessary to lead in organizational and social contexts, and emphasizes ethical leadership, legal issues, written and oral communication skills," (Leadership, ODU). This summer, I applied my kinesthetic approach to the emphasized written / oral communication skills, ethical leadership, legal issues, and characteristics / skills needed to lead in organizational and social contexts. I have taken many courses that align with each of the leadership components, but practicing these skills at the University of North Carolina Greensboro helped me to understand how to apply them.

Using my 'kinesthetic approach' to practice ethical leadership and address legal issues.

After taking 'Leadership & Law,' CPS 412, 'Ethic, Governance, and Accountability in Public Service,' PAS 301, and 'Trends & Issues in Leadership,' CPS 416, I have gained a clearer understanding of ethics and what it should legally look like from a leadership perspective. In these courses, I had to develop my personal code of ethics and conduct research on the common legal issues in leadership. In March of 2019, I was assigned to research a legal issue that aligned with the field I aspire to work in. The legal issues that I researched involved the higher education admissions scandal that was revealed in the spring of 2019.

On March 9th, 2019, I attempted to take a break from my 'Trends & Issues in Leadership,' course and attend a student affairs conference in Los Angeles, CA called NASPA, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. Little did I know; at this conference I would discover information that would only enhance my research for the course. As I attended the undergraduate workshops held at the University of Southern California, news abruptly broke out that the very same institution that I was standing on was under investigation. When I observed the commotion around me, I originally thought that the news was local, being that I was currently in the area. I soon came to the realization that this investigation was a part of many others that were nationally recognized for an admissions scandal. In this scandal, certain students would get admitted into the some of the nation's most prestige higher education institutions, despite falling short of the characteristics commonly associated with highly admissible students (Cowen, S.). The reason that these students were being admitted was because of the bribery cooperated between the students' parents and administration; including, but not limited to – coaches, admissions professionals, administration, etc. (Park, M.). Although I conducted first – hand research on this issue, I was not a part of the leadership team that developed an ethical approach to this issue.

In my internship, I had the opportunity to reflect on my personal code of ethics and collaborate with UNCG's Assistant Vice Chancellor and Assistant Director of Residence Life to navigate an ethical approach for UNCG on a different legal issue. The three of us met in representation of the diversity committee for the division of student affairs and attended a NASPA Webinar titled – "You Can't Say That Here: Balancing Free Speech and Campus Safety," (NASPA). We evaluated the legal issue of free speech on college campus and sought for ways to ethically address this issue for the institution. The learning outcomes that our committee achieved from this webinar were as follows: we gained a concrete understanding of the

University of Connecticut's event procedures so that we would be adapted and restructured to conform to the needs of UNCG, we developed the means to create a campus team to review and respond to requests for speakers and programs that may be controversial to UNCG's campus, we learned and understood how a leading research institution defines safety in regards to free speech, and we learned how to educate and proactively engage with student organization leaders and advisors at UNCG. We achieved these outcomes by assessing a controversy regarding a 2017 speaking engagement, which brought a controversial commentator to a campus just after Election Day 2016. The Assistant Vice Chancellor, Assistant Director, and I, discussed themes that would contribute to the institution's strategic plan in addressing similar issues that may occur in the future. I was able to contribute in this space because of the ethical leadership practices and legal issues that I have researched in my courses (i.e. the Higher Education Admissions Scandal). To be able to put these components in to action was developmental for me and it marked one of many times I exercised skills learned from my courses.

Using my 'kinesthetic approach' to enhance my written & oral skills.

Sitting with representatives from UNCG's diversity leadership team was not the only time I exercised skills learned from my course work in the leadership major. After taking Interpersonal Relations, HMSV 339, and Interpersonal Communication in Organizations, COMM 351, I have developed a higher competency about interpersonal conflict. In effect of this increased awareness, my written and oral skills have improved. One of the common themes that I discussed and researched in my course work was managing conflict and evaluating what that looks like in the workplace. In order for one to understand conflict in the workplace, they must understand the theory of managing interpersonal conflict. In my studies, I have found that there are many causes to conflict, but one that stood out to me the most was the lack of understanding. Many times, the reason that one party may not understand the stance of the other party is because of their poor listening skills.

There are many barriers that hinders effective listening such as: physiological barriers, environmental barriers, attitudinal barriers, sociocultural differences, and lack of training (Adler, R.). Physiological barriers are those that cause a party to physically not be able to hear such as hearing deficiencies or rapid thought. Rapid thought is when one can't focus in on messages because they're distracted by their mind racing. Environmental barriers include message overload or physical distractions such as cold, noise, other people, etc. Attitudinal barriers include preoccupation, fear of appearing ignorant, pride, or egocentrism – thinking selfishly of oneself, without regard for the feelings or desires of others. (Elmhorst, J.). Attitudinal barriers also include the assumption that effective communication is the sender's responsibility, assumption that listening is passive, or assumption that talking is more advantageous than listening. Sociocultural differences consist of cultural differences such as accents, degree of experience with differing speech styles, or conversational parameters, such as flow and use of silence. Sociocultural differences also include gender differences. Research shows that feminine and masculine communicators listen for different purposes and they use / interpret listening noises differently (Adler, R.). Lack of training is another contribution to listening barriers. Because of these listening barriers, people engage in unresolved conflict that could be avoided if they listen effectively and gain an understanding of each other. In my coursework, I used this research on listening barriers and other components to develop a strategic plan for companies to use that will train its' employees how to manage interpersonal conflict.

Upon my arrival at the University of North Carolina Greensboro, I took the research conducted in my coursework to develop a theory that helps housing professionals train their Resident Assistants / Advisors to manage interpersonal conflict. I applied the written and oral skills I've gained from my course work to develop a presentation tailored to housing and residence life professionals across the state of North Carolina at a state conference. Ashley Owens, Coordinator for Residence Life, and myself organized and conducted a fifty-minute presentation at the 2019 North Carolina Housing Officers, NCHO, Social Justice and Assessment Drive – In Conference on "Dealing With Difficult vs. Dealing With Different," (Owens, A. C.). Our abstract states, "There are plenty of difficult conversations that occur amongst students in our residence halls around a plethora of topics in the realm of social justice. However, these topics are deemed difficult because of the differences that our students hold. This presentation will shed light on the challenges Resident Assistants / Advisors encounter and enlighten the audience on how to train RA's on how to facilitate difficult conversations with residents. Allowing RA's to shed light on the root of issues and empowering students to embrace difference," (NCHO). Being the only undergraduate student / resident assistant at the conference, it was an honor to practice my written / oral skills and lecture graduate students, hall directors, assistant directors, housing directors, associate dean of students, and other residence life / student affairs professionals on how to understand the common issues and insecurities RA's face when approaching the facilitation of difficult situations based on first – hand experiences and research.

Summarizing My Kinesthetic Approach

In my internship at the University of North Carolina Greensboro, I had many opportunities to exercise my kinesthetic approach to the skills I've gained from the different courses in Old Dominion's Leadership Program that are necessary to lead in organizational and social contexts. This internship has allowed me to practice the components of the degree that emphasizes ethical leadership, legal issues, and written / oral communication skills. I had the ability to use my research on the 2019 higher education admission scandal from my Leadership & Law course, CPS 412, and apply it to the NASPA Webinar session titled – "You Can't Say That Here: Balancing Free Speech and Campus Safety," (NASPA). During this session, UNC Greensboro's Assistant Vice Chancellor, Assistant Housing Director, and I worked to acknowledge ways we can ethically face similar legal issues for the institution. Many of the ethical leadership approaches that I've learned when facing other legal issues helped me to contribute in this space. It was also developmental to use the research from my Interpersonal Communication in Organizations Course, COMM 351, on managing interpersonal conflict and apply it to a fifty – minute presentation for housing professionals (Owens, A.C.). This internship has allowed me to practice my written and oral skills and give professionals tips how to train their RA's to do the same when facing difficult or different situations. Because of my administrative involvement at the University of North Carolina Greensboro, I have cultivated a more holistic view on ethical leadership, legal issues, and written / oral communication with my 'kinesthetic approach.' In result of my internship experience, I have adequately met the Leadership program's expectations by developing the characteristics and skills necessary to lead in organizational and social contexts for the field of student affairs.

How I Navigated My Internship Experience

Background to Arriving at The University North Carolina Greensboro

I have navigated my internship experience through networking, exposure, and living by the principle that states, "It's not about what you know, it's about who you know." John R. Broderick, President of Old Dominion University, has been instrumental in my experience at the University of North Carolina Greensboro. I have to admit; I have not always sustained the most professional relationship with President Broderick. In December of 2017, I was scheduled to have a one - on - one meeting with the President Broderick, to update him on my academic / co - curricular progress and inform him about a mentorship program that I chaired under the Office of Intercultural Relations, Project Crown. The former Vice President of Student Engagement and Enrollment Services at Old Dominion, Dr. Ellen Neufeldt, decided to sit – in on this meeting to attain more information about the program. This would not be the first one - on - one meeting between the president and I, but this would be the first meeting that the Vice President would participate in. Two days after the scheduled meeting, I showed up to work in the Office of Intercultural Relations and my former supervisor Lesa Clark, the Director of OIR, shared a message with me from the Vice President asking why I was not present at the meeting. My heart immediately dropped as I realized that I MISSED THE MEETING! It was at this point that I had to assess my self – care and life skills; thus, making me re – evaluate my career aspirations. During the winter break of 2017, I assessed my gifts / skills and concluded that I would make a career and degree change that aligned to the field of student affairs. The rescheduled meeting in January of 2018 did not include the president, so I expressed my new profound career aspirations to Dr. Ellen Neufeldt. Little did I know, Dr. Ellen Neufeldt was a highly influential professional in NASPA, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. She advised me to join the NASPA Undergraduate Fellows Program at Old Dominion University, known as NUFP

(NASPA Undergraduate). The NUFP elements consists of on – campus mentorship, regional and annual conference programming, the Dungy Leadership Institute, and summer internships. After eight months of being accepted into the program, I had approximately seven summer internship interviews with various institutions across the nation; including but not limited to, North Carolina State University, Valdosta State University, University of Tennessee Knoxville, Eastern Michigan University, and the University of North Carolina Greensboro. After being accepted into four institutions, I decided to build my professional network with student affairs professionals at the University of North Carolina Greensboro. By this time, I have met with President Broderick on multiple occasions to rekindle our relationship. After our encounter in Los Angeles during the 2019 NASPA Conference, president Broderick and I had a conversation about my summer plans. It was at this moment he contributed to my internship experience before it even started by connecting me with Dr. Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr., Chancellor (president) of the University of North Carolina Greensboro. In 2017, I could not foresee that me missing a meeting with the President of Old Dominion University would put me in spaces (regional and national conferences) that would benefit my career aspirations, influence me to change my major to leadership, and cause me to connect with another university president during my internship experience.

Expanding My Professional Network

The birth of my network during my internship.

Meeting the Chancellor of UNC Greensboro was one of the many connections that I've made while interning at UNCG. The moment I arrived to campus, approximately eight to ten

Coordinators for Residence Life (Hall Directors) assisted me in moving in. Their hospitality was unmatched, and it marked the beginning of many life – long professional relationships. Just a few days ago, one of the CRL's who helped me move – in, Daniel Wiggins, reflected on this experience and wrote, "When you first arrived (with a giant box of shoes), I knew you had presence and something special; however, you have gone above and beyond my expectations, and I will be so excited once you are a full – time professional in this field." Many of the relationships that began on my move – in day share similar testimonies. Being that my internship was in the department of housing and residence life, it would be easy to only connect with professionals in the department. I made a commitment that I would not limit my network to be stagnant in the department of housing of residence life, but I would also network with administrators in the division of student affairs and other professionals at neighboring institutions.

Assessing the domino effect of my connections.

My second day on campus, I took the initiative to begin expanding my professional network and connected with Jared Ward, Co – Curricular Learning and Assessment Program Coordinator at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. I met Jared Ward during the NASPA Conference in Los Angeles. In the few months of knowing him, he has been my mentor and has shed light to different issues within the field of student affairs. He allowed me to shadow him during UNC's LeaderShape Program that ironically was hosted in Greensboro, NC (Carolina Union). During this program, Jared introduced me to several student affairs professionals, one of which had a huge impact on my experience. This connection would be with Dr. Shauna Harris, Associate Director for Student Life & Leadership at UNC Chapel Hill. Being that I aspire to work in the role of Dr. Harris in the future, developing intentional programming that enhances the leadership development of college students, I was elated to have made this connection. Since we've connected a few months ago, Dr. Harris has occasionally updated me on various opportunities that contribute to my professional development in student affairs. She has also referred me to connect with other professionals such as; Demarcus Merritt, Assistant Director for Housing and Residence Life at UNC Greensboro, Coretta Walker, Assistant Vice Chancellor at UNC Greensboro, and Gerald Harris, Director of Student Involvement at Duke University. I eventually connected with all three of these individuals and they all have contributed to my personal and professional development in various ways.

Coretta Walker has invited me to her church, she has helped me solidify a list of graduate schools, she serves as a resource for graduate school referrals, and she has shared a few scholarly readings with me: *Job One 2.0* by Peter Magolda (Magolda, P. M.), *Becoming Socialized In Student Affairs Administration* by Ashley Tull (Tull, A.), and *The Strategic Guide to Shaping Your Student Affairs Career* by Sonja Ardoin (Ardoin, M. S.). These readings have expanded my competency for the field of student affairs, giving me a more holistic view on how I should navigate my graduate search and pursue this career. Coretta also took the initiative to brief me for my shadowing experience with the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, Dr. Cathy Akens. I had the opportunity to shadow Dr. Cathy Akens during UNCG's Student Affairs Division Director's Meeting; and in effect, I walked away with an understanding of what their institution's leadership team looks like from an administrative perspective.

Demarcus Merritt, Assistant Director for Housing and Residence Life, and I have sustained a professional relationship that goes beyond student affairs. There were times during my internship where I did not receive adequate finances, and without me saying a word, Demarcus would voluntarily take the initiative to be a blessing. I did not take this connection for granted and we were able to work well together on various projects. One of the projects that I assisted Demarcus on was the development of assessment questions for the department's Flight Program (UNCG Flight 2019). The Flight Program is the on – boarding process for new housing professionals under UNC Greensboro's department of housing and residence life. Being that the Flight Program is a yearlong experience, I will be continuing my involvement in the creation of the assessment during my senior year at Old Dominion University, until June of 2020. Another time we worked together on a specific task was at the Dungy Leadership Institute (DLI), one of NASPA NUFP's four elements, which was hosted at UNC Chapel Hill. "DLI is held annually on various college campuses and offers 32 NUFP Fellows the unique opportunity to network with their peers and current student affairs administrators serving as institute faculty. DLI provides an in – depth leadership development experience and prepares Fellows for graduate work in student affairs and higher education," (2019 NUFP DLI). Demarcus and I served as representatives for the University of North Carolina Greensboro during the institute's Resource Fair to inform the NUFP Fellows about UNCG. Because North Carolina has a high concentration of higher education institutions, there were many other colleges and universities at the resource fair from across the state. I decided to take advantage of this opportunity and connect with different professionals from the other institutions. It was at this resource fair that I met Gerald Harris, Director of Student Involvement at Duke University.

I have always admired Duke University because of its' athletic programs, but to receive a first – hand perspective on their institution's division of student affairs was far more fulfilling.

Being that student engagement and leadership development are my top two student affairs interests, I was so elated to connect with the Director of Student Involvement for Duke. This connection was fulfilling in the fact that I took a site visit to meet Gerald in his office. Gerald gave me an in – depth tour of Duke's campus and during this tour, he shared with me the history of the institution and its' impact on the campus' culture. Although Duke's campus maintains its' historic appearance on the outside, the inside of every building has a unique, modernized interior. Seeing this was significant because it helped me understand the logistics of how private higher education institutions are ran. The leadership of Duke and similar private, historic institutions must make ethical decisions that simultaneously please its' alumni and new incoming students. Gerald Harris explained the various challenges that administration face in leading private institutions and it opened another perspective on my entire view of higher education leadership.

Summarizing My Network

There is a saying that states, "Student affairs is a large field, but it is very small." Interning at the University of Greensboro has allowed me to witness this first – hand. The three previous paragraphs reveal the connections I've made from the referral of one individual, Dr. Shauna Harris, Associate Director for Student Life & Leadership at UNC Chapel Hill. I would not have made this connection when I did if it wasn't for Jared Ward, Co – Curricular Learning & Assessment Program Coordinator at UNC. There is a domino effect in every connection that I have made while interning at UNC Greensboro, and I have just shared the effects of my first two days on campus. The other 81 days of my internship are filled with so many other connections, it would take a novel to expand on each. Every connection, from directors to first – year professionals, from assistant directors to graduate students, from vice presidents / vice chancellor's to student affairs department heads, from presidents / chancellor's to clinical professors and faculty, has allowed me to increase my competency in student affairs because of the professional development, personal development, and wise counsel that these experts have shared.

Conclusion

Summary

I have navigated my internship experience at the University of North Carolina Greensboro through networking; which in effect, has allowed me to put many of the leadership theories from my coursework to practice. During the last week of my internship, I had the opportunity to exercise my written and oral skills by presenting on everything I've learned about UNCG and proposing recommendations to the institution. Aside from sharing what I've learned and my proposals, I also was tasked to shared my projects, my connections, my shadowing experiences, my committee involvement, my conference participation, my professional presentations, and other aspects of my internship experience, to various professionals in the division.

What I've Learned & Proposed

When presenting on the different things I've learned about the University of North Carolina Greensboro, I split this section of my presentation into two parts: The Department of Housing and Residence Life, and The Division of Student Affairs.

In the department of Housing and Residence life, I've learned how dedicated the committees work to fulfill the vision of the department by providing comfortable & safe living environments, academic success support, and administering social responsibility. Their staff intentionally planned to operate under its' core values by strongly advocating for diversity and inclusion, personal growth, teamwork, community, safety, security, and innovation. The only suggestion I gave to the department was to enhance the internship experience for the next NUFP. I proposed to provide more structure by supplying a list of learning outcomes, but still allowing the next Fellow to have the flexibility to gain what they need. I also shared the model that Notre Dame University uses to host their NUFP's. Kristine Slade and Marwa Al Khamees, two interns from Notre Dame University, informed me that their institution allowed each intern to work for two weeks in different departments within student affairs. I thought that this idea may be beneficial to the next NUFP who may not be as confident to develop relationships with other professionals in the division and make connections on their own. This is just a summary of what I presented to various professionals in the field about my experience with the department of housing and residence life.

The division of student affairs works to sustain a strong support between academic and student affairs at UNC Greensboro. Integrating the relationship between academic affairs and student affairs is one of the most important topics in the field. An excerpt shared by Dr. Cathy Akens from NASPA reads, "Our vision of learning assumes that distinctions among terms such as personal development, student development, and learning are meaningless, if not destructive," and therefore proposes that it is needed to have, "…integration of all domains of learning and involvement of all educators, regardless of their campus role," (Williams, L. B., pg. 3). UNCG's

division of student affairs approaches this issue strategically with the collaboration of residence life assistantships and co – curricular initiatives given to the SAAHE (Student Affairs and Higher Education) graduate students. These initiatives promote professional responsibility, enhances leadership skills, and improves academic success. The proposal that I made to the division was to incorporate a student affairs / higher education leadership certificate for undergraduate students. This certificate will be accessible to all disciplines, regardless if the student desires to pursue the field of student affairs or not. The certificate will develop strong leadership skills and prepare undergraduates to be a competitive candidate for graduate school. Being that most graduate assistantships fall under student affairs, it would only make sense to equip individuals who may be seeking a Masters' degree to be prepared for potential assistant positions. I researched student affairs / higher education academic opportunities for undergraduates and found that only a few institutions have a major, a minor, or a concentration to study. During my presentation, I shared with the professionals at UNCG that after sharing my research with Brian Payne, ODU's Vice Provost, and Christopher Glass, Director of the Higher Education Graduate Program, Old Dominion University's Department of Education has decided to go along with the idea. Many professionals in the room were inspired at the fact that this proposal passed at my undergraduate institution; and in effect, they took notes on my suggestions for the division.

Comprehensive Conclusion

I am grateful for the opportunity I had at the University of North Carolina Greensboro to integrate the content I've learned in my coursework into the field of student affairs. Choosing to study in the Leadership (Interdisciplinary Studies, B.S.) major was one of the best steps I took toward pursuing a career in higher education leadership. The National Association for Student

Personnel Administrators' (NASPA) Undergraduate Fellows Program has fortified my professional development by providing me with this internship opportunity. I have been able to exercise the characteristics and skills necessary to lead in organizational and social contexts by practicing ethical leadership, developing strategic approaches to legal issues, and enhancing my written and oral skills. Being that these are the key components of the Leadership Major, I can say that Darron Jenkins, my supervisor for the NUFP internship, has successfully provided me with every developmental skill that I have needed to attain. As I pack my bags to leave Greensboro, North Carolina on Tuesday, August 6, 2019, I intend to carry every professional connection I have made back to Norfolk, Virginia and allow my network to expand as far as my God desires it to.

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List of Personal Research

- Proposal for Student Affairs / Higher Education Leadership Undergraduate Certificate <u>docs.google.com/document/d/1eDxbBNeP014cFTzMM2_yqfO0a8YmE0m1IhjDs7zEW</u> <u>5k</u>
- UNCG Flight Program 2019 Assessment Questions <u>https://docs.google.com/document/d/16WEZZSpVyzEwZY7Q1rkocf5X539qTiCBGpe-XpwI0FQ/e</u> <u>dit</u>

Summary of Christopher Spellman's Internship Experience <u>https://drive.google.com/drive/u/3/folders/1f9ki_wcCHNaAIUk5Eqnot6o3qltrrRBU</u>