

# HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT AFFAIRS NEWSLETTER

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## Note from the Program Director:

Greetings Alumni, Stakeholders, Students, and Friends of the HESA Program!

As I'm sure you know, the HESA Graduate Program has undergone many changes in the last couple of years – two new faculty, a program name change, and a major curriculum restructure, to name a few. I write to you now with yet another change – Over the holiday break in December 2015, Dr. Adriel Hilton accepted a new position at Grambling State University as Chief of Staff. We are all very happy for Adriel, as he advances his career, but he is also extremely missed by all of us at Western.

In January 2016, I happily took on the role of Program Director. I feel that the PD responsibilities are not only within my capabilities, but they include projects that I am interested in and passion about (e.g. continued assessment of the program, student professional development, and alumni relations). As we have undergone a faculty search this semester (more on this within "Program Updates"), I have had the challenge of being a one-faculty program... solely responsible for recruitment, admissions, GA matching, program events, etc. I would be lying if I said it has been easy, but I'm convinced the HESA program has the best students on WCU's campus, and they have been incredibly gracious through this process. I must also thank the HESA Advisory Board for stepping up to offer additional mentorship to our students this semester, and special thanks to Dr. Carol Burton and Dr. Kevin Koett for stepping in (last minute!) to teach the Spring classes that Adriel was slated to teach.

One of my biggest concerns with Adriel leaving was in regard to student support. I took on the role of advising all of the students in the program, which has been one of the most rewarding yet challenging tasks this semester. My role of "academic advisor" is quite simple; however, advisor often becomes life-coach, career-counselor, crisis-manager, student advocate, mentor, and so much more. Presumably, the HESA students have not received support at the level they would have with two faculty, but they have, however, recognized my role in support and mentorship. Just last month, I was awarded the Curtis Wood Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Mentoring sponsored by the Graduate School. I have since learned that many of the HESA students and my Department Head nominated me for this incredible honor. I am happy to serve the HESA students in this role, and I feel honored to be on a continuous learning journey with each of them.

And to the rest of you – alumni and stakeholders – thank you for trusting me to lead this program and for your support in the process. If any of you wish to discuss the program or have any other concerns that I can help with, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Here's to you!



April Perry

# HESA Program Information & Updates

## **Recruitment Update:**

\* We had a full force effort this year with recruitment: We hosted an online Open House in November 2015, the Graduate School hosts Open House Events every month (for all graduate programs), Adriel sent our marketing materials to many universities last Fall, and April spoke to approximately 15 targeted WCU student organizations and classes.

\* In January 2016, the Provost's Office approved our request to drop the GRE requirement for applicants with a 3.0 GPA or higher.

\* Our alumni have proven to be a great resource for identifying qualified candidates and directly recruiting for our program – thank you!

We believe these efforts (and many more) have contributed to our most successful admissions year yet!

## **Admissions Update:**

\* By our March 1st priority deadline, we received approximately 40 applications.

\* From these, we filled all 15 of our full-time spots and offered places to 3 part-time students.

\* We have made a commitment to match all full-time students admitted to the program with paid Graduate Assistantships, and with the generous support of the Graduate School and the Division of Student Affairs, we have funded all 15 full-time students in the 2016 incoming cohort and all 11 continuing students (2nd year cohort).

\* Demographic Information for our 2016 applicants:

\* Gender: 42.8% male; 57.2 female (self-identified)

\* Ethnicity: 3.6% Native American; 17.8% Black; 78.5% White

\* Geography: 35.8% out-of-state/country; 64.2% in-state (North Carolina)

\* WCU Grads: 46.4%

\*Remember, you can recommend a student for the program! Click [HERE!](#)

## **Faculty Search Update:**

\* We posted a tenure-track position online (WCU's website, multiple search engines, and listservs) in January 2016

\* The search committee first met to review applications in mid-February, of which we received approximately 80 applications

\* In March, six video interviews were conducted with potential candidates

\* In April, two candidates came to campus for on-site interviews

\* We have extended an offer to an amazing person, who plans to join our faculty ranks in August (contract negotiations underway).

\* You will be able to find a bio for the faculty member on the HESA website soon!

# Student News

## Spencer Presents at NASPA



**Cassie Spencer**

In March I had the opportunity to present at NASPA in Indianapolis. Dr. Perry and I presented a session on the importance of experiential learning titled: Building employability currency: Helping students leverage their co-curricular experiences. Our presentation was based off of an article written by myself and Dr. Perry that will be published later this month in the William and

Mary Educational Review. As a second year graduate student, presenting at NASPA was a unique experience and the highlight of the conference. I not only had the opportunity to share both my and

*“I was able to attend numerous sessions about my area of interest in career and professional development as well as other sessions about navigating my job search...”*

Dr. Perry’s research, but I also had the opportunity to showcase my skills and experience as a student affairs professional to a room of roughly 90 other SA professionals. In addition to presenting at NASPA, attending the conference was also a really beneficial experience. I was able to attend numerous sessions about my area of interest in career and professional development as well as other sessions about navigating my job search, using failure as the fuel for innovation and more. I was also able to get involved with a NASPA Knowledge Community of career and professional development where I met and networked with other SA professionals who work in Career Services offices. Joining the Knowledge Community and attending NASPA as a whole was both a great professional development and networking opportunity.

## Poston Presents at SROW

On March 11-13 I attended the Southern Regional Orientation Workshop (SROW), a conference hosted this year by East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina. Along with seven of my students from both Western Carolina University and my undergraduate institution, Barton College (Wilson, North Carolina), I presented four of six session blocks. Having the opportunity to present with former classmates as well as current supervisees was incredibly rewarding. This experience provided me the opportunity to utilize my public speaking and supervision skills, as well as a chance to promote student development in the orientation counselors.

Additionally, I was honored when one of my sessions entitled “Is a Career in Student Affairs the Gold Medal?” won 1st Place in the category of Graduate Educational Session. The presentation offered a suggested framework of how to begin a career in Higher Education. It began with applying to graduate school and ended with the student affairs job

search. Every SROW conference I have attended has been special and unique, but the sixth proved to be the most fulfilling by far. I have gotten so much value out of realizing my potential as a mentor, and guiding others into a future career in student affairs.



**Hillary Poston**

# Student News

## Covington Publishes Article on Promoting Minority Success in STEM



Megan Covington

This semester I served as lead author on an article titled “A Practitioner-Scholar Perspective to Promoting Minority Success in STEM” that was recently accepted for publication in the Journal of Multicultural Education in the Multicultural Perspectives in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education Special Issue. This manuscript was co-authored with HESA student, Terry Chavis and HESA program director, Dr. April Perry. The major idea for this conceptual paper stemmed from an experiential learning experience I had while employed with a summer bridge program designed to support minority students in engineering at Purdue University. Through this experience I noted the need for increased intentionality when building upon and designing effective interventions around support programs for minorities in STEM, which is discussed throughout the article.

In the manuscript, the co-authors and I discuss the combination of current research with practice and theory to delve into topics such as: challenges and barriers, financial issues, stereotypes, the role of faculty, and current support efforts in reference to minorities in STEM. Through the presentation of previous literature and ideas for action, we suggested that institutions of higher education will increase the likelihood of success for racial/ethnic minorities in STEM fields by building upon already effective programmatic efforts, looking through a new theoretical lens, developing collaborative partnerships across campus, and continuing to develop empirical research on this important area of exploration.

## Chavis Presents at Graduate Symposium

As a classmate and I joined forces, we created a paper that briefly underlines the struggles of persistence of minorities in STEM (discussed above). After much time and energy, it was accepted into a professional journal! Now, it was time for WCU to see what their scholars are thinking. One of the best ways to do that is to participate in the Graduate Symposium. Though I have presented scholarly work several times over, this one was different; I was presenting to an audience with little knowledge of the content. The most difficult part of the process was not the public speaking, but explaining the material to educate the audience. It was a success and was an experience that benefited my goals as a scholar. Through my coursework in the HESA program, I have developed a more professional approach to presenting scholarly work and the ability to use a language that complement the topics. The Graduate Symposium is the beginning of my journey at presenting at professional conferences or symposiums. My goals are to submit proposals to professional organizations such as NASPA, SACSA, ACPA, and ASHE. Next year, the goal at WCU is to participate in the 3-Minute Thesis and Graduate Symposium.



Terry Chavis

# Student Experiences at The Placement Exchange

## Williams Gains Experience at The Placement Exchange

This spring, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to attend both The Placement Exchange (TPE) and the annual NASPA conference in Indianapolis, Indiana. The TPE experience proved to be one of the most tiring, exciting, and rewarding processes that I have been through in my time in graduate school. This massive job fair involved “speed interviewing” with dozens of different schools and really taking the time to figure out how to present my best self to potential employers. I was able to connect with my peers from different institutions, as well as experience this exciting week with two other friends and members of my cohort. I felt prepared in the large number of candidates, because of the preparation from the HESA program and my experiences in my graduate assistantship and internships. I was able to translate stories that had been so meaningful in my paraprofessional career to interviewers to better explain who I am. Without TPE, I think the job search would be a lot more difficult to

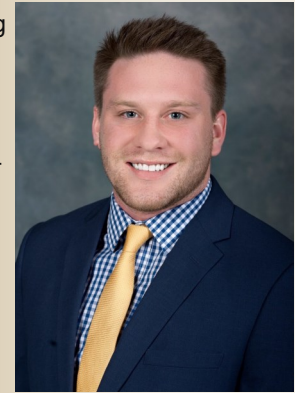
navigate. I feel more prepared for future interviews. I also reaffirmed that I am a good candidate in the student affairs profession, prepared to enter the field.



**Ronni Williams**

## Cauble Attends TPE

As a second year graduate student, one of the most exciting and rewarding activities I was able to participate in this year was The Placement Exchange (TPE), held in Indianapolis, Indiana, for the 2016 year. TPE is an annual conference allowing students and job-seekers within higher education across the nation to come together and interview for varying positions within student affairs. As a student who is about to graduate from the HESA program, TPE was an amazing opportunity to place myself in a position where I was able to meet numerous amounts of professionals within the field and market myself as an incoming professional.



**Joshua Cauble**

Before going through TPE, I was nervous at how the process was going to work. Back-to-back interviews for three days straight is terrifying within itself, but add the notion that you are interviewing with thousands of other individuals, some for the same position, adds an extra level of nervousness. My nerves quickly dropped as I began the interview process. The individuals at the institutions interviewing for positions were so kind and understanding of the process throughout TPE and made every effort to make every interviewee feel comfortable and confident within themselves.

After the first couple of interviews I had realized how prepared I was coming in to this process. Looking around at other students attending the conference, it was very apparent that the HESA program at Western Carolina University truly prepared students for the professional world, especially the interview process. For any student questioning whether or not they should participate within TPE, all I could offer is my true belief that every student going into higher education and student affairs should experience this conference and truly reflect on the benefits this experience will have on your job search.

# Student Experiences at The Placement Exchange

## Floyd Reflects on Her TPE Experience

On March 8, 2016, I traveled to Indianapolis, Indiana to interview for positions at institutions across the country at The Placement Exchange (TPE). Before arriving at TPE, I had several phone interviews with institutions which resulted in second-round interviews at TPE. Once I arrived in Indianapolis, I had 8 first-round interviews and 3 second-round interviews. I was not nationally searching, so beginning this process was daunting and very scary.

*"...I learned a lot about myself and the passion that I have for Student Affairs."*

However, my entire TPE experience was really phenomenal. The day before interviews started I attended TPE Bootcamp, which allowed me to become familiar with the entire process, take part in mock interviews, and ask questions of professionals that have experienced both sides of the TPE, as an interviewer and an interviewee. By the end of the Bootcamp, I felt prepared and excited to start interviewing.

Most people that come to TPE, and are nationally searching, have interviews set up for

every day, but I only had interviews on the first and second day. Most of the schools that I chose to interview with were only doing first-round interviews at TPE. While the beginning of TPE for me was really stressful I had time to relax and reflect at the end.

I am still job searching, and a lot of the schools that I interviewed with have contacted me since TPE for further interviews. TPE was extremely challenging mentally and emotionally, but I learned a lot about myself and the passion that I have for Student Affairs. I encourage anyone who gets the opportunity to go the The Placement Exchange should participate in order to experience this awesome opportunity.



**Myranda Floyd**

# Student Spotlight

## Morgan Hudson

Hello everyone! My name is Morgan Hudson, and I am serving as an intern this semester within the Department of Intercultural Affairs (ICA) here at Western Carolina University! Our mission within ICA is to provide an inclusive environment that examines, recognizes, accepts, and affirms human differences and similarities related to national origin, religion, gender, disability, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, and socioeconomic status. While the mission statement can seem a bit wordy, it can really be summed up in four words: social justice and advocacy.



**Morgan Hudson**

*“While the mission statement can seem a bit wordy, it can really be summed up in four words: social justice and advocacy.”*

By educating the campus community on a wide range of social identities and advocating for those with less cultural and political power, ICA has certainly foregrounded important conversations on campus. Many community members may perceive these conversations to be negative, given that they have primarily taken place through the use of chalking and social media. However, important dialogues have also occurred face-to-face in authentic and open ways, allowing students, faculty, and staff to talk across difference and understand multiple perspectives. Staff in the Department of Intercultural Affairs have been left with the challenge of creating safe spaces where these dialogues can continue to occur, while also promoting events that aim to educate and spread awareness of important social justice issues. One way that ICA does this is through major programming and forums. One example of programming that ICA conducted this year was the Tunnel of Oppression. This was the first year that the program has ever been put on by the University, and it was clear that it made an impact. Over 300 students went through the tunnel, and many professors required that their classes go to the program in order to broaden their horizons when it came to class discussions about different religions, sexual identities, and races. The tunnel had over 20 student volunteers, and they all portrayed a variety of characters within each scenario. At the end of the program there was a discussion session, to which those students, faculty and staff who went through the tunnel could express how it made them feel. This discussion led to rich ideas on how we as a campus community can work together in order to make sure our campus is inclusive to everyone. I, along with my supervisor Niki Paganelli, took the feedback from the discussion sessions, and we are planning to make next years tunnel bigger and better. During the month of April, ICA and the upper administration here at Western Carolina hosted four forums on the topic of positive freedom of expression. The forums were for students, faculty and staff to have constructive conversations on this important issue. The feedback from these forums will help produce further forums, programs, and policies in the future in order to better the department and Western Carolina as a whole. We are a department that works hard to continuously provide inclusivity to all constituents of Western Carolina, so that we can truly stand together as a University.

# Alumni Spotlight

Hello! My name is Melissa, and I graduated from WCU's College Student Personnel program in 2014. It feels like it's been much longer than just two years since I left Cullowhee, and I miss it regularly.



After graduation, I moved back to my hometown of Vancouver, Washington (in SW Washington, just over the border from Portland) and started a job as an Academic Advisor at Clark College, the community college in town (and the one from which I graduated in 2008!). Academic advising isn't always the job I imagined it to be, but I'm relishing in the challenges that I'm experiencing and hoping that I'll see growth and some more opportunities to really utilize my degree.

Outside of my day job, I have spent the last two years investing heavily in my community. I've found much of my passion in this community investment, and that's something of which I am exceedingly proud. Upon my return to Vancouver, I joined the Young Democrats of Clark County, and the Clark County Democrats. In December of 2014, I was elected as Secretary of the Clark County Democrats for a 2-year term, and in April of 2015 was elected as Secretary of the Young Democrats for a 1-year term. I also got involved in the Young Democrats of Washington, and became the Convention Chair. We planned our annual convention in Vancouver this year, and it was a great success. At that convention, I was awarded Young Democrat of the Year, which was an incredible honor. Just two weeks ago, I was elected Chair of the Young Democrats of Clark County.

My involvement with the local Democratic party takes a lot of work, but has been something that has gotten me through any financial, life, or work related struggles I've been through in the last two years. I've built strong relationships and met some incredible people, and have found a space where I can invest in my community and invest in the future of education by getting the right people elected to office.

My work in the community has gotten me two nominations for WSU Vancouver's Women of Distinction (in 2015 and 2016), which is both an honor and a humbling experience. These nominations have given me the opportunity to meet other incredible women in our community and really see that kind of work that is being done to make Vancouver a successful city and a positive place to live.

I still love working in higher education, and hope to continue that work until the time at which it makes sense for me to make my move to the Department of Education. That's part of the reason I am doing so much work in politics outside of my day job – hopefully one day you'll see me as the Secretary of Education. I'm proud to have graduated from WCU, and hope every day that I am utilizing my degree and making the university proud.





Left: HESA Students and Faculty at NASPA in Indianapolis (March)



Right: HESA Students and Provost at the first-ever Research Mini-Conference at WCU (April)

## HESA Announcements

- May 4th at 12:30pm: HESA Student Oral Comprehensive Exam and E-Portfolio Showcase (open to stakeholders and alumni).
- May 6th at 7pm – Graduation (hooding ceremony for graduates at their families before)
- Summer Internships: Our full-time students are required to do a summer internship... if you're hosting one this summer, thank you! If you're interested in hosting one at your campus in the future, let April know.
- HESA Students' Year-End Summary:
  - o 2015-16 Publications: 4 manuscripts published
  - o 2015-16 Conference Presentations:
    - 15 presentations (across 10 conferences)
    - 16 Students attended at least one regional/national conference (and many of those attended multiple)
  - o 2015-16 Awards:
    - Adam Ray – NCCPA Graduate Student of the Year
    - Meredith Oakley – First-Year Experience Advocate Award
    - Hillary Poston – Center for Service Learning Graduate Student Meritorious Service Award
    - Hillary Poston – Best Graduate Presentation at SROW

Please direct comments and questions regarding this newsletter to:

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