



## Insight on a Career In Student Affairs

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# Insight on a Career In Student Affairs

**Can I really make a living doing this?**



Student Affairs Career Day  
September 14, 2006

Sponsored By  
The Division of Student Affairs  
The Florida State University





I am pleased to welcome you to Student Affairs Career Day. In this booklet, you will find helpful information that will assist you in making an informed decision about a career in Student Affairs.

At Florida State University we are understandably proud of the accomplishments of the Division of Student Affairs staff and FSU students as we work together to enhance the University's reputation for excellence, leadership, and service. We are dedicated to helping individual students learn and demonstrate integrity and leadership both in and out of the classroom.

We hope that the information presented in this booklet and during the program will encourage you to develop a network with Student Affairs professionals and higher education faculty. I hope as you learn more about our profession, you will consider joining the Student Affairs family. Please know that we in the Division of Student Affairs are here to assist you in your journey.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary B. Coburn".

Mary B. Coburn  
Vice President for Student Affairs



## Select Student Affairs Web Links

Florida State University Division of Student Affairs  
<http://www.studentaffairs.fsu.edu/>

Florida State University Higher Education Program  
<http://www.fsu.edu/~elps/he/index.htm>

National Association of Student Affairs Professionals  
<http://www.naspa.org/>

American College Personnel Association  
<http://www.myacpa.org/index.cfm>

Association of College and University Housing Officers—International  
<http://www.acuho.ohio-state.edu/>

Association of College Unions International  
<http://www.acui.org>

Association of Fraternity Advisors  
<http://www.fraternityadvisors.org/>

National Association for College Activities  
<http://www.naca.org/>

National Orientation Directors Association  
<http://www.nodaweb.org/>

Association for the Study of Higher Education  
<http://www.ashe.ws/>

American Educational Research Association  
<http://www.aera.net/>

National Association for College Admission Counseling  
<http://www.nacacnet.org/>

American College Health Association  
<http://www.acha.org/>

## Glossary of Common Terms

**ACPA**—American College Personnel Association. A national organization established to unite student personnel professionals on a national basis. Provides publications as well as sponsors an annual national conference which includes programs and placement services

**NASPA**—The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. A national association similar to ACPA. Publications and an annual conference including programs and placement are some functions of this organization.

**Assistantship**—A form of financial aid offered at most institutions to students pursuing graduate education. This usually requires working in a specific area and receiving a stipend.

**Practicum**—A practical supervised experience which includes seminars and supervision from a faculty member. This is usually a program requirement and is unpaid.

**Comprehensive Exam**—Also called comps. This is an assessment given at the end of the program to determine skills and competencies acquired during course of study.

**Student Affairs**—Refers to the division at an institution established to serve the developmental and administrative needs of the student.

**Doctorate**—The doctorate is an academic degree of the highest level. The Ph.D. is designed for those who are interested in research and teaching. The Ed.D. is designed for those interested in administrative or specialized positions in education.

**Student Development**—Refers to the theory used in many Student Affairs programs. This discusses the development of the whole student

**Internship**—A supervised, practical experience; usually a program requirement. Can be paid or unpaid.

**Thesis**—Involves theoretically based research including a literature review, definition of issue, and background. Defended before a panel of faculty.

**M.A.**—The Master of Arts degree (in Student Affairs) is designed for those who are interested in research and advanced knowledge in assessment.



**M.Ed.**—The Master of Education degree (in Student Affairs) is designed for those who are interested in becoming a practitioner in the field of student affairs.

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## What Is Student Affairs?

The term “Student Affairs” has become more complex since its inception. At its core, however, is the concept of educating the whole student (Sandeen, 30). Consider the mission statement at Florida State:

“The Division of Student Affairs collaborates with students, faculty, and staff to create welcoming, supportive and challenging environments that maximize opportunities for student learning and success. Through high quality programs, the Division facilitates student development, celebrates differences, and promotes civic and global responsibility” (Division of Student Affairs, 2006).

The responsibilities of a Student Affairs office vary by institution, but there are certain expectations that are common in the field. Student affairs professionals provide programs and services to student and institutions and are expected to:

- Support and explain the values, mission, and policies of the institution
- Participate in the governance of the institution and share responsibility for decisions
- Assess the educational and social experiences of students to improve the institutional programs
- Provide and interpret information about students during the development and modification of institutional policies, services, and practices
- Establish policies and programs that contribute to a safe and secure campus
- Effectively manage the human fiscal resources for which Student Affairs is responsible
- Support and advance institutional values by developing and enforcing behavioral standards for students
- Advocate student participation in institutional governance
- Serve as a resource to faculty in their work with individual students and student groups

### Tips From the Experts

When it’s time for you to search, consider what these FSU Higher Education Masters students had to say about their own experiences and the suggestions they have for the future.

#### Words of Advice

- Assess what your needs are (proximity to family, big city vs. small town, involvement opportunities outside of the institution) and make a list of them.
- **DO YOUR RESEARCH!!!** Use NASPA, ACPA, and US News & World Report for more information on programs.
- Make lists of the deadlines, requirements, and visiting times for each of the programs you find interesting as this will help you from becoming overwhelmed in late fall when all applications are due.
- Visit the school during the non-recruitment periods to experience a “typical day.” Read the newspaper, talk to students, and attend a class.
- Ask about the assistantship and other financial aid options. Find out if you can receive a tuition waiver and what it will cover.
- Find out what the program is like (theory-to-practice, counseling, or research based; internship opportunities; curriculum) to determine if it could meet your desired needs.
- Have an open mind.
- Grad school searches can be a taxing process, but can also be fun. If you take the time to do the search right, the results will make the

#### The Challenges

- All of the recruitment days for most programs are during the same general time. Generally, students are not prepared to be away from school/work a lot during a small amount of time and spend that much money traveling around.
- Financial aid issues are pretty common. You have to take the time out and find out what you’re able to afford. And it is not easy to picture yourself with large amounts of student loan debt.
- Depending on the institution, assistantships can be hard to come by for things you might be interested in. For example, only having one assistantship in Student Activities or one in Greek Life. It can be pretty frustrating when you are assessing what your needs and wants are versus the availability of opportunities.



## The Higher Education Program at Florida State

The Florida State University Program in Higher Education prepares individuals for positions of leadership in colleges and universities and related agencies whose activities impact higher education. Specifically, the Master of Science degree in Student Affairs focuses on the development, administration, and evaluation of student affairs programs in postsecondary institutions, and on the study of student development theory and its application as a basis for working with college students.

Students gain practical experiences relating theory to practice in three required internships in student affairs offices at Florida State University and at another institution of the student's choice. Practical experiences gained through graduate assistantships, other part-time employment, and internships are an integral and important part of the master's program.

The application deadline for Fall 2007 admission is January 12, 2007. Visiting Days for the Higher Education Program will occur February 21-23, 2007. Prospective students will have the opportunity to interact with faculty, staff, and current students as well as interview for graduate assistantship positions. More information on the program can be found at <http://www.fsu.edu/>

### Select Graduate Preparation Programs

Here's a list of other programs you might consider. For comprehensive lists of graduate programs, please refer to the ACPA and NASPA links on page 10.

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| Appalachian State University                      | Boston College               |
| Clemson University                                | Indiana University           |
| Michigan State University                         | New York University          |
| North Carolina State University                   | Ohio State University        |
| Pennsylvania State University                     | Seattle University           |
| Seton Hall University                             | St. Louis University         |
| Texas A & M University                            | University of Florida        |
| University of Georgia                             | University of Louisville     |
| University of Maryland, College Park              | University of Memphis        |
| University of Nevada, Las Vegas                   | University of South Carolina |
| University of Tennessee, Knoxville                | University of Virginia       |
| Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University |                              |

## Insight on a Career In Student Affairs

- Advocate and help create ethnically diverse and culturally rich environments for students
- Assume leadership for the institution's responses to student crises
- Be intellectually and professionally active
- Establish and maintain effective working relationships with the local community
- Coordinate Student Affairs programs and services with Academic Affairs, Business Affairs, Development, and other major components of the institution
- Assist students in successful transition to college
- Help students explore and clarify values
- Encourage development of friendships among students and a sense of community within the institution
- Help students acquire adequate financial resources to support their education
- Create opportunities for students to expand their aesthetic and cultural appreciation
- Teach students how to resolve individual and group conflicts
- Provide programs and services for students who have learning difficulties
- Help students understand and appreciate racial, ethnic, gender, and other differences
- Design opportunities for leadership development
- Establish programs that encourage healthy living and confront abusive leadership
- Provide opportunities for recreation and leisure-time activities
- Help students clarify career objectives, explore options for further study, and secure employment



## Career Opportunities in Student Affairs

Within the realm of Student Affairs lies a myriad of career opportunities. Here are just a few areas to consider:

Academic Advising	Financial Aid
Admissions	Greek Affairs
Alumni Affairs	Health Services Administration
Athletics	International Student Affairs
Campus Ministry	Judicial Affairs
Campus Safety	LGBT Services
Career Services	Multicultural Affairs
Commuter Affairs	Orientation/First Year Programs
Counseling	Residence Life and Housing
Development and Fundraising	Service Learning
Disability Services	Student Activities/Government
Distance Education	Student Affairs Research
Diversity Programs	Student Union Administration
Facilities Management	Women's Centers

## What is the Next Step?

If you are interested in a career in student affairs, the next step involves finding a graduate preparation program. On the following page, you will find a select list of institutions that offer preparation programs. Keep in mind that other institutions may offer related programs, and that this is a list of student affairs programs. If you are not geographically limited, it might be a good idea to research up to 15 schools.

Once you have obtained the information, you will need to develop a list of criteria that you are looking for in a prospective institution. The following is a possible list of criteria that you may use when narrowing down your choice of institutions:

- Available assistantships
- Available housing
- Cost (Tuition)
- Full/Part Time program
- Size of school
- Location
- Size of program
- Length of program (*most are 2 years*)
- Type of program (*M.A., M.Ed., M.S., counseling or administrative based*)



After organizing your data on various institutions, you will then want to select your top 2 or 3 schools that you would like to apply to. That may sound like a small number, but there is usually a \$40-\$50 application fee on average per institution. So you would like to keep that cost to a minimum. Personal statements/essays are often part of the application process. Some institutions will even require interviews with current faculty. Please plan your search accordingly to make sure you have time to schedule any interviews and/or visitation days.

Standardized tests, such as the GRE, are a requirement for some programs but not all. You may want to check with the institutions you are interested in to see what they are looking for in terms of scores/ranges. For most institutions, scores are required from the entrance exam before acceptance, but you can apply before you take the exam and have