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Intergenerational Culture?**

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ways to foster lasting relationships

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Between Departments**

Exploring social exchange theory
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opening remarks

Presidential Perspective

NACAS Conferences Excel at Making Meaningful Connections



NEIL MARKLEY
NACAS PRESIDENT

I write this column having just returned from the absolutely wonderful South CX (regional conference) in Dallas. The South CX brought together an amazing mix of higher education professionals and Business Partners for three days of education, commerce, and connections. While the education and commerce pieces were vibrant and informative, the CX really excelled at providing opportunities for connections that count. I'd like to share two bookend events that demonstrate the value of these connections.

My first morning in Dallas required a visit to a downtown breakfast spot named Ellen's. Having read the reviews, I looked forward to a tasty breakfast and my last moments of quiet before a busy schedule of events at the CX. I saddled up to my barstool and examined the menu, and as my eyes hit my favorite breakfast item, biscuits and gravy, I heard someone call my name. A couple stools down from me was a familiar face, Jennifer Eule, vice president for market strategy and industry relations for Aramark. I met Jennifer a month prior at the NACAS Senior Executive Summit and was impressed by her energy, inquisitive mind, and knowledge of the food industry.

Her opening line was "I bet I'm the last person you want to see right now," acknowledging that I'd no longer have a quiet breakfast. I laughed, and we talked for most of the breakfast, eventually conversing about the great work of the Aramark Foundation in fighting hunger and NACAS' support of basic needs. A lightbulb went off in our heads: The Aramark Foundation could be a good fit to help support NACAS' efforts in building community and supporting basic needs. We decided this could be an interesting path for us to explore further. While I look forward to more conversations, I was really struck by how such a routine part of my day turned into an unlikely connection, a great conversation, and perhaps a great outcome.

The last day of the conference, we were treated to a tour of the amazing University of North Texas (UNT)

campus. Danny Armitage, UNT associate vice president for auxiliary services and new NACAS South president, and his team provided us with an incredible showcase of products and services that made all of us swoon. I don't think I've seen a more impressed group in all of the campus tours I've been on since our West CX at Sonoma State University 14 years ago ;).

In particular, the UNT dining program was full of wonderful eye-openers. Ninety percent of its products are made in-house with surprises, including a full bakery supplying all baked goods; acres of hydroponic gardens in converted shipping containers; a full vegan dining hall; in-house butchering; a soon-to-be-launched candy-making operation; and a new residential dining venue, Eagle's Landing. Eagle's Landing offers not only a fantastic dining option, but it is also set to become a commissary kitchen for residential dining.

Upon learning this, a number of us on the tour wanted to go behind the scenes for an in-depth look at the operation. While this was not on the schedule, Danny provided us with Matthew Ward, residential dining executive chef, to be our guide. Matthew enthusiastically showed us around the facility, answered questions, provided advice, detailed operations, and offered help with anything specific we asked. Later, after the tour, he came by our reception, provided his card, and genuinely offered to be of assistance if we ever needed it. Another incredible connection.

NACAS provides some amazing educational and professional development opportunities. We move the industry forward with our knowledge and partnerships. But what we do best, reinforced with my experience at the South CX, is connect people and build meaningful relationships to make the work we do on our campuses and in our industry better. I encourage you all to make your own connections and have your own experiences by attending one of the upcoming CX or C3X events. More information is available at nacas.org. I look forward to seeing you soon! ■

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Making Connections Across the Generations in the Workplace

EXPERT DESCRIBES HOW TO EMBRACE THE CULTURE SHIFT AND BUILD INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

BY DR. NICOLE KING-SMITH

THE CHALLENGE of building intergenerational relationships is an issue all too familiar to many campus leaders and staff. Not only are you welcoming new students, cultivating the current ones, and graduating the seniors each semester, but you are one of *five* generations in today's workforce, making this workforce the most diverse ever. Several factors have caused a major cultural shift in how we build intergenerational relationships, disrupting some best practices that once proved to be successful.

generation and the context. For example, when someone asks for your address, some people might present their email address, while others might share their home address.

Miscommunications can lead to generational assumptions, which then start to be used to label each generation, resulting in biases and stereotypes. This creates an obstacle to building intergenerational relationships, and the lack of such relationships is known to lead to isolation. When we can remove the labels and come to a level of understanding, individuals then have an opportunity to build rapport and develop a thriving culture.

MENTAL HEALTH

Over the past several years, mental health awareness has increased, and we now understand each generation has its challenges. When we can take the time to understand not only individuals but also their mental health challenges through a generational lens, we can establish a community of resources to better support each other professionally and personally.

As professionals, we need to consider the action steps necessary to progress forward. So, where do we start? Your institution's campus culture will guide you on the path to determine which one of the many areas you should focus on. As you move forward, you will begin to identify which needs are most important for you and your campus.

One of the major concerns on campuses is how mental health is presenting itself differently through each generational lens. I remember when I was new to my role as a university department chair, and I requested a meeting with my boss. I was so nervous. My anxiety was high, and I had a big knot in my stomach. I had just been told I was going to have to take medication for life if I didn't make some lifestyle changes. I explained my situation to my boss and asked if I could adjust my workload. I will never forget the response: "Welcome to the club! Everyone in this office is taking some kind of medication. It's OK. It comes with getting older." I was paralyzed. What just happened? Where was the compassion?

In a recent article, *Forbes* reported that 92% of CEOs feel their organization is empathetic, but only 50% of their employees agree. That is why, as individuals, we need to make sure we are showing compassion and creating a culture of empathy.

When I taught in the classroom, I would remind myself that the students are my employees whom I am managing for the semester, and it is important to know they come with stressors. As professionals in higher education, we must understand that when mental health challenges show up on college and university campuses, they can have a significant impact on students' academic performance, social life, and overall well-being. Some of the top challenges that continually show up are:

- **Academic pressure:** Students face a high level of academic pressure, including demanding coursework, exams, and assignments, which can lead to stress, anxiety, and burnout.
- **Financial stress:** Many students struggle with financial stress due to the high cost of tuition, textbooks, and living expenses, which can lead to depression and anxiety.
- **Social isolation:** Being in college or university can be an isolating experience, especially for students who are away from

So, what are some of the major challenges? The top ones are:

- Misunderstanding generational cultures.
- Miscommunicating among the generations.
- Making generational assumptions.
- Lacking an awareness of mental health through a generational lens.

To build intergenerational relationships, we must define what makes a generational culture. Doing so involves identifying and understanding the important characteristics that describe each generation and the reasons the generations get labeled or categorized in subgroups.

So, how do these generations get their labels? In exploring this issue, individuals attending NACAS' Senior Executive Summit in March met in breakout groups to complete the following statement: "When people talk about my generation, they say" The participants from various generations said technology, media influences, economic environments, and personal cultural values have played key roles in shaping how members of each generation build relationships in their personal and professional environments. In particular, they said miscommunication is a major challenge because people from different generations may be using the same words, but those words might have different meanings depending on the

home for the first time. Social isolation can lead to loneliness, depression, and anxiety.

- **Substance abuse:** Students are at an increased risk of abusing substances, including drugs and alcohol, which can lead to addiction, mental health issues, and other problems.
- **Stigma:** Because of the significant stigma surrounding mental health issues, many college students are reluctant to seek help due to fear of judgment or discrimination.
- **Lack of resources:** Many colleges and universities have limited resources for mental health services, which can make it difficult for students to access the help they need.

There is not a one-size-fits-all approach to addressing these challenges. Instead, a comprehensive approach is required—one that includes a combination of education, prevention, early intervention, and ongoing support for students. We are seeing more colleges and universities starting to provide mental health services, promote mental health awareness, and create a supportive environment that encourages students to seek help when needed. These services are not only a need for the students but also the campus employees. Being able to assist students and employees supports the overall campus culture and is key to building those intergenerational relationships.

MENTORSHIP

During my sophomore summer of college at Florida A&M University as a business major, I accepted a work-study assignment at the microfiche department in the campus library—and yes, it exists to this day. I had a very strict boss—at least that's what I thought at that age. "Show up on time." "Don't wear certain attire." "Speak clearly and pronounce your words when speaking." "Get things done promptly." "No cellphone." Does any of this sound familiar on your campuses? She ended up becoming my mentor, helping me succeed throughout the rest of my college career and getting me my first internship with JPMorgan Chase.

Today, mentorship is still a huge need, and we are finding that because we have multiple generations working together, reverse mentoring is becoming the cultural norm. In reverse mentoring, younger generations mentor older generations. This approach is helping to build campus cultures. Here are several ways to make mentoring across multiple generations on a college campus a valuable experience for mentors and mentees:

- **Create a mentorship program:** Pair students with faculty, staff, or alumni from different generations. This can help create opportunities for intergenerational connections and learning.
- **Encourage cross-generational interaction:** Host events or activities that bring together students, faculty, staff, and alumni from different generations. These can include social events, workshops, or guest lectures.
- **Provide training for mentors:** Offer training that focuses on generational intelligence and how to communicate and work effectively with individuals from different age groups.
- **Foster a culture of respect:** Encourage all campus community members to respect and appreciate the perspectives and experiences of individuals from different generations.
- **Facilitate mentoring relationships:** Provide resources or support such as setting goals and objectives for the mentoring relationship, providing regular check-ins, and encouraging feedback.
- **Use technology to connect:** Employ technology to connect mentors and mentees across different generations, including virtual

mentoring programs or online platforms that facilitate communication and collaboration.

- **Provide opportunities for reverse mentoring:** Encourage mentees to share their knowledge and expertise with their mentors. This can provide valuable insights into the experiences and perspectives of younger generations.

GENERATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The most important thing to remember is that building a culture of trust and respect begins with generational intelligence, which is the ability to understand, appreciate, and effectively communicate with individuals from different age groups. It is an essential skill needed in today's diverse and multigenerational workforce. So, how do we start to overcome some of those generational barriers? Here are some of the top ways to practice generational intelligence:

- **Learn about different generations' cultures:** Educate yourself on the characteristics of different generations, including traditionalists, baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z. Each has its unique experiences and values, which can affect how its members communicate and interact with others.
- **Be open-minded:** Avoid stereotyping or making assumptions about people based on their age. Instead, approach each person with an open mind and a willingness to learn.
- **Practice active listening:** Choose to listen, especially when communicating with someone from a different generation. Take the time to listen to their perspective and ask "Why?" to clarify their point of view.
- **Adapt your communication style:** Adjust your communication style to match the preferences of the person you're speaking with because people from different generations may communicate in different ways. For example, members of older generations might prefer face-to-face communication, while those in younger generations might prefer text or email. But remember: Ask, don't assume.
- **Embrace differences:** Recognize that we have the most diverse workforce for the first time ever, and understand that diversity is an asset in the workplace and society. By embracing differences, you can build a more inclusive and engaging environment.
- **Seek feedback:** Ask colleagues of different ages for feedback on your communication and collaboration skills. This can help you identify areas for improvement and further develop your generational intelligence.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

With these skills, you not only will have stronger campus connections, but you also can build up the next generation of leaders. When we work hard to pave the way for our future, we want to pass the opportunities to the next person who can continue the cultural vision. Succession planning is the essential process of identifying and developing that talent.

Often when I work with professionals, they ask about how to find and identify the next leaders. They are seeking a certain executive presence to bring into the role and are discovering that this characteristic is difficult to find in younger generations. Here are some tips for starting the succession planning process of seeking out those individuals and beginning to prepare them for the position:

- **Identify key positions:** Determine critical positions within the department that require specialized skills or knowledge. Compile a list of potential candidates who could fill these roles in the future.

- **Develop leadership competencies:** List the leadership capabilities required for the identified key positions. These aptitudes should include skills, knowledge, and behaviors that are necessary for success in the role.
- **Assess current employees:** Evaluate the skills, knowledge, and potential of current employees to determine if they can fill the identified key positions. This assessment should include a review of performance evaluations, work history, and professional development opportunities.
- **Develop talent:** Establish training and development programs that can help employees build the competencies needed for future leadership roles. This can include on-the-job training, mentoring, coaching, and leadership development programs.
- **Communicate succession plans:** Share the department's succession plans with employees to help them understand the opportunities available to them and what they need to do to prepare for leadership roles.
- **Create career paths:** Outline the steps employees need to take to move into leadership positions. This can include job rotations, cross-training, and targeted professional development opportunities. Understand that the younger generations value time, so a career path to a leadership position that might have taken five years in the past may need to be adjusted to two to three years.
- **Monitor progress:** Oversee the progress of employees in their development and provide ongoing feedback and support. This can help them stay

on track and make necessary adjustments to their career paths. Various generations have different expectations for what type of feedback they need, so make sure to clarify if it is needed weekly, monthly, or quarterly.

As you embark on your journey to build intergenerational relationships, understand that it's an ongoing process. To be successful, the commitment and dynamics of everyone must play a part. Even though it can seem challenging at first, many rewards come from organizational cultures that make this a priority. Dr. Maya Angelou said it best: "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." When building generational relationships, everyone wants to feel valued. ■



DR. NICOLE KING-SMITH, founder and CEO of NK Enterprise Consulting LLC, is a generational diversity expert and certified cultural strategist. She has worked with Fortune 500 companies, education institutions, and professional development

organizations to identify intergenerational challenges and strategize solutions that embrace generational diversity. If you would like additional information, visit nkenterpriseconsulting.com and schedule a free consultation call.



How Do You Build an Engaging Culture and Foster Intergenerational Relationships?

BY THE NACAS COMMUNICATION SERVICES COMMITTEE

CAMPUS SERVICE leaders at colleges and universities in the United States and Canada are developing and implementing approaches to build healthy and strong intergenerational workforces. *College Services* reached out to several NACAS members to ask them for their response to this question: What does it mean to be a leader who builds an engaging culture and fosters intergenerational relationships? They responded from the following perspectives:

- Commitment
- Communication
- Emotional/generational intelligence
- Mentorship
- Succession planning
- Wellness

Here is what they had to say.

COMMITMENT: CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT AND EMPOWER

As a leader, it is essential to secure support at every level in order to build an engaging workplace culture. At Kennesaw State, the administration division of which campus services is part is committed to promoting a collaborative culture at the highest level. Leadership worked alongside their teams to develop a vision and core values (kennesaw.edu/administration-division/vision-values.php) that are inclusive and supportive and guide our daily work. Our ultimate goal is to create an environment where everyone can thrive, and our core values drive us closer toward that goal. We challenge ourselves to support and empower our teams, leverage all perspectives in problem-solving, and provide services and products that benefit the campus community. Since this framework was established in 2019, significant work has been completed across the division to emphasize

these values, ensure they are relevant at all levels, and have them guide our daily decision-making.

Leaders should also facilitate ongoing professional development and training opportunities to demonstrate their commitment to an intergenerational culture and employee success. Accessibility of professional development resources is critical in preparing the emergent workforce for the upcoming opportunities and exposing seasoned employees to changing trends and technologies. Mentorship and cross-training opportunities can foster relationships across functional units, improving engagement. As a leader, I believe recognizing everyone's value, embracing differences, and providing everyone with the opportunity to share their perspectives are key to promoting a supportive environment in which everyone can thrive.



Lee White

LEE WHITE is executive director of campus services at Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, GA. Her prior experience at the university includes being director of transportation services.

COMMUNICATION: FOSTER TRUST AND CONNECTION

Communication is an essential part of effective leadership and employee engagement. It is particularly important when managing cross-generational dynamics since it requires the leader to adapt their communication style to

fit the audience. Recognizing and respecting individual communication styles and preferences within a team fosters trust and connection. Ultimately, it is the leader's responsibility to integrate these preferences and find a balance

that represents the team. Leaders with strong communication skills can break down barriers within a team by actively listening and developing an approach that focuses on commonalities rather than differences.

COMMUNICATION: FOUNDATION FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

The work of operational and auxiliary units evolves each year. The expectations of doing more with less, navigating financial constraints and inflationary pressure, and [dealing with] staffing challenges all require exceptional leadership to inspire teams to work in sync and centered on objectives. Modeling clear communication is foundational for leading a diverse operational unit.

Clear communication starts with sharing information. In our meetings, I intentionally create an agenda that is more robust than just general updates. I build our agendas around critical questions and areas that need a broader understanding from the team. This approach offers individuals a voice outside of their area and facilitates collaboration.

One of the most significant benefits of clear and inclusive communication is psychological safety. Leaders can test the psychological safety of their organization by asking the following questions:

- Do the members of this team feel safe sharing ideas?
- Does the environment allow for healthy discourse?
- Can each individual find their voice to express concerns?

An individual who feels safe in their work environment performs and connects in powerful ways. In addition, psychological safety helps bridge the intergenerational workforce at our institutions by removing the barriers of fear that individuals have about sharing information. A leader must strive to develop a psychologically safe environment with communication at the core. The payoffs for nurturing this type of environment are immense and lead to increased employee engagement.

For more information on psychological safety, read the *Harvard Business Review* article titled “What is Psychological Safety?” by Amy Gallo that was published February 15, 2023.



Brian M. Johnson, Ed.D.

BRIAN M. JOHNSON, Ed.D., is associate vice president for campus operations with campus services at Tulane University in New Orleans. He brings around 15 years of experience in multiple roles in student affairs at various colleges and universities.

COMMUNICATION: BEING INTENTIONAL ABOUT WHAT WE SAY

I work with individuals from five generations in the Office of Auxiliary Enterprises at Howard University. The workplace, in general, has never experienced so many generations working together at one time—traditionalists, baby boomers, Gen Xers, millennials, and Gen Zers. Everyone is dealing with stereotypes about each other, conflicting standards behind work ethics, and, most importantly, different communication styles. To help everyone work together, we need to break down what people from different generations mean when they communicate so they can be better received in the workplace. We have

to be intentional about how words are used and understood. At a retreat, we will focus on how to communicate across generations, what is essential to the different generations, and what stereotypes and biases they face. I believe we must intentionally educate our staff about each other so everyone can be received and understood.

LANIECE TYREE, CASP, is assistant vice president in the Office of Auxiliary Enterprises at Howard University in Washington, DC. She is also vice president of the NACAS Board of Directors and the sole representative from a historically Black institution.



LaNiece Tyree, CASP

EMOTIONAL/GENERATIONAL INTELLIGENCE: FOSTER A CULTURE OF UNDERSTANDING

To build an engaging culture and foster intergenerational relationships, leaders must first be aware of the generational differences and understand how their own generational biases may or may not be influencing their own personal approach to leadership. Additionally, successful leaders of intergenerational workspaces should be open to fostering a culture that appreciates the mental, physical, financial, and social well-being of their employees.

Emotional/generational intelligence is critical when building a workplace culture that develops and nurtures employees. With multiple generations making up our workforce today, leaders must work to develop an inclusive culture where our team members feel safe and appreciated. Understanding how one's own values and behaviors may differ from those of a different generation can help to build empathy and tolerance [among generations]. Ultimately, understanding



Mary Fister-Tucker

those differences is not enough. Action by the supervisor and input from the workplace members are key to ensuring that perspectives are heard and acted upon.

Finally, because fulfillment from the [work environment] varies greatly both among and within generations, leaders must take the time to understand the value proposition honored

by each generation. It is critically important to acknowledge and respect that value proposition as it relates to how work/life balance is defined and what is considered a successful career. This understanding will enable a leader to build an authentic and fostering environment that will inspire team members from all generations to gain their own personal sense of fulfillment while

effectively meeting the needs of the business or institution.

MARY FISTER-TUCKER is vice president for fiscal services and chief financial officer for Morehead State University in Morehead, KY. She brings more than 20 years of experience working on large research university and comprehensive university campuses.

MENTORSHIP: BEING A STRONG ROLE MODEL

During my professional career in higher education, there have been leaders who have modeled an engaging culture for me. These leaders took time to value my work and helped me to see the impact of my own work on our university's student success outcomes. They took time to teach me new skills, such as fund accounting and public higher education finance in Texas. When we had exhausted their knowledge, these leaders encouraged me to invest in myself through obtaining advanced degrees and certifications.

For me, I try to be the same type of role model for my own staff. This means I show up at work more motivated and more committed than any other member of the team so I can help them see the value of their work and encourage them to grow professionally. I work to be present in

meetings with staff, am proactive in how we communicate about our programs, am supportive when something goes wrong, and am always thinking about ways to motivate and recognize staff for their accomplishments. This level of engagement and motivation means that I also need to recognize when I need a break, too, so that I can be my best self for our amazing team of colleagues and students. These breaks are sometimes a 20-minute art walk, a lunch-break swim at the campus pool, or vacation time at the beach to recharge my batteries.

DR. EMILY MESSA, CASP, is senior associate vice chancellor of the University of Houston System and senior associate vice president of administration for the University of Houston's



Dr. Emily Messa, CASP

Office of Administration in Texas. She oversees various services, including a major systemwide public art collection.

MENTORSHIP: KEY TO BUILDING A STRONG TEAM

One thing I have learned after working 24 years in higher education is people in auxiliary services are doers who wear lots of hats. As such, we are looking for people to pitch in when needed. To do so, however, we must build strong teams in our departments through mentoring and cross-training so that we can balance the workload. This process must be intentional and will take time. Stopping to create an efficient and reliable intergeneration team involves finding out

what your staff needs from you, what you need from your staff, and what your staff's individual, self-actualized goals are. If we stop to build these trusted teams, we can stop to refuel and recharge for the challenges ahead.

DR. KRISTY VIENNE, CASP, is senior associate vice chancellor for administrative services at Lone Star College in Houston. She is also serves on the NACAS Board of Directors.



Dr. Kristy Vienne, CASP

SUCCESSION PLANNING: CRITICAL WHEN PERSONNEL CHANGES



Angela Peterson

As leaders in auxiliary services, we have been very nimble working through the [COVID-19] pandemic. The workforce has impacted our operations, [especially] employees transitioning early to retirement or doing career path changes. The time is now to implement a succession plan if you have not done so. We can only afford to be content once positions are filled. Having a succession plan makes it easy to navigate through losing valued

personnel and being faced with unnecessary financial challenges. A succession plan enables us to continue operating efficiently throughout [while] being impacted by the leadership change. The services we provide on our respective campuses are vitally important to creating an exceptional student experience and the overall success of our students. We can have success with a succession plan!

WELLNESS: TAKING A HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE

The wellness of our students, faculty, and staff is paramount on our campus. Therefore, we have adopted Wellness Day [in] our academic calendar. We started with two days and have increased to four this semester. An essential component of student, faculty, and staff success is practicing wellness from a holistic perspective. Therefore, we planned several activities, including massages, interactive games, food trucks, and a paint-and-sip event. Everyone is encouraged to use Wellness Day to engage in activities to enhance [their] health and self-care. We all want to experience the various components of good health such as mental, physical, spiritual, financial, and relational. We truly hope that the Aggie Experience will embody this mindset as we strive toward excellence in promoting a healthy mind and body.

ANGELA PETERSON is associate vice chancellor for campus enterprises at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro, NC. She is also on the NACAS Board of Directors for the South Region.

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Senior Executive Summit Brings Together Visionaries



General session speaker Bridget Burns, CEO of the University Innovation Alliance, shares "Driving Innovation for Higher Ed in the New Normal."

LEADERS IN AUXILIARY SERVICES at higher education institutions have been adapting to tremendous upheaval and uncertainty in the past few years. Regardless of the challenges they confront and overcome, they have remained committed to the students they serve.

In support of this goal, NACAS' Senior Executive Summit welcomed professionals who are exploring forward-thinking approaches to alternative revenue streams and enrollment challenges. The event in March at Omni Amelia Island, FL, attracted senior auxiliary service leaders from the United States and Canada.



Above and below: Attendees gather for Omni Amelia Island's Sunrise Cafe dinner experience.



Above: Attendees participate in the interactive peer exchange about what it means to be a leader who builds an engaging culture and fosters intergenerational relationships. Below: Senior Executive Summit attendees mingle at the Welcome Reception.





NACAS Chief Learning Officer Sheena Majette (center) and attendees at the Welcome Reception.

The summit included speakers on various topics. Among them were campus service partnerships by Todd Tekiele, founder of City of Hospitality Group; sustainable innovation by Bridget Burns, CEO of University Innovation Alliance; and intergenerational relationships by Dr. Nicole King-Smith, CEO and founder of NK Enterprise Consulting LLC. (King-Smith's article on intergenerational relationships is on page 6.)

Look for information on next year's summit in emails and future issues of *College Services*. ■



Industry panel session and open discussion with NACAS CEO Matt Marcial, CAE, CMP.



Left: Opening keynote speaker Todd Tekiele, founder of the City of Hospitality Group, shares "On Your Mark™—Your Starting Line to Thriving Campus Service Partnerships."



Attendees participate in the interactive peer exchange group activity to discuss how they used these items—TV, computer, music, phone—from the ages of 15–25.



General session and peer exchange speaker Dr. Nicole King-Smith, CEO and founder of NK Enterprise Consulting LLC, shares "5 Key Steps to Building an Engaging Generational Culture."

WOMEN IN HIGHER ED LEADERSHIP SUMMIT September 12-15, 2023

NACAS is offering an inspiring new event as part of its leadership series titled Women in Higher-Ed Leadership Summit. It will feature networking experiences, speakers, and roundtable discussions on issues impacting professional women in auxiliary services and higher education. Registration is open; learn more at nacas.org/wls.





Recent master's graduate with Chief Andrew Black of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's Department of Public Safety (DPS) and DPS Ambassador Scooby Black.

Building Relationships Between Departments: It Takes More Than a Hammer

BY LORI FUROYAMA, PH.D., AND ANDY LACHMAN, PH.D., CASP

UNIVERSITIES ARE notorious for being siloed entities filled with politics. The breakdown of communication and working relationships between departments can negatively affect the organization, the students it serves, and the ability of departments to complete tasks efficiently. However, it does not have to be this way. Departments can build quality, high-functioning relationships with other departments.

Drawing upon our experiences and social exchange theory, we aim to provide practical tips that will assist you in constructing high-quality relationships between departments at your institution. Primarily, we use examples from our lived experiences of how our departments and others work collaboratively to execute the commencement exercises at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM).

COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

UHM is a land-, sea-, sun-, and space-grant research institution with an enrollment of over 19,000 undergraduate and advanced degree students. With an average of about 5,000 students graduating each year, the flagship campus hosts three campuswide ceremonies a year—two in the spring and one in the fall. Although the ceremonies are managed by campus administration, the production of the campuswide commencement ceremonies is a collaborative effort by over two dozen units on campus. The ceremonies are a well-oiled machine made possible by the relationships and collaborations between and within the different units on the campus.

With its rich culture and history, UHM's commencement ceremonies are like no other in the United States. Once the commencement ceremony is complete, UHM's graduates head outdoors to fields marked with lettered signs to meet their friends and family. The lei reception, which follows the formal program, is often larger and more widely attended than the ceremony. It is estimated that for every graduate, at least 10 guests come to present lei. As no tickets or RSVPs are required for this portion of the day, the commencement team must be well-coordinated and prepared for the masses.

Campus services at UHM is one of the departments that collaborates on the commencement ceremonies. The bookstore sells regalia, commuter services facilitates the parking of thousands of vehicles, food services assists with catering, and public safety provides crowd control and security. These auxiliaries have built strong working relationships with the team at the Office of Vice Provost of Academic Excellence, which contributes to the successful execution of the event.

SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

Social exchange theory builds off the work of George Homans. This theory views relationships in terms of costs and benefits associated with interactions. It suggests that individuals are more likely to build relationships with others when the cost is low and the benefits are high. Since relationships are not generally currency-based endeavors, the cost comes in the form of aspects such as negative emotions and time. Conversely, the benefits come in the form of positive emotions, support, and time savings.

We admit that considering relationships in terms of cost-benefit analysis may seem distasteful. However, we can simplify social exchange theory to relationships made with helpful people who create positive feelings. This



Top: Spring 2023 graduates pose with lei at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's Les Murakami Stadium Field after the commencement ceremony. Middle: Candidates are shown during the spring commencement ceremony. Bottom: Graduate celebrates with her family members.

feature

simplified definition might provide us with a more palatable basis for this conversation. Take a moment and reflect on your favorite colleague outside your department to collaborate with on your campus. This person likely aligns with this profile of being low cost (e.g., not emotionally draining) and highly beneficial (e.g., helpful).

COLLECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

At this point, it is important to recognize that relationships are made primarily at the individual level. Although relationships may generally be the product of interactions between individuals, we would like to suggest that relationships can also be made between departments at a collective level. Relationships at the collective level are based on the establishment of multiple beneficial relationships at the individual level and practices that promote the establishment of these relationships. Additionally, the relationships at the collective level have a positive cost-benefit analysis for the departments involved. Furthermore, positive relationships at the collective level extend beyond the existence of individual relationships.

This phenomenon of collective-level relationships can be observed in several ways. Most commonly, collective department relationships are seen between departments in the same silo (e.g., departments that report to the same vice president). However, evidence of this phenomenon is stronger when it occurs outside of silos. One example would be departments in different silos that historically have worked closely together. Another example would be departments that work together well due to what appears to be a friendship between two individuals, but this closeness continues after they leave the organization.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BUILDING DEPARTMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS

You might be wondering how all of the aspects of relationship-building we have discussed play out in the real world. Additionally, you may want some advice on how you can assist your department in building cross-campus department relationships. We offer these seven suggestions to help you:

1. **Trust:** The saying “Relationships are built on trust” is often heard in reference to marital and domestic relationships, but it applies in professional settings, as well. In a professional setting, trust often involves dependability, confidentiality, commitment, and avoidance of undermining behaviors. Furthermore, trust is built over time, which is important to consider in terms of collective relationships, as these relationships have long histories. An example of this is the relationships developed with the management of the athletic facilities used for commencement. Their teams are committed to making the event successful. Event coordinators trust that the details of the individual roles on the day of the event are executed with pride and commitment to the common goal of a safe and successful event. Reciprocally, the facility management trusts the coordinators will provide them with the resources needed to fulfill their responsibilities. We find value in making a conscious effort to create relationships built on trust.
2. **Communication:** Commuter services, public safety, facilities management, and landscaping are just a few of the units managing the crowds of families and friends searching for their graduates after the formal ceremony. Communication prior to and on commencement day is key to a safe, successful lei reception. Phone calls, emails, texts, and face-to-face communications are imperative for seamless operations. Relationships built with a strong foundation ease communication during high-stress situations to allow for two-way conversations. Listening is vital to this



'Auli'i Aikau-Osurman, commencement staff member from the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Excellence, poses with University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's Department of Public Safety Ambassador Scooby Black.

process. If the weather changes and arrangements need to be adjusted suddenly, open communication is important for team members to work together quickly to modify plans. Thus, to form good relationships between departments, it is essential to communicate with your campus colleagues, listen to them, and promote good communication practices.

3. **Acknowledgment:** Prior to the event, conducting a planning meeting where each unit or team is given time to share their ideas and recommendations related to their specialty areas signifies respect and acknowledgment for the contributions of individuals and their teams. After the event, recognizing team members and specific units within the group that contributed to the success of the event and went beyond their duties to ensure its success acknowledges their actions were noticed and appreciated. Acknowledgments can include emailing their supervisor recognizing their efforts or dropping off a special thank-you snack. Taking time to acknowledge and show appreciation for people's efforts creates goodwill and encourages people to want to work with you and your department again.
4. **Campus engagement:** Institutions of higher education are dynamic environments. The breadth of activities and opportunities available to campus community members far exceeds those found in most corporate environments. There are lectures on various subjects, community events (e.g., homecoming pep rallies), concerts, sporting events, and opportunities to



University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Bookstore participates in a graduation fair.

take classes. These activities provide a chance to build relationships outside of the typical working setting. Drawing on our own experiences, we, the authors of this article, cemented our relationship by being classmates. We recommend exploring the opportunities on your campus that will allow you to understand your colleagues and create relationships outside of the typical work setting.

5. **Respect for expertise:** For commencement, we trust that our team partners are the experts in their field, will provide recommendations of best practices, and execute their tasks with professionalism and pride on the big day. We rely on each member to “do their part” on the team. An example of this is vehicular traffic. Event coordinators rely on the commuter services to plan and supervise the vehicular traffic based on weather, construction, and pedestrian incidents before, during, and after the ceremonies. Allowing the commuter service team to have its space and manage respective duties without micromanagement strengthens the relationship between units and demonstrates respect and support for the individuals and their contributions.
6. **Mentoring new team members:** When a new member joins the team, mentorship and an orientation pave the way for a smooth transition. Introducing the individual to team members around campus orients the new member to the support network key to their role and responsibilities. Regarding commencement, because the network relies on the different units to do their part, it is important for the new member to be acquainted with the key contacts and their roles. Thus, when there is turnover in a department, new staff members have already started to build relationships that will support the collective relationships between those departments in the future.

7. **Reciprocal support:** As stated earlier, with social exchange theory, the benefits of establishing relationships come in ways such as support and time saved. When strong relationships are formed, units and individuals can rely on each other beyond the actual event. For example, volunteers and staff members connected to commencement are now in the extended network of campus contacts. The relationship lends itself to reciprocal exchanges where volunteers at one event become leads in other events that need assistance. The coordinators can turn to each other for their respective events or tasks. Another example is search committees for position vacancies. Search committees should have diverse representation from departments across campus. With a foundation built and relationships nurtured, individuals familiar with each other's campus roles can turn to each other for assistance and support with tasks like hiring committees.

While these practical tips provide a foundation for creating positive inter-departmental relationships, these suggestions are far from an exhaustive list of possible ways to create these relationships. Thus, when working with your colleagues, we encourage you to apply the principles of the simplified social exchange theory we discussed earlier: Be helpful and contribute to positive emotions. ■



LORI FUROYAMA, Ph.D., is educational specialist in the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Excellence at UHM. As part of her job, she oversees and manages commencement.

ANDY LACHMAN, Ph.D., CASP, is manager of university housing, food, and mail services at UHM.

member spotlight: Margot Hsu Carroll



Margot Hsu Carroll, Assistant Vice President of Auxiliary Services, Louisiana State University

NACAS members are leaders who help create hospitable, well-rounded campus communities worldwide through the various campus services they ensure are provided. In this feature, *College Services* hosts a question-and-answer segment in which we introduce our members. For this issue, we interview Margot Hsu Carroll, assistant vice president of auxiliary services at Louisiana State University (LSU) in Baton Rouge.

College Services: Please introduce yourself and tell us about your role in auxiliary services.

Margot Hsu Carroll: I serve as the assistant vice president of auxiliary services at LSU. My current responsibilities are to manage LSU dining, LSU bookstore, LSU student union, Tiger Card Office, copy and mail, vending, pouring rights, and copier management in partnership with vendors, including Chartwells, Barnes & Noble, UPS, Xerox, and Coke. My entire career after graduating from Smith College has been in higher education. After 13 years as an admissions officer at Harvard, I then worked for 13 years at the University of Delaware. I am now nearing my 10-year anniversary at LSU. My work at an Ivy League school, a midsize public institution, and a large flagship public university has provided me with a great variety of professional experiences. However, I am often still surprised with what a typical workday might bring, which is one of the interesting and rewarding aspects of my job. A good sense of humor and an optimistic outlook definitely help, and I think I have both.

CS: What do you get out of being a NACAS member?

MHC: I started attending NACAS conferences in the early 2000s as a new auxiliary services professional. While I found the sessions educational and informative, the overall conference environment was at first somewhat intimidating. Through networking, I formed valuable bonds and friendships,

both with vendors and with other NACAS higher education colleagues. Now, I feel extremely fortunate to count many colleagues among my personal and professional NACAS networks. This network's generosity and willingness to share best practices are unsurpassed.

CS: What NACAS member did you meet that made an impact on your role and/or your department?

MHC: During the [COVID-19] pandemic, I met monthly with several NACAS colleagues. We shared our challenges and solutions to various operational and contractual concerns during the pandemic, and we continue to meet to this day. Here are a few of them: Lynne Bell, University of Arkansas; Deborah Huebler, University of Houston; and Ana Alvarez, University of Miami; among others. That is only one example of how various NACAS colleagues have positively impacted me both professionally and personally.

CS: What is your greatest professional accomplishment?

MHC: Operating successfully in the challenging environment of the pandemic is one of my proudest accomplishments. That was a difficult time for all of us! Kudos to all of us in auxiliary services across the country. We should be proud of how we continued to provide critical services through those challenging times.

CS: What show have you recently binged that you would recommend?

MHC: "Succession" and "The Last of Us." I guess I am an HBO fan, lol.

If you would like to contact Carroll, she can be reached at margotc@lsu.edu.



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volunteer spotlight: Felecia Townsend



Felecia Townsend, Director of Business Service Operations and Dining, Florida International University

NACAS volunteers are truly the lifeblood of the organization, from holding leadership positions on boards and committees, to organizing educational webinars and writing for *College Services*, to helping out at regional events. In this new feature, *College Services* is hosting a question-and-answer segment in which we introduce our volunteers. For this issue, we interview Felecia Townsend, director of business service operations and dining at Florida International University in Miami and immediate past president of the NACAS South Board of Directors.

College Services: Please introduce yourself and tell us about your role in auxiliary services.

Felecia Townsend: I am the director of business service operations and dining, where I am responsible for residential and retail dining, catering, preferred external catering partners, concessions, auxiliary venue rentals, inventory, and a host of other operational components of auxiliary activities on multiple campuses.

CS: What do you get out of being a NACAS member?

FT: It helped me to gain confidence in my abilities and skills. As a member, I volunteered and mentored others who were upcoming in the auxiliary profession. It is through involvement that I strengthened my leadership to later become part of the Regional Board. Through NACAS, I gained insight [into] and education on industries that were unfamiliar [to me]. It propelled me to become more innovative; to think outside of the box; and to explore new concepts, products, and business objectives. Through NACAS, I was able to build relationships, whereby I was mentored and motivated by peers, which caused me to discover my own talents.

CS: What NACAS member did you meet that made an impact on your role and/or your department?

FT: There are multiple members from NACAS, both institutional and Business Partners, that made an impact on my role at Florida International University: members like Charlie Figari, the Z-Sisters (Sharon, Myra, Susan), Rich Steele, [and] Ken Ramey, and Business Partners like Stacy Dyer (Texas Book), Dave Amorine (Aramark), Terri Bump, Jim Gregory

(OnCampus Brands), and so many others, including some on the NACAS national staff. I could write a whole page of names [because] so many have impacted my life and my career. My NACAS family, which I refer to them so dearly, has been an encourager, an adviser, a strategist, a problem solver, an educational hub, a think tank, a nurturer, and just a true support base. [I found it a great resource] to be able to pick up the phone [and call] or email anyone in the NACAS network to obtain information or advice. There was no competition but [a] genuine sharing of experiences, challenges, successes, and solutions. And it all started from one NACAS Conference where meeting, collaborating, and networking took place. The relationships have grown over the years to be more than just a colleague or business relationship but long-lasting friendships. Year after year, I'm eager to attend the Conference to hear the latest trends, get firsthand information concerning projects, hear stories about occurrences on other campuses, but most of all to see my "family." I am still in touch with so many even though they have retired or migrated to a different career path. And to this day, they continue to pour into me wisdom and creative advice concerning my [professional] role and my personal life. NACAS has truly been [an asset] in elevating me in my career at Florida International University, and [my] involvement in NACAS has [expanded] my insight and knowledge base regarding auxiliaries [because] I have engaged with so many from all over the world.

CS: What is your greatest professional accomplishment?

FT: The accomplishments I'm most proud of are being ranked No. 1 as The Best College Food in Florida and ranked No. 14 as The Best College Food in America by Niche.com.

CS: What show have you recently binged that you would recommend?

FT: I don't watch a lot of TV, but if I binge, it would be "Law and Order: SVU," or on the opposite spectrum, I'd choose "Andy Griffith" or "Gunsmoke."

If you would like to contact Townsend, she can be reached at townsendf@fiu.edu.



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business partner spotlight: Salli Darden



Salli Darden, Chief Brand Officer, Chartwells Higher Education

Business Partners offer various unique campus service solutions that meet the needs of NACAS' higher education members and their school communities. In this feature, *College Services* hosts a question-and-answer segment in which we introduce our Business Partners. For this issue, we interview Salli Darden, chief brand officer at Chartwells Higher Education.

College Services: Please introduce yourself and tell us about your role in auxiliary services.

Salli Darden: I lead a team of subject matter experts in the areas of culinary, communications, marketing, insights, student engagement, and sustainability. This team develops innovative new ways to bring joy to campuses through dining as part of the services provided through outsourced dining at Chartwells Higher Education.

CS: What do you get out of being a NACAS Business Partner?

SD: The NACAS community is exceptional. Many of our partners are very actively engaged, and being at the table with them and our industry as a whole continues to help us bring innovation to [the] market and our partners before they have to ask for it. We gain valuable insight as to what our partners' future needs may be [and] how we can provide value outside of dining and be a part of overall campus and student success.

CS: What NACAS member did you meet that made an impact on your role and/or your department?

SD: There are so many, and I hate to miss the chance to list them all, so please forgive me, those I don't list here ... but there are a few I've always wanted to thank and call out, so I will: Emily Messa and Deborah Huebler at the University of Houston; Margot Carroll at LSU (Louisiana State University); Eddie Daniels at the University of Florida; Ana Alvarez and Humberto Speziani at the University

of Miami; Felecia Townsend and Susana Brumfield at Florida International University; previous NACAS CEO and now-colleague Kelsey Finn; and previous growth leader with NACAS and now at Trooh, Kennedy Turner.

Again, there are many, but I feel like each of these incredible people has helped make me a better professional and partner, and I think they all know—as I hope all my partners do—that a phone call any time ... and I'd walk through walls for them.

CS: What is your greatest professional accomplishment?

SD: The humbling honor and deep responsibility I'm given to lead others and impact their career and professional development. This includes being really intentional about opening doors and providing education and access to traditionally under-represented groups in leadership roles.

What better professional accomplishment can there be than impacting someone else's life and opportunity? I love promoting really good people. Also, on a more specific note, I'm proud that we partnered with Margot at LSU and now other campuses as well to help Afghan refugees find a soft place to land; we created the "Joyful" campaign and events to help students struggling with mental health and making connections; and overall, how we've changed our brand and led with heart. There have been times over the [past] few years when I've taken some calculated risks in order to build something bigger and I'm proud I went for it, but most importantly, I'm really proud and thankful for my incredible team.

CS: What show have you recently binged that you would recommend?

SD: "Shrinking" on Apple TV ... loved it.

If you would like to contact Darden, she can be reached at salli.darden@compass-usa.com.

EMBRACING DIVERSITY CAN HELP US BUILD RELATIONSHIPS OF MUTUAL RESPECT

What comes to mind when you think about a colleague whom you have a strong business relationship with? Maybe they are trustworthy, reliable, and friendly. They're probably also someone whom you genuinely enjoy working or doing business with. And more than likely, you have a mutual respect with this person who's helped to build the foundation for the strong relationship you have with them. It's usually easier to work with someone when you have shared values and commonalities, and it makes the entire experience that much more enjoyable.

Now, I want you to think about someone whom you may have struggled to connect with or found difficult seeing eye to eye with no matter how hard you've tried. Why is it so difficult to build a relationship with certain people, but with others, it seems to come so naturally? I think it's simple, really ... we're all human, and we're all different. We all bring unique backgrounds, experiences, and expectations to our personal and professional lives. Does this mean we should just give up on trying to build or improve those more challenging or difficult relationships? Absolutely not. When we have differences of opinion or use different approaches

to problem-solving, that can sometimes lead to tension or misunderstanding. I would argue that it's in these relationships we can find the greatest opportunities to embrace perspectives different from our own and thrive by activating the power of diversity and enhancing our effectiveness as professionals and leaders.

So, how do you bridge the gap and begin to build a relationship with someone who is very different from you? It starts with empathy, as well as harnessing the power of diverse perspectives. Seeking to understand and share the feelings of another person can be a powerful tool to put yourself in another person's shoes and to try and see a situation from their perspective. This helps you to better understand their point of view, as well as what motivates their actions and decisions. Embracing diverse perspectives is recognizing that there is value in different ways of thinking and approaching situations. It means being open to new ideas and being willing to learn from others. When we embrace diverse perspectives, we create an environment of mutual respect and collaboration.

Just as trust is not earned overnight, building strong relationships takes time and effort. It also



MATT MARCIAL, CAE, CMP | NACAS CEO

takes patience and a willingness to listen and communicate with honesty and mutual respect. It's important to remember we are all human, and we all have our own unique talents, strengths, and weaknesses. So, the next time you're struggling to connect with a colleague or business partner, take a step back and practice empathy and strive to embrace their unique perspectives. You might just be surprised by what you learn and how that could be the start to building a strong relationship.

During this past November at C3X in Las Vegas, I was proud to announce NACAS' Diversity in Auxiliary Leadership (DIAL), a new program that will build a pipeline of historically underrepresented, diverse leaders within auxiliary services and higher education through mentorship, leadership and professional development, certification, networking, and collaboration. DIAL is a fully funded, two-year cohort program designed to build a strong group of historically underrepresented individuals. If you would like to volunteer as a program mentor to share your guidance and experience, we encourage you to visit nacas.org/dial to learn more. ■

“JUST AS TRUST IS NOT EARNED OVERNIGHT,
BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS
TAKES TIME AND EFFORT. IT ALSO TAKES PATIENCE AND A WILLINGNESS
TO LISTEN AND COMMUNICATE
WITH HONESTY AND MUTUAL RESPECT.”

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