Reflections: The Master’s Student Experience

I hugged my friends one last time as they announced the final boarding call for my Amtrack train to Washington D.C. I was sad, terrified, happy and excited to be heading to UMD to begin my first semester of graduate school. There were so many new experiences and things to learn….my first metro ride to UMD, our first gathering as a cohort at Vector 0, my first day at my assistantship with the Women in Engineering program, my first graduate school class and turning in my first paper. There were many times that I felt lost, literally while trying to find a building on campus, or figuratively as I immersed myself in learning the language of a new profession. It’s half way through the semester and I don’t feel so lost anymore. I feel exhilarated when I’m able to make the connection between something that I’ve learned in class and put it into practice in my GAship. I feel challenged by my cohort, my professors, and my assistantship. I know that these challenges will help me to grow and be even better than I thought that I could be. I’m so glad that I chose UMD.

-Dawn Ginnetti (1st year Master’s student)

When I say I am a 2nd year Masters student, it still feels odd to hear. Reflecting on my first year in our program feels as if a year has passed in the blink of an eye. Student development, qualitative studies, and assessment- for the first time these “terms” became tangible as we confronted the impact our identities will have on the students, conducted surveys and began to interpret data. It was certainly a year of firsts. One overwhelming feeling that I keep coming back to is a tremendous sense of growth that I have experienced. I have been pushed both academically and personally by the conversations within my cohort as well as with the faculty. As we approach the midway point of the first semester in my second year, I am filled with excitement as we begin to construct our seminar papers and continue to hone our skills as researchers and practitioners. Although this may not be a year of firsts, I am positive that it will be just as rewarding.

-Carlos Sepulveda (2nd year Master’s student)
Kimberly (Hutchinson) Johnson started a new position as Director of Academic Advising in the Division of Undergraduate Studies at the University of Oregon. Kimberly reports, “It’s wonderful to be back at my undergrad alma mater!” We can’t think of a better treasure to send back to Oregon than our Kimberly!

John Fink is now Senior Research Assistant at the Community College Research Center at Teachers College. John has recently relocated to NYC after heading up the Transfer to Terp Program in the Stamp. John led the charge to launch this great learning community in the Stamp and his presence is missed, but we are all loving his new life in Brooklyn with his girlfriend and this new opportunity he has at Teachers College. We are ALL so proud of John!

David Barnes recently started a new position as Program Coordinator for the Young Scholars Program at Ohio State University (his alma mater). He will be working with college bound students, preparing them for college and the admissions process. The position is located in Akron, Ohio. What a joy it is to send outstanding students back to their alma mater. Great job, David!

Dan Tillapaugh has been named the new Associate Editor for Series for ACPA’s Developments. They say that seminar papers are a perfect way to cut your teeth for this great writing and editing assignment. How proud we are that Dan got his start at Maryland! We can’t wait to hear how your work influences our profession.

Denise Collins was promoted to full professor at Indiana State University. What an amazing thing to know that Denise is influencing future generations of scholars and practitioners at Indiana State. Bravo, Professor Collins!

Ramsey G. Jabaji was promoted to assistant director for International & Leadership Programs in the A. James Clark School of Engineering. He also served as an adjunct faculty member directing Georgetown University’s Certificate in Higher Education Management program taught in Doha, Qatar for more than 40 Georgetown University staff. Guest lectures were provided by the following student affairs Terps: Kimberly Griffin, Denny Roberts, John Zacker, Matt Johnson, Marybeth Sharp, and Kevin Kruger. Ramsey is truly a star and we are so glad that he is influencing global scholar engineers!

Josh Hiscock is president of the Kiwanis Club of Tysons Corner/McLean, in Virginia. Josh has been a loyal member of the Kiwanis organization since his high school days and he has advised college organizations (Key Club) over the years. How proud we are that he has staked his claim in Northern Virginia. Josh continues to work in Alumni Programs at his alma mater – The George Washington University.

Susan R. Jones and her colleague, Dr. Sherry K. Watt, are the new editors of the New Directions for Student Services sourcebooks for Jossey-Bass/Wiley. We can’t wait to see how Susan’s amazing scholarship influences this great publication. Congratulations, Susan!

Lee Burdette Williams is now Director of Student Life and Collegiate Partnerships at Mansfield Hall in Burlington, VT, an academic and residential support program for college students with autism and other disabilities. Lee hopes to assist higher education institutions in better serving this growing population. This is cutting edge work and we are so proud that Lee is going to be leading the way!

Poonam Lewis and partner just begun our second year living in Pakistan, where they both work for the U.S. State Department. This picture is of them touring a Hindu temple in Pakistan.
Kirsten Freeman Fox is the new Associate Director for Career Exploration and Development at Denison University. This past week Kirsten and her amazing two children had a chance to visit with Donna Lim and Marsha Guenzler-Stevens when they visited Columbus, Ohio for the Big Ten Union Directors Meeting. Molly and Nathan are darling children and Kirsten and Bill are so lucky to have an almost 3 year old and a 2 year old! We think Denison is so lucky to have the gifts and talents that Kirsten will bring!

Lily Clark Henderson is the new Academic and Events Advisor in the College of Business at Cal Poly! What a joy to know that you are making your mark in California.

This semester, Angel Hernandez started the Educational Doctorate program (Concentration in Community College/Higher Education Leadership) at California State University, Fullerton. We can’t wait to hear of all that Angel learns and all of the scholarship that he produces while in his doctoral program. Make us proud, Angel!

Jeremy Page and Lindsey Watson Page got married on September 19, 2014. We are so happy for both of you and can’t wait to meet Lindsey! Congratulations to both of you!

Sal Mena started a new role at Rutgers University-New Brunswick as the Associate Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and Deputy to the Vice Chancellor. Sal is also Co-chairing NASPA’s inaugural National Graduate Student and New Professionals Institute to be held in spring of 2015. Sal will be a wonderful leader for our fellow Big Ten institution. Great leaders are often called to do even more – so we can’t wait to see what Sal does at Rutgers and with his role in NASPA. Congratulations, Sal!

Amanda Suniti Niskodé-Dossett started a new job as an Academic Adviser at the University of Minnesota in the College of Liberal Arts. Finding that great way to help students achieve in and out of the classroom will be something that Amanda does with great skill. We are proud of you, Amanda, and can’t wait to hear how you help transform the lives of your advisees!

Richie Stevens received tenure and was promoted to Associate Professor at Shepherd University in spring 2014. He helped start the College Student Development and Administration Master’s program and has served as its Program Coordinator since the program began in 2006. ‘We love the fact that this proud message was shared by one of our other great alumni – Thomas Segar – who serves as Vice President for Student Affairs at the same institution. It is so great when one Terp can brag about the great achievements of another Terp! We are so proud of you, Professor Stevens!

Susan Jones, Gretchen Metzelaars, Javaune Adams-Gaston, Marsha Guenzler-Stevens, James McShay, and Donna Lim had a reunion this past week in Columbus, Ohio when the good folks at The Ohio State University played host to the Big Ten Union Directors Meeting. It was such fun for James, Donna, and Marsha to see how each of these amazing women is helping to transform that little school in Columbus. Marsha reports, “We met so many of Susan’s great graduate students – all of whom raved about Dr. Jones and then we got to witness Vice President and folk hero Dr. J. wow the assembled masses with her wisdom at the opening banquet. Senior Associate Vice President Metzelaars did an amazing Pecha Kucha presentation on campus traditions during the conference. Just the opportunity to “hang out” with our old friends was truly the cherry on the top of the sundae for all of us from Maryland!” (We also love how they use last names at OSU – so respectful and formal!)

Gerry Panelo Elizondo has moved back to her hometown of Fresno, CA to take a position at Fresno State as the Assistant Director of Student Involvement. What a joy to be going home –and to be taking on this challenging and important job. We are proud of you, Gerry!
Cara Appel-Silbaugh, along with colleagues at Georgia Tech (E. Gerome Stephens and Colleen Riggle), received a research grant from NASPA Region III to study how women in STEM find social support and belonging. What an amazing area of study! Cara has long been interested in women’s leadership and academic success and it is so great to hear that she will help institutions learn how to support women in the fields of science and technology. We can’t wait to read the articles!

Morgan McMillan is the Coordinator of Financial Literacy for Indiana University. She is responsible for administering financial education and wellness programming for the whole university system. This is such an important function and we know that Morgan has amazing history in working in this area. This experience combined with her great student development background will allow her to be extraordinary in this new position. You are doing groundbreaking work, Morgan!

Jacqueline Mac is now Interim Program Coordinator, Graduate Student Life at University of Maryland. Jacque served as the graduate assistant in this area years ago, but later found her way to Georgetown University and into the world of educational non-profits. It is so good to welcome Jacquie Mac back to the Stamp into this important role. Thanks for all you will do for graduate students at Maryland!

Terry M. Flannery was elected to the Board of Trustees for the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education for a three year term. CASE is the largest education professional association in the world, and primarily serves institutions and professionals who work in Alumni Relations, Development and Marketing and Communications. We are so proud of Terry, who spends her time as Vice President for Communication at the American University in Washington, D.C. We can’t wait to see how her leadership helps to transform CASE!

Melissa D. Scarfone started a new position as an associate professor (Disability Support Services Counselor) at Montgomery College in Rockville. This is a critical position at one of the premier community colleges in the country. We are so proud of you, Melissa!

Justine Hollingshead was promoted at NC State University. In May of this year Justine accepted a new role as the Assistant to the Vice Chancellor and Dean for Academic and Student Affairs (DASA). Justine will be assisting with strategic plan goals, public relations issues, marketing and communications, and coordination of large-scale projects that transcend divisional units. This is amazing leadership role for a great leader!

Peter Eckel is the Vice President for Governance and Leadership Programs at the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. Peter has been working in national educational associations for much of his career and we have been in awe of the great work he has done to help us enlarge our vision for learning, leadership, and service in higher education. Make us proud, Peter!

Christine Y. Cruzvergara served as a consultant for a USAID/STRIDE grant. She was sent to the Philippines with her consulting partner, Joe Testani, to assess the current state of career services at University of Santo Tomas and to provide a 4-5 yr strategy for how to develop a model career center for the country. What an amazing experience! We love the global influence of Christine.

Leslie S. Meyerhoff was just promoted into a new position at Cornell University, Director of Assessment and Planning for Student and Academic Services. Leslie has been at Cornell University for 15 years. She started in Residential Programs, then moved to Campus Life, and she is now working at the divisional level on assessment and planning. We know that your work in assessment will help Cornell to use data to drive decisions. Bravo, Leslie!

Aeriel A. Ashlee co-founded Ashlee Consulting LLC with her life and business partner, Kyle Ashlee. Additionally, Aeriel accepted an RD position aboard the Spring 2015 voyage of Semester at Sea. Aeriel and Kyle will be visiting Maryland in November and we can’t wait to catch up on all the great work she and Kyle are doing. Bon Voyage, Aeriel!

**ASHE Reception**

We are pleased to invite you to a reception by the University of Maryland’s Higher Education Program on Friday, November 21, in Washington, DC. The Higher Education program would like to extend their invitation to the CSP/SAC community as well.

It isn’t often that we’re able to personally connect with members of our joint alumni community. Along with faculty and students, the Chair of the Department and Dean of the College of Education will be attending the ASHE Conference annual meeting and would be delighted to meet you at the reception.

Please join us if you can. We ask only that you RSVP by Friday, November 7, 2014 if you plan to attend.

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Articles, Books, Book Chapters, Talks, & Presentations


Kavaliauskas Crain, L. (October 2014). From backpack to briefcase: Building and assessing a senior transition program. Students in Transition Conference, Denver, CO.


Get IN the BASKET!

Share the good news! Submissions for the InBasket can be emailed to sagrad-InBasket@umd.edu.

Submissions received by the first Wednesday of each month will be included in that month’s issue.

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DMV (Re)Connection: Tisha McCoy-Ntiamoah (’04 – JMU, VA), Marcus Peanort (’05 – Montgomery College, MD), and Tiki Ayiku (’05 – NASPA, DC) get together for dinner, some catching up, and of course reflect on their professional progression.