



**DOWNSTATE**  
HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY

# Career Pathways in Higher Education: Exploring Different Career Trajectories

NEXT STEPS Conference – July 21  
Montclair State University

Hosted by ACUI Region VII



# Taking the Next Step: What Brought You Here?

- Welcome & brief introduction
- What's my path?
- Session objectives:
  - Exploring career trajectories
  - Leveraging your Professional Development
  - Networking
  - Planning your next steps
- Icebreaker: “What's one title or role you've imagined yourself in, even if briefly?”



# Who I Am: A Career Rooted in Student Affairs

Senior Student Affairs professional with nearly three decades of experience (29 years on May 20, 2025, but who is counting?)



Started at SUNY Purchase College – 10 years of transformative work with students

- Titles at Purchase: Staff Assistant, Coordinator for New Student Orientation, Student & Community Advocate, Assistant Director for New Student Orientation, Assistant to the VP for Student Affairs, Assistant to the Assistant Dean for Liberal Arts & Sciences, Acting Director of Student Development & Student Activities, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs, Interim Dean of Students, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs & Ombudsperson

Currently at SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University – 19 years and counting

- Titles at Downstate: Assistant Dean for Student Affairs, VP for Student Affairs & Dean of Students, VP for Academic and Student Affairs

Committed to student success, wellness, and leadership development

# Scholar, Mentor, Advocate

Doctor of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2011

NASPA Pillar of the Profession, Class of 2020

NASPA Region II Scott Goodnight Award for Excellence as a Dean, 2019

SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Professional Service

2025 President's Award for Distinguished Alumni – SUNY Purchase

2021 Teachers College, Columbia University Alumni Award for Outstanding Service



# Leadership Across SUNY: 29 Years of Service

## Association Service (Mostly in NASPA and with Region II of NASPA)

- Region II Director & Member, NASPA National Board of Directors (March 2023 – March 2025); Member, Region II Advisory Board (since 1997!); Information Technology Leadership Team; NASPA Region II Historian; Member of multiple conference committees

## Council of Senior Student Affairs Officers of the State University of New York

- Served as President from June 2019 – June 2021

## SUNY Chief Academic Officers Association

- Member of Executive Committee since October 2021

## Purchase College Alumni Association

- Currently President Emeritus, served two terms as President

## Teachers College Columbia University Alumni Association

- Served as President 2015 - 2017

Trusted advisor to colleagues across functional areas

Honored to have served under inspirational leaders and mentored future professionals



- Functional areas in Student Affairs: Housing, Conduct, DEI, Wellness, Activities, Career Services, etc.
- Emphasize cross-functional career mobility

# But before we begin...



**Student Affairs**

What the last five years felt like (sometimes)....



But I more like to think this is what Student Affairs is like...



After the last few years though... I don't blame those that think like this...



**Dr. Christopher Conzen**

@chrisconzen



Catching up with a friend who left a campus job (with no other job lined up). They are now actively looking and I asked if they would consider Higher Ed again. Their response: "I would rather run into traffic covered in bees than step foot back on a campus"

4:18 PM · Oct 19, 2021 · TweetDeck

First things first...

**The Future of Student Affairs is  
linked to Student Success**

**NOT  
Crisis Management**



# It's More Than Just the Dean's Office

- Divisions in higher ed institutions
  - Academic Affairs, Enrollment, Advancement, etc.
- Types of institutions
  - Public/private, 2-yr/4-yr, research/teaching
- Functional areas in Student Affairs
  - Housing, Conduct, DEI, Wellness, Activities, Career Services, etc.
- Cross-functional mobility

# There's No One Way Up the Mountain

- Lateral, vertical, and functional shifts
- Real-world career journey examples
  - Res Life -> Conduct -> Title IX -> DEI -> VPSA
  - What are other pathways?
- Non-traditional routes and administrative options
  - Academic advising, operations, institutional research



# What's Your Pattern So Far?

## Think–Pair–Share:

- What roles or departments have shaped you the most?
- Where do you feel pulled next?



# The Room Where It Happens

- Why Associations like ACUI, NASPA, ACPA and others matter
  - Exposure, leadership, mentorship
- How to get involved
  - Presenting, volunteering, board service
- Regional vs National Association Involvement
  - You're already here at ACUI Region VII



# Not Just Schmoozing—Strategizing

- Intentional networking:
  - informational interviews, event follow-up, mutual support
- Find your 'board of advisors'
- Sample script for reaching out
  - Using the “LinkedIn” Trick
- How to maintain authentic connections over time



# Grow Where You're Planted (Then Grow Some More)

- Institutional Professional Development
- Tuition Waivers, Certifications
- Informal learning:
  - books, podcasts, shadowing
- Personal growth goal-setting
  - Skills and competencies



# Design Your Next Step

- Design your career roadmap
  - Where am I now?
  - What do I want to explore next?
  - What skills do I want to grow?
  - Who can I connect with in the next 3 months?
  - What will I do in the next 30 days?



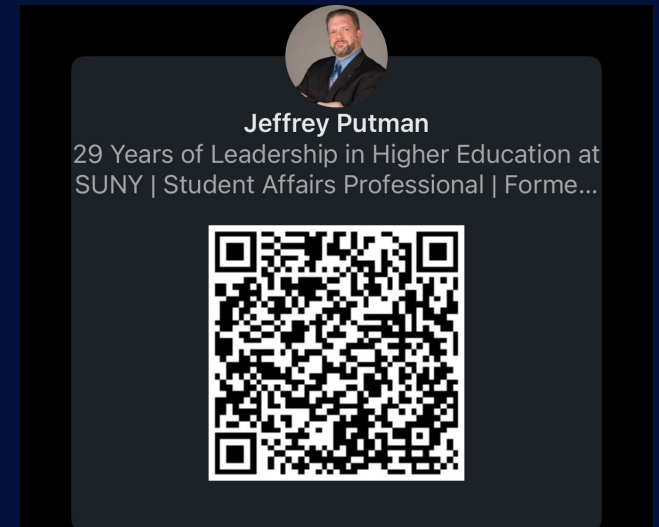
# You Own Your Path

- No 'one right way' to advance
- Encourage bold moves and lifelong learning
- Challenges
  - Connect with at least 3 new individuals today
  - Connect with someone on your campus outside your department in 2 weeks
  - Join a new Committee or Project by September



## Further Reading and Inspiration

- Podcasts: SA Voices, Student Affairs Spectacular
- Associations: ACUI, NASPA, ACPA, NODA, NACE
- Contact Me!
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“It is possible to commit no mistakes and still lose.  
That is not weakness. That is life.”

- Captain Jean-Luc Picard

“The bureaucratic mentality is the only constant in the universe.”

- Dr. Leonard McCoy

“One cannot summon the future....

But one can change the present.”

and

“Change is the essential process of all existence.”

- Spock

# Thank You!

