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The Final Word

Diana Dubuque

It's a scary feeling to be asked to write The Final Word for The Vermont Connection (TVC) Journal. I certainly can't compete with the previous authors on any level. I am not a writer nor an educator, although I am honored to even be considered as an author in my final shining moments as a member of the HESA team.

My history

After graduating from a small women's business college in New Hampshire (yup, no co-ed for this girl), with a major in the Airline and Travel Secretarial program, I began my career at UVM in 1972 working in the office of Sponsored Programs processing grant applications to outside funding sources until 1974. Then an opportunity came along with United Airlines to work as a reservationist, and I moved to Boston to take that job. In doing so, I would fulfill my desire to be able to travel inexpensively and be able to 'pay back' my parents in traveling benefits for paying for my college education.

Within a year, a merger occurred for the Boston and NY reservations offices and a move to New Jersey was planned. I decided that my move would not be to NJ, but back to Vermont and to UVM. I got a job with the Forestry Department working with undergraduate students and five faculty members. I stayed in Forestry until 1978 when my first child was born, always intending to return. Three children later, I came back to UVM in 1982 when the youngest child turned two. The department was called Organizational, Counseling and Foundational Studies (OCFS), which was a mouthful to say when answering the phone. That department housed HESA, Counseling, Foundations, and the Administration & Planning program, now Educational Leadership. It was during the early years in that office that I was given a choice of staying with the program I then worked for or moving into the HESA staff role. Deb Hunter was there, David Holmes was leaving, and Kathy Manning had recently been hired. I chose to work with HESA faculty and students, and have been happily doing so ever since.

Diana Dubuque has worked with The University of Vermont HESA program for over 25 years and at UVM for 37 years in total. Prior to coming to the HESA program, she worked with the Administration and Planning program, the Forestry Department, and the Office of Sponsored Programs. She also has worked for United Airlines in Boston. She will retire in June of 2014.

The HESA Experience

Some 25+ years later, I am still working with the HESA program and have been extremely happy in this position. The evidence of my being part of the team, rather than just the staff person, is what has committed me to stay.

I have seen many cohorts enter the program. Some of you pondered your decision in the first semester as to whether you made the right decision, some of you had family separation anxieties, others had assistantship positions that were either overwhelming or not enough to do in your opinion and were looking for more structure or more project assignments to work on. Over the years, I had countless students in my office that just needed to talk through an issue or vent to someone when the faculty were not in. I am happy that students felt that I was trustworthy enough to bear their burdens, and that perhaps I was able to comfort them in some way.

I watched you grow with each passing semester, learning to navigate the institution and its intricacies and complexities, sometimes you wondered if it would ever end. And yet, nearly all of you in your final semester could not believe that you were graduating and how two years had flown by so quickly! Yes, you graduated as mature young adults, and have gone on to do marvelous work in the field. Throughout the years I enjoyed seeing the growth in our students, and continue to be proud of the positions our grads are offered all over the country as they exit the UVM HESA program and begin their careers. Each year I have put out a call for volunteers to attend career fairs around the country and represent the HESA program. And always, the call is answered. We are fortunate to have a highly qualified pool of candidates every year in numbers that exceed 185 applications. We have YOU to thank for that as you continue to send us prospective candidates that are eager to follow in the HESA experience.

For many years, I kept a United States map with pins and strings to all of the locations our grads were located. It was a fabulous tribute to our graduates and for me to look at every day. The map became outdated as grads took on new positions throughout the country and Canada, and was discarded when we moved to Trinity campus.

I keep tabs on many of you through social media (Facebook), your successes, changing jobs, going back to school, participating in Semester at Sea, families, and the trials and tribulations of a spouse off to war. Several of you stopped by the office when attending the Legal Issues conference, or were in town for other reasons. Some of you have returned to UVM for employment! It was always nice to see you, and for you to remember us. Thank you for allowing me to be part of your UVM life and beyond. It has been my pleasure to watch you continue

to grow, in both career and family and of course, I always enjoy pictures of you and your families on Facebook.

Recently, we received some wonderful letters from our alumni, many of whom talked about the experiences here and how they benefitted from our teachings. You seem to revisit the conversations, class discussions, and experiences in your assistantships and practica when you are trying to facilitate the happenings in your current jobs. You have written the following comments: “I am feeling so prepared,” “grateful for my training,” “I am proud to call UVM and HESA my home,” “I have utilized the tools I accessed and practiced during graduate school daily,” and “Throughout my career I have utilized the lessons learned from my time in UVM HESA in order to think critically.” There are so many more of you using the skills that you learned with us. It makes me smile to see the recognition you honor UVM HESA with, and it has made me realize that as students move through the program, you are growing every day without realizing it. But when issues arise at your jobs, you are fully prepared to handle them with confidence and grace. And, if you need a little help, The Vermont Connection is vast and wide, and alumni are extremely supportive and helpful. Just ask.

Change is Forever

The UVM Administration continues to change as well. We have a new president as of 2012, the 7th president in my tenure at UVM. Edward Andrews, Lattie Coor, George Davis, Thomas Salmon, Judith Ramaley, Daniel Fogel, and now Thomas Sullivan. And, there have been about the same number of interim presidents, provosts, and deans as well. And through it all, we remain strong and vibrant. The HESA program has undergone changes as well.

Since our move to Trinity Campus five years ago, many things have changed. Bridget Turner Kelly left UVM, Jackie Gribbons retired, Dorian McCoy left UVM, and Robert Nash returned to teaching full time in the Foundations area. I worked with Shametrice Davis for a few short months. Deb Hunter became the chair of the department, Kathy Manning became the HESA coordinator, and we recruited faculty from other programs and some campus administrators to teach courses in the HESA program while we try to align ourselves with our top-notch standards. I have been asked to change offices four times, and it seemed that every year I would move one office to the left. I recently realized that with my upcoming retirement, I will be two doors short of getting the ‘corner office.’ So, I leave that to Deb.

The Wrap Up

It has always been my thought and my intention to retire from a job that I love deeply, with a sense of fulfillment and contribution, maybe even with significance to the program, the faculty, and the students with whom I worked. The reflection of one's life should be rewarding and fulfilling. Life is short and you do not really think about it until you are nearing retirement. Contributions to my 'retirement fund' for years, even when I did not think I could afford it became very important all of a sudden. Somehow those years just seem so far away when you are younger, but they have a way of sneaking up on us.

Most recently some of our HESA alumni visited the campus to pay tribute to Kathy Cook and stopped by the office to visit. One of our alums joked about getting emails from me while she was a student, and she knew she had better pay attention! So, I guess I made an impact on folks to get things done. Another remarked that things would fall apart if I retired, so I should not. But, I know that is not true.

Things may change. I have learned recently that my position will not be replaced, but the program will remain strong and the faculty will do everything they can to ensure its' strength and longevity, including the hiring of an additional faculty member. I am confident that The Vermont Connection will forever continue and we will enjoy many more years of educating young people to become wonderful professionals.

I worked for a faculty member many years ago who kept saying 'the more things change, the more they stay the same'. There may be circles in life where this might be true, but in the world of higher education, I find this to be anything BUT true.

My Final Word

Therefore, my Final Word to you is that life is a challenge and it is forever changing. Every day is an adventure at work. There is always something happening, whether it be a student sobbing in your office, changes in staffing, crisis on campus, or a co-worker facing severe illness. Lend a hand whenever possible. Be accommodating and flexible. Work hard. Be proud of who you are, where you are, and never stop listening and learning. Embrace your surroundings and know that you are there for a reason. Be true to yourself. Move, go back to school, or change jobs as you seek another level in your career and in your life. Make solid decisions and do not look back. Allow yourself the freedom to expand. Be a mentor. Never settle for less. I urge you to live your life to the fullest every day. I have no doubt that you are re-creating new domains and that the future of higher education is in excellent hands!



When I retire in June, I will miss this position, the faculty and students, and all that it has taught me. I will be forever grateful.

Bless all of you,
Diana