

# The Vermont Connection

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## Editor's Note

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## EDITOR'S NOTE



As I sit down to write this note, surrounded by my TVC family during Production Week, I am reminded as to why we chose this year's theme of *The Vermont Connection* in the first place. "Liberating the Learner: Unpacking Access and Privilege in Higher Education" was decided over ice cream—creemees, to be exact—last summer after a group brainstorm. Access, privilege, and liberation were key ideas that stuck with my cohort after we read Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in our second week of HESA. Thinking about education as the practice of freedom is directly tied to our individual journeys into higher education. We all took different paths to Burlington, Vermont, and all had help along the way to increase our access to education, whether it was through mentorship, a bridge program, or unearned privilege. These journeys enriched our classroom discussions and helped me reflect on what it means to be a graduate student in higher education and student affairs.

We are pulled in many directions as HESA students and are forced to reevaluate our values throughout the two or more years we spend in 211 Mann Hall. I am reminded of the importance in knowing oneself through challenging situations in theory (the classroom) and practice (practica and/or assistantships). I felt affirmed by my newly formed community while going through my racial identity development and understanding what it means for me to be a White woman in student affairs. I think about a specific experience in my assistantship in Greek Life this past semester and the support I received while navigating my role as a student advocate with a deep commitment to dismantling rape culture. Knowing what and who brought me to HESA and sustained me throughout my time here has allowed me to know myself better. This knowledge and awareness motivated me to continue in these difficult moments.

"Liberating the Learner: Unpacking Access and Privilege in Higher Education." What does this all mean for student affairs practice? The articles included in the 33rd volume speak to liberation, learning, access, and privilege in unique and provoking ways. In order to transform our student affairs worlds, we should actively participate with students in their journeys of liberation. We encourage our students to find balance between their school, work, and co-curricular commitments, and we also must make time for ourselves to reflect in the moments

between. The 2011 Kenneth P. Saurman Award winner, Jimmy Doan, eloquently stresses the importance of taking time to pause and listen with students, especially as new student affairs practitioners. As students and practitioners, we are all learners with the power to liberate one another. Invited author and 2007 HESA alumnus, Garrett Naiman, highlights the privileged responsibility student affairs practitioners have to our students to increase access to higher education as well.

I feel honored to be a part of this all— this introduction, this Production Week, this volume of *The Vermont Connection*. The creation and production of this journal was a community effort through and through. The 2012 and 2013 cohorts tirelessly read abstracts, drafts, and final “dot” reads. This journal would not exist without the commitment of these amazing and talented people. I thank the members of the Eboard for their energy and willingness to make this experience their own. I especially want to thank our advisors, Tricia Rascon ('06) and Nick Negrete ('06), who became mentors to many of us throughout our HESA journeys. I thank Tricia and Nick for their insight, knowledge, sass, and senses of humor through productive and challenging times. I thank our faculty advisor, Deb Hunter, for her continued support of *The Vermont Connection*. Last, but certainly not least, I thank our committed HESA alumni/ae that engage us throughout the year from Phone-a-Thon to conferences to times together in Burlington. Thank you for modeling what The Vermont Connection is all about so that as we enter the field as new practitioners we are prepared to serve as valuable resources to current and future HESA students.

I hope you enjoy the 33rd volume of *The Vermont Connection*.

Kristin Lang