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and Meaning Making in Student Affairs*

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Editor's Note

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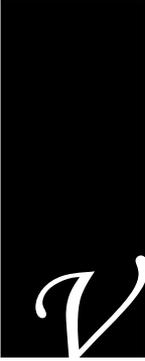


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EDITOR'S NOTE

Honoring the Past, Embracing the Present,
& Preparing for the Future

Sigmund Freud once said, “The key to happiness is good love, good work, and good play, in that order.” If only finding happiness and fulfillment were that simple. How do we make meaning of our lives in a field of service to others? What gets us out of bed in the morning? Through all of the unpredictability of a career in student affairs, how do we keep going when the future is drastically uncertain? Is higher education our passion, or is it a job to pass the time and pay the bills? The answers to these questions may be different for all of us, and no one reason is more important than another. As an individual in a seemingly tireless and often thankless role, running from meeting to meeting, dealing with unforeseen student concerns, there is rarely enough time for me to catch my breath, not to mention reflect on and learn from the moments that make up my days. I have often found myself struggling to interpret and understand what it is that I do day in and day out, what implications it has, and why it is so important.

My time in the HESA program has been characterized by this quest for authenticity, for meaning, to own who I am and what I bring to the program and to the students with whom I work. I have seen the same in my cohort, and have come to believe that by developing a strong sense of self, I can help others do the same. I have often heard the 2 years of HESA compared to a rollercoaster ride. The twists and turns of the program have been the twists and turns on my journey towards my most authentic self, but the nervous, shy individual who was unsure of her voice when she moved to Burlington 2 years ago has become a stronger, more articulate, and more confident woman. I owe this to HESA. Although I am still working on many aspects of who I am and what I bring, as Final Word author Stacey Miller puts it, HESA students are “always striving to be better than they were yesterday, and better for tomorrow.” However unfortunate, each misstep or mistake along the way has provided me with an opportunity to learn and grow.

In this 30th volume of the journal, the Editorial Board chose to take a look back in order to honor the history of *The Vermont Connection*. Decades of HESA students have worked to produce TVC, and without their commitment to its uniqueness I would not be writing this piece. This year's Moral Conversation theme, “There and Then, Here and Now: Reflection and Meaning Making in

Student Affairs,” provided an opportunity to reach out to our rich history and networks. We asked authors to reflect on what motivates them, and how they make meaning for themselves and others. As Rick Gatteau (’95) states, “Forming your identity is an ever-evolving process; it takes time to discover, understand, and appreciate your true self.”

As the saying “many hands make light work” goes, the same holds true for *The Vermont Connection*. Thank you to our advisors, Patty Eldred (’80) and Corin Blanchard (’04), for their constant guidance and support throughout this process. They provided context, historical reference, and offered advice as we strove to continue environmentally-friendly initiatives and engage our alumni around the world. We owe Deb Hunter much gratitude for serving as the faculty liaison to TVC, and for helping us in truly understanding our history in order to better shape our future. The HESA faculty have been a constant support network, from making phone calls during Phone-A-Thon this past fall to offering advice and feedback for how we can create and maintain a true Vermont connection. To our alumni, this publication would not be possible without your support, as many of you are the reasons that we are at the University of Vermont today. Your names and stories have kept us motivated and engaged. Our newest alumni, the class of 2008, instituted change for TVC that has helped guide how we have achieved our goals. Thank you for your mentorship and friendship.

Creating the journal also offers the unique opportunity for the current HESA community to come together as one, to engage and challenge one another throughout the process, and as Keith Miser asserts, “produce something that is of the very highest quality whose voice helps form the soul of the graduate program.” Last year’s Kenneth P. Saurman Award winner, David Laxamana, reflects on the intentional relationships he built that helped him survive and thrive in HESA. Thank you to this year’s Full Board for all of the collective work you have put in to make this journal a reality, and for making this 30th volume thrive. Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the members of this year’s Editorial Board, as they worked tirelessly to actualize lofty goals and ideals that once seemed insurmountable, yet stayed firmly rooted and grounded to accomplish the task at hand. Thank you for giving me the courage to be my own self, and being such an integral part of this true teaching and learning experience.

I am honored to present the 30th volume of *The Vermont Connection*. In the pages that follow, you will find articles that reflect the changing scope of higher education and vignettes that bring us back to HESA days past. We hope that this volume gives you an opportunity to pause and reflect on your own meaning making and discover how this reflection has shaped you, both personally and professionally. Most of all, we hope that it challenges you to find ways to have good love, good work, and good play.