

News Release

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Tamara Durant given National Award from NASPA *Runner-Up of the Melvene D. Hardee Dissertation of the Year Award*

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Each year, NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, recognizes members who are doing outstanding work in the student affairs profession. Tamara Durant, director of the student success center at State University of New York at Potsdam, is the 2016 runner-up of the Melvene D. Hardee Dissertation of the Year Award.

This award recognizes outstanding dissertation research conducted by doctoral degree recipients presently in or intending to enter the student affairs profession. Durant was honored for her dissertation titled, “Is Faith on the Campus Tour? Rural, Public College Students’ Exploration of Spiritual and Religious Identity.”

Durant interviewed 20 students of a wide variety of faiths. She found that in some cases students take into account their faith when selecting a college. And, they felt their colleges should support their spiritual affiliation, but didn’t expect the college to take the lead. She drew two conclusions for student affairs professionals. The first is that, “student affairs practitioners should assist students in establishing connections to formal and informal organizations that may be of interest to them and must support those same organizations, as such groups provide safe outlets for students to express frustrations with the majority culture, to socialize (and worship, as applicable) in ways that are comfortable, and to enjoy a link to home culture (Guiffrida, 2003).”

Secondly, Durant found that “faculty and student affairs professionals should provide opportunities for students to explore meaning, purpose and wholeness.”

“A wonderful research design, supported by the research questions, provided a solid and appropriate approach to examining this topic and addressing the research questions,” said one entry judge. “The findings and implications confirm the thread of continuity and integrity that was woven throughout the entire dissertation.”

Durant has an extensive background in higher education administration in both student and academic service management. She currently supervises the Student Success Center, a group of offices providing services to enhance the academic success and retention of undergraduate students at the State University of New York at Potsdam. Her research interest is student spiritual and religious identity. She received her masters of arts from Bowling Green State University and a Ph.D. in higher education from Syracuse University.

Durant and the other National Award winners will be honored in March at the 2016 NASPA Annual Conference in Indianapolis, Ind.