

# JCC Connexions

Quarterly Newsletter About the *Journal of College and Character*

Vol. 3, No. 1, February 2017



## JCC Authors Present and Write on Spiritual and Religious Lives of Students

Each year at the annual NASPA Conference in March, senior associate editor **Pete Mather** facilitates a session on a provoking topic relating to the *JCC* mission. Selected authors who have published in the *JCC* present their research findings and share their knowledge and experience relating to the topic. The authors also provide online background and discussion relating to these topics by means of [\*JCC's Connexions\*](#) blog as a preview of the session.

This year's session presenters are **Darris Means** and **Janina Montero**. They will discuss their *JCC* articles relating to the crucial role that higher education plays in paying attention to the spiritual and religious lives of their students. The session is titled, "Contemporary Dynamics in Student Spiritual and Religious Identity." It is scheduled on Monday, March 13th from 2:30 to 3:30pm.

As our [Focus Authors](#) for this *Connexions* issue, we are pleased to highlight Darris and Janina's work.

Darris is the co-author (with Audrey J. Jaeger) of "Keep Pressing On": Spiritual Epistemology and Its Role in the Collegiate Lives of Black Gay and Bisexual Men," published in *JCC* in February 2016. The [article](#) examines the roles of spirituality in the lives of African American gay and bisexual men and explores theories of identity

intersectionality.

The authors also identify ways that spiritual epistemologies of the participants in the study changed during the course of their spiritual journeys in college. An important finding of the article is that students often experience spiritual "crossroads" due to increasing autonomy in their college years. For several men in this study, the spiritual aspects of their lives operated as forms of motivation in facets of their social and academic life. An exciting recommendation is that practitioners might find opportunities to connect spirituality to persistence when they establish institutional programs and services where social and academic success of students who have multiple, intersecting identities is the goal.

As assistant professor of student affairs at the University of Georgia, Darris focuses his research on equity, diversity, and inclusion in higher education and secondary education contexts. Specifically, he explores two primary areas: (a) the collegiate experiences and identity development of Black



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and African American gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, and same-gender loving students and (b) college access, choice, transitions, and persistence for minoritized student populations. His current research projects employ community cultural wealth to study educational experiences, aspirations, and outcomes of minoritized student populations. His social justice praxis includes youth participatory action research and engagement in community-



based organizations focused on college access and equity.  
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The second [JCC article](#) featured in the

session is "Navigating Conflicts Related to Religious and Non-Religious Identity on Campus," authored by **Eboo Patel, Janina Montero, Cindi Love, and Mary Ellen Giess**, published in August 2016. The article focuses on conflicts among religious identities. Janina, vice chancellor-student affairs, emerita, at UCLA, will represent her co-authors of this article at the NASPA session.

In the JCC article, Janina writes that political and religious conflicts in the world influence university campus climate and discourse. These events affect relationships between individuals, as well as those between groups, and raise complex issues, including the balance of free speech and the restrictions of destructive speech.

Because students all over campus have close connections to national and world events, a fundamental challenge for higher education leaders is to respond in meaningful ways to varied perspectives and audiences. Since students' experiences are their own, they should not be cloaked in the perceptions of campus administration.

In co-authoring the article, Janina drew extensively from her leadership experience as VCSA from 2003-2016 and the

insights she gained from that experience relating to campus interfaith and political dialogue. In her senior management role at UCLA, she worked diligently to address the needs of individual students and of the different student communities in the student body.

Addressing these needs included putting in place strong support networks for students in distress or crisis. One example of such efforts was the introduction of services through the Bruin Resource Center that address the critical needs of students, including those who are undocumented, who are former foster youth, who are veterans, who are parenting students and/or who are in financial distress.

Prior to her role at UCLA, she was vice president for campus life and student services at Brown University; dean of student life at Princeton University and dean of the college at Wesleyan University.

She earned her doctoral degree in Hispanic literature from the University of Pennsylvania.

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In their [blog post](#), Darris and Janina provide rich background information relating to the issues they focused on in their JCC articles. They examine the role of conflicts, such as the ones highlighted in their two articles relating to the education and development of students and institutions and what they have learned in terms of how conflicts involving matters of religion and spirituality can best be leveraged to create productive learning outcomes.

They respond to the opinion of some students who insist that discussions of and attention to faith and spirituality are not appropriate for student affairs or other campus educators, apart from chaplains.

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We invite persons interested in these topics to read the articles and blog post, respond to the blog post (persons can login through their social media accounts), and attend the upcoming session at the annual NASPA conference in March.





**JCC editorial team at 2017 Dalton Institute:** Jon Dalton, co-editor, Florida State University; Janett Ramos, associate editor, Olivet Nazarene University; Ashley Tull, editorial board member, Southern Methodist University; Pam Crosby, co-editor, NASPA JCC; Alyssa Rockenbach, editorial board member, North Carolina State University; Becky Crandall, editorial board member, Ohio State University; and Pete Mather, senior associate editor, Ohio University.

## JCC Focuses on Research & Leadership at the 2017 Dalton Institute on College Student Values

### JCC Editorial Team Talks Research

**The setting:** a sunny morning in Tallahassee—high in the 70s with camellias and azaleas in bloom. **The event:** **Jon Dalton** and **Pam Crosby**, co-editors of the *Journal of College and Character*, welcomed their colleagues on the journal staff for a breakfast board meeting.

The gathering on February 2, 2017, was an occasion for discussion of the ongoing research in the field of moral, civic, and spiritual development in college students and a time of celebration of the achievement of awards, publications, and innovative practices of *JCC* authors, editors, and board members. In the upcoming issues, features will highlight some of the trends and groundbreaking findings discussed in the meeting.

### JCC Sponsors Panel on Practical Wisdom

NASPA's *Journal of College and Character* sponsored a panel discussion that explored the complex and varied meanings of *practical wisdom*. The discussion topic was inspired by *JCC*'s [special collection](#) of articles written by authors who reflected on their lives and work in higher education.

Panel participants **Jon Dalton**, Florida State University; **Kathryn Cavins-Tull**, Texas Christian University; **Mary Coburn**, Florida State University; **Pam Crosby**, NASPA JCC; and **Peter Mather**, Ohio University, addressed major themes drawn from the special collection and the kinds of action persons with practical wisdom often engage in. Such actions, it was noted, might be

- Finding jobs that “choose” them
- Discovering deep meaning and purpose
- Practicing kindness and sympathy
- Finding the right balance in all of life
- Searching for their deepest truths
- Embracing diverse others
- Seeking their most worthy dreams
- Expressing gratitude for all that is unmerited in life

In this session, which was entitled “Practical Wisdom: Lessons Learned from Life and Leadership in Student Affairs and Higher Education,” panelists shared some of the most important guideposts in their personal lives and careers, things that ultimately matter to them and that convey their deepest purposes and values. The special collection is available through February.

## Sponsler and Hartley Share Research on Civic Learning

The NASPA Research and Policy Institute publishes research and analysis relating to topics of significance to student affairs professionals and higher education policy-makers. Of particular note to the mission of the JCC is the [report](#), *Five Things Student Affairs Professionals Can Do to Institutionalize Civic Engagement* (2013). The purpose of the brief is to acquaint student affairs professionals, particularly chief student affairs officers, with five fundamental suggestions that decision-makers can consider in establishing educational opportunities to prepare students for active citizenship.

Authors **Laura Sponsler** and **Matthew Hartley** argue in the brief that student affairs leadership is crucial to establishing programs, policies, and practices that advance civic learning and democratic engagement.

Both Laura's research and professional practice focus on civic learning and democratic engagement. She served as the founding director for NASPA's Lead Initiative,



a project recognizing a network of nearly 100 post-secondary institutions for their commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement. She has represented NASPA and its civic

work with local, regional, and national partners. She also collaborated with NASPA's professional development team to incorporate civic learning and democratic engagement into conferences and professional development opportunities for NASPA members.

Currently, she is examining student-faculty partnerships as a pedagogical tool for democratic engagement in the classroom in line with the scholarship of teaching and learning. She is also exploring democratic teaching pedagogy and the ways in which teaching philosophies and practices are evaluated.

A clinical assistant professor at the University of Denver, Morgridge College of Education, she earned her Ph.D. in higher education from the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education.

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Matthew's research focuses on academic governance and the social and democratic purpose of higher education and provides insight into how higher education in countries outside the US approach governance in this critical way.

For example, he is currently examining how universities in Kazakhstan are responding to education reforms aimed at promoting greater institutional autonomy and shared governance. He was recently named a Fellow for the HEAD Foundation in Singapore, a think tank dedicated to promoting higher education reforms in Asia. He has worked with the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France, exploring partnerships between universities, schools, and civil society organizations aimed at promoting education for democratic citizenship. In 2011, he completed a Fulbright Fellowship in Bratislava, Slovakia, in partnership with the Slovak Governance Institute, studying the launch of community-based learning efforts at several universities.

His [book](#), *To Serve a Larger Purpose, Engagement for Democracy and the Transformation of Higher Education* (2011) co-edited with John Saltmarsh, examines the roles of universities in democratic societies.

Matthew is a professor of education at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education. He is the associate dean of Penn Graduate School of Education and the executive director of the Alliance for Higher Education and Democracy. He earned his master's and doctoral degrees from Harvard University's Graduate School of Education.



## "You Can Call Me by My First Name": On the Meanings Behind Names and Titles

One [recent article](#), "Do You Make Them Call You 'Professor'?" (Preston, 2016) published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and an [earlier one](#), "Doctor, Professor or 'Hey, You'?" (Kreuter, 2011) in *Inside Higher ED*, discuss the intricate issue of the use of titles and forms of address with faculty members. They ask what forms of address are considered appropriate for undergraduate and graduate students and the etiquette of communication.

These articles and the mixed reaction to them prompted me to reflect on my own experience of how different cultures approach names and titles as well as the meanings and sentiments associated with them.

Growing up in a culture that exhibits considerable deference and reverence to teachers, professors, and superiors, I am used to incorporating honorifics, such as *lao shi*

(teacher) or *jiao shou* (professor) into my daily speech and even bowing to display my respect.

Calling professors by their first names is considered impolite in Taiwanese culture. When I first moved to the United States for graduate school, I always called my professors by their last names and addressed them as *Professor* or *Dr.* in both my spoken and written communications.

As an international graduate student hoping to get acquainted with "authentic" American culture, I paid close attention to how my American colleagues approached their professors. I noticed that they often behaved more casually. In particular, many graduate students were treated as colleagues and were encouraged by their advisors and professors to use first names. When I grew closer to my professors and mentors, and when they told me, "You can call me by my first name," I experienced mixed emotions. On the one hand, I was thrilled because I knew that this permission was their way of being friendly and approachable. On the other hand, it was difficult for me to go against the ingrained cultural rituals I grew up with, especially for those I sincerely respect.

Out of curiosity, I looked for articles on how students should address their teachers and professors. I quickly found out that there is no fixed rule or "right way." Complex interplay among personal preferences, institutional

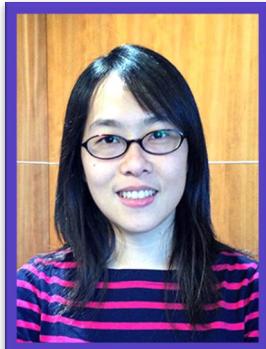
and departmental environments, formal and informal settings, age and generational differences, cultural backgrounds and social customs, values of hierarchy, a sense of authority, and levels of acquaintance might influence what people call one another. However, communication is a two-way street. We also have to consider the flip side: How would my professors like to be addressed? Will my comfort with addressing them formally make them feel that I am reserved or aloof?

The longer I lived in the US, the more I became culturally sensitive and learned to adjust to different contexts and settings. Now if my professors tell me that I can call them by their first names, I try to learn to accept their goodwill even if I feel some initial discomfort. When I am with my fellow graduate students, I listen to how they address their own advisors and follow their lead. However, when I am having a conversation with others, I still refer to my professors in their absence using their last names because it helps me express my respect and gratitude.

I am aware that using honorific titles might make a relationship seem distant. Sometimes it can even be interpreted as being pretentious or obsequious. At the same time, I have learned that it is important to share my cultural customs so that others can understand me better, just as it is important to be open-minded toward other cultures. Such conversations may help us diminish the misperceptions that we have about others due to our unfamiliarity with cultural norms. Learning about different cultures takes time, but it is crucial for reducing misunderstandings.

Having been a teaching assistant and instructor for undergraduate courses at a large university in the northeastern United States for the past three years, I have found that over half of the student emails I receive do not include my name. They begin with a greeting such as "hi there," "hi," "hello," or "hey." Some do not even contain a greeting at all. I do not necessarily interpret the gesture as disrespectful. Maybe my students think that I am approachable or, because my first name is unusual for them, they are worried about having to write it out.

Or perhaps the millennial generation simply perceives the email as a text. There is certainly a lot of variation across cultures, and over time; but even at one point in time, some people feel more comfortable behaving one way or the other. Calling people



### Inside, Outside, & In-Between

A New Column  
By Hsin-Yu Chen

#### (Continued from page 5)

by their titles and last names does not automatically indicate sincere respect.

Likewise, being casual should not simply be interpreted as being disrespectful. How do we interpret and perceive these behaviors? How do we tolerate people who behave differently? Is there a “golden mean” to behaving appropriately, especially when addressing your superiors?

Maintaining the balance between overly informal or formal communication between faculty members and students in higher education has been the subject of several recent publications (e.g., Stephens, Houser, & Cowan, 2009). Small things, like greetings, influence both verbal and written communication as well as our impressions of others, and can be a good starting point for promoting reflection.

It is important to understand the cultural values that undergird the communication between individuals and groups and to cultivate interest in learning about how other cultures address one another, especially given the cultural diversity within higher education.

It is imperative that we show respect to one another, but such respect may require understanding, acceptance, and tolerance of ethical values. Use of an honorific title can be crucial in the early phase of a relationship, but it cannot define the long-term relationship. The keys to understanding human interactions and connections are in

being sincere and genuine: listening carefully to someone and responding thoughtfully display the greatest level of respect.

#### References

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**Hsin-Yu Chen** is a doctoral candidate in recreation, park, and tourism management at The Pennsylvania State University. Her research interests include college students and emerging adulthood, cross-cultural comparative studies, and leisure and human behavior.

### Estee Hernandez, *Character Clearinghouse* Editor, Wins Prestigious NASPA Research Award



The **Dr. Susan R. Komives Research Award** (sponsored by NASPA's Student Leadership Programs Knowledge Community) supports professional, doctoral, and master's-level scholarly research. **Estee Hernandez**, doctoral candidate in the higher education program at Florida State University,

just learned that she has received the award for 2017.

Estee is editor of the *Character Clearinghouse* online publication at FSU. *JCC Connexions* partners with the *Character Clearinghouse* in promoting items of interest relating to the moral, ethical, spiritual, and civic development and behaviors of college students.

Estee also serves as a program coordinator at the Center for Leadership & Social Change and as instructor in the undergraduate certificate in leadership studies program. Her research focuses on the graduate student experiences of marginalized communities and Chicana/Latina women along the educational pipeline. As an

educator, her practices focuses on flattening the power dynamic between teacher and student and fostering a community of learners, as well as (re)centering cultural forms of knowledge. Research recipients of the Dr. Susan R. Komives Research Award are invited to submit an article about their research to the SLP-KC newsletter in order for SLP-KC to disseminate the authors' findings to the KC membership and beyond. *We look forward to reading more about Estee and her ongoing research!*

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**Character Clearinghouse** presented a panel discussion “Me or Thee, and a Fragile We: The Conundrum of Identity Liberalism” at the 2017 Dalton Institute in Tallahassee. Panelists explored questions such as “Can we actively support each cultural voice on the margins—honoring and guarding their emergence—without a by-product of pervasive and aggressive judgment against White America?” The panel challenged the audience to reflect on the relationship between empowerment and alienation. Please read a transcript of the [posted tweets](#) of the session.



## Becky Crandall, Scholar of Holistic Approaches to Student Support, Is IDEALS Researcher

Informed by the fifteen years she spent in roles ranging from campus ministry to campus climate assessment, Rebecca (Becky) Crandall devotes her time to answering questions relevant to the welfare, success, and development of student populations that have been traditionally labeled “at-risk.”

Primarily, she focuses on intercollegiate athletes, religious minorities, and LGBTQ students, directing specific attention to these students’ spirituality and/or (non)religious worldviews. In doing so, her goal is to afford scholars and practitioners insight that will foster a more effective, holistic approach to student support.



Presently, Becky serves as the post-doctoral researcher for the Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey ([IDEALS](#)) at The Ohio

State University—a position she began after completing her Ph.D. at NC State University in 2016.

Through this four-year study of over 20,000 students who began college in fall 2015, partners at North Carolina State University, The Ohio State University, and Interfaith Youth Core are exploring the impact of college on students’ pluralism orientation. In addition, IDEALS measures the changes that take place in students’ interfaith attitudes and behaviors throughout college. A report detailing the attitudes and expectations that entering first-year students have toward interfaith engagement is available [online](#). Recommendations for practice are included.

Becky is a valuable and active member of the JCC Editorial Board. She will facilitate a special session sponsored by the journal at the 2017 NASPA Religious, Secular, and Spiritual Identities Convergence Conference in May at UCLA. She is the recipient of the 2017 Jon C. Dalton Institute on College Student Values Dissertation Award.

### Upcoming Conference Sessions, Sponsored by JCC

#### "Contemporary Dynamics in Student Spiritual and Religious Identity"

[2017 NASPA Annual Conference](#)

March 13, 2017, 2:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Pete Mather, Darris Means, and Janina Montero

#### Session on Interfaith Diversity Experiences & Attitudes Longitudinal Survey (IDEALS)

[2017 NASPA Religious, Secular, and Spiritual Identities Convergence Conference](#)

May 22, 2017, 2:45 to 3:45 p.m.

Becky Crandall



## Two Upcoming Professional Development Opportunities Are Noted

### NAPSA's Spirituality and Religion in Higher Education Knowledge Community

(SRHE\_KC) leaders are highlighting two exciting professional development opportunities in spring 2017 for those interested in topics relating to the SRHE-KC focus.



**NASPA**

Spirituality and Religion in Higher Education KC

"Engaging Interfaith: Creating Meaningful Religious, Secular, and Spiritual Diversity Resources Throughout Campus" on Sunday, March 12, at 1 p.m., which will examine the ways that programming for religious, spiritual, and secular identity and engagement intersect with the breadth of functional areas and competencies in stu-

dent affairs. Participants will learn strategies for institutionalizing religious, spiritual, and secular engagement on their campuses. Leaders of the pre-conference include Ross Wantland, Rachael Samuelson, Janett C. Ramos, Zach Cole, Cody Nielsen, and Sable Manson.

(SRHE\_KC) is looking forward to the 2017 NASPA Religious, Secular, and Spiritual Identities Convergence at UCLA from May 22 – May 24, which is designed for higher education faculty across all disciplines, administrators, students, campus ministers, chaplains, religious professionals, interfaith educators, as well as university affiliates and partners, who work in and want to work in religious, secular, and spiritual endeavors.

For more information on how to share your experiences, talents, insights, and questions with others in gathering together, visit [RSS Identities Convergence](#).

## Dalton Institute Explores Issues Relating to Inclusion, Isolation, and Community

Regardless of political affiliations, the 2016 U.S. Presidential race introduced new conversations, challenges, and priorities for students, as well as for the faculty, staff, and administrators who serve them. The **2017 Jon C. Dalton Institute on College Student Values** invited participants to explore the implications of these challenges for higher education by posing and addressing questions relating to its theme, "Inclusion & Isolation: Restoring Trust and (Re)Building Community on Campus." Such questions included "What role do campus traditions, values, policies, and practices play in perceptions of inclusion or isolation on campus?" "How do higher education institutions support members of historically marginalized groups in building community and social capital in college?" "How do colleges and universities balance free speech and academic freedom with the notions of campus as a 'safe space' and 'brave space'?"



**Beverly Daniel Tatum**, author of *Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria*, kicked off the Institute with an interactive approach in the form of a "fireside chat." Other speakers included **Vernon Wall** of LeaderShape, **Allyssa N. Rockenbach**, North Carolina State, and **Sam Museus**, Indiana University. The Institute offered diverse experiences for attendees including an inaugural scholarly paper session, a panel discussion hosted by Institute founder Jon C. Dalton, a pre-conference workshop from Florida State University's National Coalition Building Institute facilitators, and over 30 concurrent program sessions. To learn more about the Dalton Institute, interested persons should go to <https://studentvalues.fsu.edu/>. "Save the Date" for another exciting Dalton Institute on February 1-3, 2018.





## Update From Rev. J. Cody Nielsen, NASPA's Expert in Residence in Religious, Secular, and Spirituality Initiatives

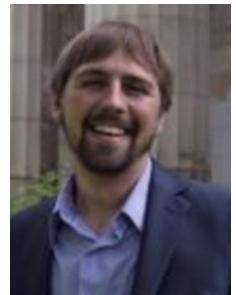
With the current political climate, consideration of religious, secular, and spiritual identities could not be more important for higher education. Before the Obama administration left office, President Obama signed into law a clause adding nontheists, atheists, and humanists under the "umbrella" of the International Religion Freedom Act. This move, though largely unnoticed by the general public, is a significant step forward in the inclusion and protection of all worldviews in American society.

Upcoming live briefings by the Expert in Residence are seeking to focus on diverse minorities on campus. This past month, we looked at Hindu identity on campus with **Angu Bhargava**, Hindu American and member of the President's inaugural Advisory Council on Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnership.

This month, on February 15 at 2 p.m. EST, I welcomed **Simran Jeet Singh**, Trinity University, to be a part of a [lively discussion](#) with me of Sikh beliefs on campus and their importance in the global tapestry of religious traditions.

[Work continues](#) on the **2017 NASPA Religious, Secular, and Spiritual Identities Convergence**, which has changed dates to May 22-24, 2017 at UCLA. We are proud to announce that **Jamie Washington**, founder of

the Washington Consulting Group, will give the opening keynote, and **John Hoffman**, California State University, Fullerton will lead a panel of diverse professionals discussing religious, secular, and spiritual identities.



**Peter Laurence**, an organizer of the 1998 Education as Transformation conference at Wellesley, which was one of the most significant conferences to date regarding the intersection of higher education and spiritual identity, will lead a preconference session May 22 alongside **Christy Lohr Sapp**, Duke University, **Angie Thurston**, Harvard Divinity School, and me. This preconference will explore the historical foundations of religious engagement on campus, will help to examine the journey that has brought and led us to the convergence moment, and will examine the many ways in which individuals form communities on campus as well as in society.

Interested participants should feel free to reach out to me by phone (319 759 9688) or email ([j.cody.nielsen@gmail.com](mailto:j.cody.nielsen@gmail.com)) and are highly encouraged to sign up to be a part of this important moment in the history of this field.

## Current Article on Student Activism Focuses on Campus Support

The "new student activism," as it is often called, is a hot topic in higher education as well as in the popular press and social media. **Barbara Jacoby** of the University of Maryland explores in her article, "The New Student Activism: Supporting Students as Agents of Social Change" in the current (February 2017) issue of the *JCC*, what educators have learned through their work with service-learning and civic engagement that enables them to create a campus environment that supports student activists as agents of positive social change.

She shares a set of questions for educators to grapple with as they navigate the complexities

of today's student activism.

Student activism has increased substantially on campuses across the country following the election of Donald J. Trump as President. Social media and numerous press articles have focused on the protests and ways campuses are responding. The author argues that the roles of those supporting student activists are more important now than ever.

Barbara speaks from her experience as a college student in the late '60s and early '70s, a long-time student affairs professional, a scholar and practitioner of service-learning, and an academic teaching a course on social change.

## Index of Blog Posts in *JCC Connexions* (Click on Links Below)

- H Chen & C Yarnal & others: "Should Students' Use of Leisure Time Matter to College Educators?"
- J. Dalton: "Do Colleges and Universities Perpetuate Income Inequality by Favoring The Wealthiest Students?"
- K. Guthrie: "Undergraduate Certificate In Leadership Studies: An Opportunity For Seamless Learning"
- M. Jackson: "What Are the Challenges & Rewards of Being Student Affairs Professionals?"
- F. Lane & J. Schutts: "Predicting the Presence of Purpose Through the Self-Efficacy Beliefs of One's Talents"
- P. Mather with replies from C. Broadhurst, G. Martin, & L. Harrison: "Student Activism and Advocacy"
- P. Mather, C. Bridges, & M. Johnson: "Research on Social Change and Social Justice"
- P. Mather, D. Means, & J. Montero, "Preview of Upcoming 2017 Naspa Session on Student Spirituality With JCC Authors"
- D. Morgan & co-authors, H. Zimmerman, T. Terrell, & B. Marcotte: "Should Fraternities Be Banned From College Campuses?"
- G. Paine: "Caring About Students – The Work of Student Affairs"
- M. Swanbrow Becker & D. Drum: "When and How Should We Intervene in Students' Lives?"
- S. Seider: Trigger Warnings: Just Good Teaching? Critical Conversation #7
- S. Watt with replies from L. Roper and C. King: "Racial Conflicts as Learning Opportunities"
- M. Waggoner: "Should Colleges & Universities Care About Spiritual Beliefs of Students?"

***The aim of the JCC Ambassadors is to promote scholarship and practices that relate to the moral and civic development and behaviors of college students that are published in the journal. The group is headed by associate editor for social media, Janett C. Ramos. Ambassadors research and lead social media conversations relating to articles and blog posts authored by JCC scholars. Contact [jcc@naspa.org](mailto:jcc@naspa.org) if you are interested in joining the Ambassadors!***

### **JCC Plays Important Roles in Upcoming Conference on Religious, Secular and Spiritual Identities Convergence**

**Becky Crandall**, who serves on the *Journal of College and Character* Editorial Board will present a special session, sponsored by the JCC, at the 2017 NASPA Religious, Secular, and Spiritual Identities Convergence at UCLA in May.

The session will explore the latest findings from the Interfaith Diversity Experiences & Attitudes Longitudinal Survey (IDEALS), a national study of students' attitudes, experiences, and expectations about worldview diversity. Drawing from data collected from over 20,000 first-year students at 122 U.S. institutions, the presenter will offer insight into the interfaith diversity attitudes of students across their first year of college. Attendees will also learn about specific facets of the campus experience that foster students' pluralism development.

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The JCC with special guest editors **Nick Bowman** and **Jen-**

**ny Small** will publish a special issue relating to the inaugural 2017 NASPA Religious, Secular, and Spiritual Identities Convergence conference. The issue will include selected articles based on scholarship presented at the conference May 22-24, 2017 at UCLA's Meyer and Renee Luskin Conference Center in Los Angeles, California. Papers given at the conference or manuscripts which have been later developed based on program presentations may be submitted for consideration. Prior to the conference, all registered presenters will receive information regarding manuscript guidelines and deadline for submission to the journal.

For more information about the *Journal of College and Character* and questions regarding this opportunity connect with JCC editors at [jcc@naspa.org](mailto:jcc@naspa.org). For additional information about the Convergence conference, visit the [website](#) here.

## Michael Williams Devotes Research to Topics on Student Success



The research agenda of **Michael Steven Williams** reflects his passion to understand the social psychological factors that contribute to student success at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Seeing

a clear need for scholarship that centers race in investigations of popular psychological constructs (e.g., grit, self-efficacy), he also seeks to bring new theoretical perspectives to the study of Students of Color in the collegiate milieu.

In his efforts to accomplish these goals, he engages in scholarship that explores the social psychological development experiences of historically marginalized populations at diverse institu-

tion types.

For example, he plans to build on a recent co-authored [publication](#) with **Tiffany Brown Burnett, Talia Carroll, and Cameron Harris** through expanding his research on Black doctoral students by developing, testing, and administering a national survey that will allow him to explore the relationship between socialization experiences, the psychosocial environment, and the desire to pursue faculty careers upon graduation.

He also recently secured an internal grant to expand an investigation of factors that influence a sense of belonging—a strong correlate of retention and various measures of academic success—for Black collegians.

Michael is assistant professor in the Austin W. Marxe School of Public and International Affairs at Baruch College, City University of New York (CUNY). He serves on the editorial board of the *JCC*.

## JCC Welcomes New JCC Ambassador Nestor Melendez

**Nestor Melendez**, who has worked in roles as director and dean in diverse areas such as residence life, judicial affairs, student activities, and student leadership and engagement, is committed to guiding students in an array of areas including campus-engagement, development of leadership skills, creating inclusive communities, self-identity realization, and pre-professional mentoring. He is the newest *JCC* Ambassador.

Nestor earned his bachelor's degree in theatre from SUNY Oneonta and graduated from the master's program in educational leadership from Central Connecticut State University. With background and experiences in theater, he seeks to communicate and engage students with the narrative of what success looks like to them. He also uses his experiences in reconciling the two distinct cultures in which he lives to help students understand their

own unique identities to put forth their best skills, talents, and abilities.

A proud Brooklyn native, Nestor was a member of the student affairs team at Hofstra as assistant dean and director of student leadership & engagement. Nestor also served as assistant director of student activities at Salve Regina University, complex director of Bliss Hall at SUNY New Paltz, assistant dean of Students at Fairleigh Dickinson University, dean of students at Bergen Community College, and the dean of culture at ROADS Charter High School in Brooklyn, NY.



*Journal of College & Character*

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*Journal of College and Character* and JCC Connexions are published by

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