

# SYNERGY



*A range of speakers, career workshops and presentations helped current and future generations of Student Affairs professionals at the annual Western Regional Careers in Student Affairs Day to capitalize on skills and connections. NASPA, California State University, Fullerton, and ACPA are among the sponsors of this annual event, held this year at the CSUF Titan Center.*

**How Staff Help Students  
Debunk a Persistent  
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by December 15! (p. 11)***

# Updates from the Chair Christopher Lewis



As the cold weather in the Midwest starts to settle in for the coming winter months and the fall term gets closer to its conclusion, I hope that this newsletter finds you well.

All NASPA members recently received a copy of the proposal for a new unified association, and I hope that you have had a chance to read this document as it will affect each and every one of us (<http://naspa.org/unification/>). Please note that knowledge communities within the new proposed association are re-envisioned as communities of practice. SAPAA has been vocal to ensure that there is a future for our knowledge community and is in conversation currently with NASPA leadership to discuss our hopes for SAPAA to be a part of the new proposed association. I encourage each of you to share with me your thoughts on this document, and I will be happy to share these with the NASPA leadership.

Our leadership team has requested that the new structure more explicitly promote the value of partnerships with academic affairs units, faculty, and faculty professional organizations. We are pleased to note that the specializations of each of our working groups -- career services, living-learning communities, service-learning/civic engagement, and academic advising -- are well situated in the proposed organization. It is our hope that as each piece of SAPAA finds a home in the new organization, we do not dilute the focus on academic affairs/student affairs partnerships the umbrella of SAPAA provides.

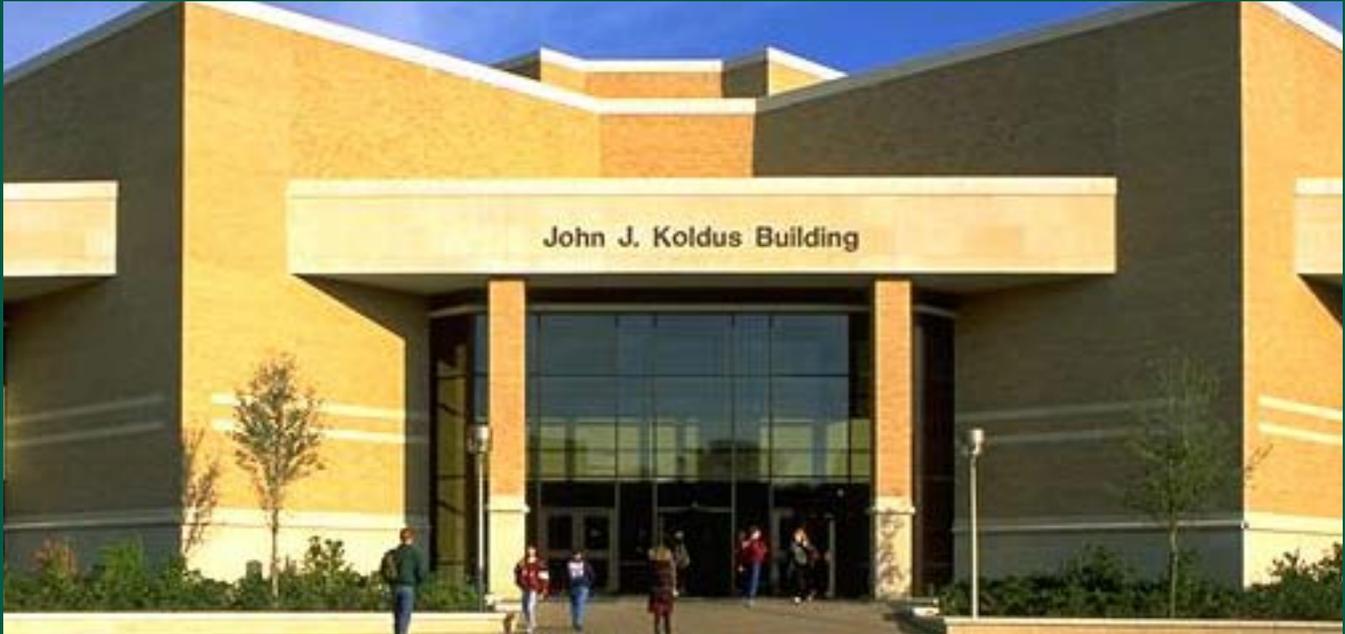
Outside of this, I am happy to introduce to you our newest Regional Representative from Region IV-E, Dorcia Chaison, Assistant Director of Undergraduate Programs for the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (CANR) at Michigan State University. We are very excited to have Dorcia as a part of our leadership team.

We also have been working on planning events for the Annual Conference in Philadelphia, PA, to be held March 12-16. We plan to have meetings for each of our working groups, a business meeting and a joint reception with both the Student Leadership Programs and Sustainability Knowledge Communities. I hope that colleagues attending the conference also will join these activities.

This issue is all about Career Services. We are challenged to think hard about how we can support successful student career development. In a job market that is somewhat stagnant, it behooves us to partner across academic and student affairs to help our students to market themselves competitively for an ever-changing work world. I commend the work of our Career Services Working Group and hope that you will join their dialogue to support our students in these future transitions.

# THE 11TH CAREER MYTH

Career Centers, like the Texas A&M University Career Center (pictured below), are invaluable resources for early career advisement.



By: Michael E. Shehane

In May 2009, the University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley), featured an article on its career services website titled “Top 10 Career Myths.” The authors highlighted 10 common myths in the area of career services including many misperceptions held by students who used such services. Below is a quick recap of these myths:

*Myth 1* – There is one perfect job for me.

*Myth 2* – My major is going to lead to my career.

*Myth 3* – I will have only one career in my lifetime.

*Myth 4* – Liberal Arts, Humanities and Science majors are usually unemployable after college.

*Myth 5* – Most students know their major and career goals when they enter college.

*Myth 6* – If I wait long enough, luck will

eventually bring me to the right career.

*Myth 7* – Most people have a solid understanding of careers and the world-of-work and if I don’t, then I am the only one who is confused.

*Myth 8* – Career assessments will tell me exactly what career is right for me.

*Myth 9* – I should choose an occupation based on my strongest skills.

*Myth 10* – The best place for me to start looking for an occupation is where employers are doing lots of hiring right now (Berkeley, 2009).

Myths 1 and 3 focus on how a student will, in fact, have many careers throughout a lifetime that will be excellent fit for the student’s skill set and interests.

Moreover, myths 2, 5, and 7 help readers gain the perspective that most students do

not have clear understanding of majors and careers when they begin their college experiences, nor will the final majors selected actually lead directly to chosen career paths. This concept is echoed in a *USA Today* article (Jones, 2001), with several featured CEOs from Fortune 500 companies not pursuing their undergraduate degrees in business. Finally, myths 6 and 8 stress the importance that students engage fully in the process of finding a career, including investigation and reflection.

Both the UC Berkeley and *USA Today* articles support Donald Super's life space, life-span approach to career development, which states that career development is a lifelong process (Super, 1957; Evans, 2003). Super's theory maintains that individuals between the ages of 14-24, which includes many traditionally-aged college students, experience "exploration" stages regarding their careers. During this stage, students are best served by exploring multiple career paths, and engaging in self-assessment or reflection (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998).

Students who begin career exploration as early as their first semester of college reveal an additional career myth that was not discussed in the UC Berkeley article. Specifically, Myth 11 would hold that career centers are only intended for and used by upperclassmen to find internships and jobs.

However, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education states, "the primary mission of Career Services (CS) is to assist students and other designated clients through all [emphasis added] phases of their career development" (Dean, 2006, p. 86). Therefore, it is pivotal that career services seek out and engage students before they are upperclassmen and encourage them to get involved in career exploration early in their undergraduate experiences.

Some notable best practices at career centers may be woven into early student experiences. They range from career service open houses and first-year mentoring programs covering career topics to targeted presentations, and other activities to connect career learning in the curriculum (NACE, 2004).

At Texas A&M University, located in College Station, Texas, the Career Center has partnered with the Leadership and Service Center within the Department of Student Activities to create a first-year seminar that integrates career exploration into the curriculum. This semester-long, one credit hour course provides students with opportunities to explore career aspirations through service-learning experiences. Course requirements include resume writing, Career Center visits for walk-in resume reviews, attendance of non-profit career panels, and final service-learning projects to identify and assist with critical needs. Furthermore, all students take *StrengthsQuest* assessments and research how their interests and strengths connect with career plans (Clifton, Anderson, & Schreiner, 2006).

Students ultimately reflect on the meaning of servant leadership, where they find purpose, and how their sense of purpose relates to their future career goals. By connecting first-year students to service and career learning early in the college experience, instructors intend to provide a meaningful basis for serving and





Sheshane, pictured right, talks with a student visiting the TAMU Career Center.

leading in the College Station community as well as a pathway to purposeful career and vocation exploration. Moreover, the course is an attempt to dispel Myth 11 and combat the perception that career centers only exist for those students seeking full-time employment.

In addition to integrating career services within a first-year seminar course, the Texas A&M Career Center uses open houses and freshmen orientation involvement to encourage early participation in career services. In August 2009, the Career Center hired a full-time professional staff member dedicated to serving undecided/undeclared students in their quests for majors. The creation of this full-time position is both a symbolic and literal commitment by the Center to combat Myth 11. Students declaring majors at critical freshman and sophomore junctures now have additional resources at the Center to help initiate their early use of career services.

As career centers across the nation continue to feel the effects of the current economic climate, they must learn how to help students understand the importance of using career services throughout the undergraduate experience. The notion that career services are only intended for students ready for careers is indeed a myth. Ultimately, the ability to integrate first and second-year students into the services

offered by career centers will allow them to expedite the process of quelling the Top 10 Career Myths by first addressing Myth 11.

### References

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## Call for Submissions!!



Share your opinions, research-based practices and study results in NetResults, a biweekly “e-zine” distributed to the NASPA membership.

**STYLE REQUIREMENTS:** Please submit articles of 800-1,500 words in length as double-spaced, Microsoft Word files, with text formatted to style guidelines established by the American Psychological Association (<http://www.apastyle.org/>).

Content should address critical issues of interest to Student Affairs faculty, officers, administrators, students and other professionals. Please include appropriate hyperlinks to other web resources and please see additional details at <http://www.naspa.org/pubs/mags/nr/about.cfm>.

Send your submissions to Associate Editor Michelle Pena at [mpena@naspa.org](mailto:mpena@naspa.org), and please call her for queries at (703) 532-7535.

## Why Not Submit Your Story to Synergy?

Share your research, program or other news from the field with SAPAA members!

Articles for *Synergy* should be concise, with text and references following general style guidelines from *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition* (2009).

Please provide text in single-spaced, 12-point font, with double-spaces between paragraphs, and no more than 3 pages in length, including references. Include author's information (name, title, institution, e-mail and telephone number), and photos/artwork as high resolution .jpg files with suggested captions to identify the relevant subjects.

**Submit** by the Synergy deadlines below to Editors Alexis Andres ([ala5p@virginia.edu](mailto:ala5p@virginia.edu)) and Nancy Singer ([nsinger@email.arizona.edu](mailto:nsinger@email.arizona.edu)).

February issue on Living and Learning Communities – text due by January 4, 2011

April issue on Civic Engagement/Service Learning – text due by March 1, 2011

# THE PLACEMENT EXCHANGE:

## *In the First Person*

By: Cecilia Lalama, Boston University

After a fortuitous pink slip from a job in television, I found a job as an administrator at my alma mater, Boston University. The job satisfied my two basic needs at the time: to find employment and to position myself for a suitable graduate program without the worry of paying for the degree. Within a few months, I realized there might be a career in this for me and once I became involved with NASPA, I knew that “this” was higher education and that I had found my professional calling.

Two years into my tenure at the college, I realized that I enjoyed interacting with students and wanted to work with them more closely. I unabashedly suggested to my supervisor that she promote me and was soon offered an advising position that resulted from a division restructuring.

By the time I completed my master’s in journalism, I was almost a year into a career in advising. I decided to be more intentional about my professional development while I considered additional educational possibilities to meet my new career goals. Yet as sometimes happens to all professionals, the daily grind of work and home life led to a general feeling of complacency. What had been an exciting entry into a new profession became a tedious experiment in paperwork in addition to my daily contacts with students. The ceiling was low and I bumped into it often.

I needed a change but I wasn’t sure where to look or how to start. I attended my first NASPA conference in 2008 and participated in The Placement Exchange.



I went into the job search with squared shoulders and determined to find a job that spring. Although the job market had not shown its current scarcity, I had not counted on such high demand for jobs in the field. I quickly learned that a focused networking campaign was probably the best approach to get noticed, so I reached out to folks who could help me get connected.

I met a Vice President for Student Affairs through a relative for instance, and she became a mentor in the early stages of my job search. She connected me to other folks at her institution, and I learned to ask each new contact to connect me with someone else. Her willingness to talk to a complete stranger about career aspirations buoyed me as I became more intentional with whom I networked.

I also crashed a couple of receptions at the annual conference and that certainly facilitated meetings with folks I could not reach via phone or e-mail (don’t try this at home). What resulted from the aggressive search was five job offers in three institutions within six months.

When my job search plans in 2009 included relocation to another state completely, I immediately signed up for The Placement Exchange as my fundamental job search tool. Since I

now was familiar with NASPA as an organization, I could more confidently navigate the listings on TPE and make connections for openings at desired institutions through folks I had befriended at the national conference. The ability to make those kinds of connections was invaluable, even if these discussions didn't lead to interviews.

I could write here about the myriad higher education websites that I joined to further my job search, but those of you who are currently looking know about those sites all too well. The key, in my opinion, was using TPE as a conduit to help me navigate within an organization where I had already developed roots to broaden my personal connections within NASPA.

My TPE experience in 2008 felt like a cattle call and I navigated it wide-eyed and scared enough to look around carefully. Every applicant around me seemed to be my competitor. By 2009, I was a pro and even received a couple of invitations to interview from institutions I had not previously considered. I learned to view my neighbors more as colleagues than as competitors. Sharp elbows often do more harm than good, especially in our profession, and because every position is not the perfect position, I accepted that I would find a fit when the right opportunity came along.

Though the job market would take a dramatic turn shortly thereafter and though my search (because it was conducted in fits and starts over the past two years due to personal factors) occasionally stalled, I consider 2008 to be the year that I really grew up professionally. I learned the value of becoming involved in my professional organization, took steps to assume leadership roles, adopted an intentional,

focused attitude toward networking, and pursued jobs that required me to stretch beyond my current abilities.

The greatest challenge that I faced the first time around was navigating the TPE itself. It was easy to feel like a candidate number in a sea of so many applicants. The secret, I learned, was to make the TPE seem smaller, by narrowing searches within its listings and taking advantage of the TPE coaches who were always on hand to conduct mock interviews or generally share their ideas. They humanized the experience and provided advice in generous, sincere ways.

I also learned not to fret when my candidate mailbox was empty (and therefore not to check it too often). To those newcomers out there who are considering TPE this year: arrive early, attend information sessions and get to know your fellow job seekers. You will have to share computers with them, wait for interviews together and maybe even swap listings. Placement is just as much an exercise in introspection as you search for the "right" job as it is a networking event. It is only as stressful as you make it.

Placement is a unique experience and can be rewarding as long as you remember that there is insufficient time to apply to every job and that few or no callbacks for interviews do not reflect on you as a professional. My job search, fraught as it was with disappointments, taught me to stay true to my career goals and be confident in my abilities. It also forced me to be patient. That I insisted on being involved in the Student Affairs side of the house when my name badge indicated that I belonged on the other side played a key role, too.

Now that I have the bird's eye view, I see

even more clearly how much there is to do in this profession and in my own career. Yes, I am a mid-level professional and I still, happily, have a lot to learn.

*Cecilia Lalama is Assistant Director for Mentoring and Outreach at Boston University's Educational Resource Center and Chair of the SAPAA KC Advising Working Group.*

### **Easy Ways to Connect with The Placement Exchange (TPE)**

Founded in 2006, TPE is a definitive resource that links multiple employers and candidates.

- **Register for TPE 2011 in Philadelphia**, March 9-13 and receive a discount on your conference registration! Details at: <http://www.theplacementexchange.org/event/reg.cfm>.
- **Participate in TPE 365** educational opportunities offered throughout the year.
- **Become a TPE Ambassador or Intern** - contact David Cooper and Cecilia Suarez at [TPE.ambassador@gmail.com](mailto:TPE.ambassador@gmail.com) for additional information.



# RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE READS

## *Emerging Trends on Careers*



By: Marguerite Bonous-Hammarth

The best approaches to help college students embrace tenets of reflective and lifelong learning in their career planning have been subjects of intense study, if not debate, in higher education. The following annotations highlight several trends that may be of interest to NASPA colleagues in their professional development efforts with students.

### **Finding Career Strengths**

Ramirez, A.Y. (2010). Why teach? Ethnic minority college students' views on teaching. *Multicultural Education*, 17(3), 29-35. ISSN: 1068-3844.

Ramirez examines motivations for teaching through interviews with 76 undergraduates from African American, Filipino and Latino

ethnic backgrounds at universities across Southern California. Responses from students thinking about teaching careers and those without teaching plans fall into three main categories of perceived benefits from teaching careers, perceived drawbacks, and assessments of teaching as a career.

Serving the community, having flexible schedules (having summer months off) and receiving employment benefits (health insurance and retirement programs) are cited as major teaching benefits. Lengthy time commitments and costs required for teaching credentials, inadequate salaries, and perceived lack of respect of the

profession related to strict governmental regulations are among the perceived drawbacks to career interests in teaching.

The author provides implications and insights for practice with relevant application, including scholarships to cover fifth-year teaching preparation, salary incentives for teachers serving high-need schools, and student perceptions of recent California assessment programs (Teacher Performance Assessment and Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment programs) as major hindrances to foster interests in teaching careers. Includes 13 references.

**Scott, C. (2010). Vocatio: The importance of exploring an ancient concept for community college students. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 151, 101-110. doi:10.1002/cc.419.**

Scott discusses the concept of vocatio, or “being called to a particular life’s work” to assist students in examining spiritual questions in a first-year experience course. The course activities (e.g., journaling, interpreting Myers-Briggs Type Indicator results), and cultural approaches adopted such as talking circles support student reflection at deep levels and will provide educators with helpful curricular tools and ideas. Includes 11 references.

### **Decision Making /Career Indecision**

**Amundson, N.E., Borgen, W.A., Iaquinta, M., Butterfield, L.D., & Koert, E. (2010). Career decisions from the decider’s perspective. *Career Development Quarterly*, 58(4), 336-351. ISSN: 0889-4019.**

The authors explore relational career decisions – the meanings developed about career decision making from decider perspectives – through interviews with 17 individuals that included eight postsecondary students.

Narrative themes suggest three major patterns associated with decision making related to: “relational perspectives,” or connections among family, friends and others, as well as mentors or role models; “personal meanings” developed from engagement (inside and outside of work), new identities, and resilience gained from crises; and “economic realities,” reflected from tensions between needs and wants, and from coping with uncertainties such as industry layoffs.

While the majority of respondents represent students beyond postsecondary enrollment, the authors provides several implication points of interest to educators. Career counselors will benefit by adapting their client approaches to meet development needs (e.g., group counseling approaches to create community). In addition, they can employ unique strategies to assist clients with developmental needs (addressing skills to help clients to connect with others or to clarify emotions over career transitions). Includes 40 references.

**Hammond, M.S., Lockman, J.D., & Boling, T. (2010). A test of the tripartite model of career indecision of Brown and Krane for African Americans incorporating emotional intelligence and positive affect. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 18(2), 161-176. doi: 10.1177/1069072709354201.**

Hammond et al. identify five potential components related to vocational decision making for 282 African Americans attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Their study is framed around several well-recognized concepts and variables from current research, including meta-analytic findings reported by Brown and Krane (2000).

Four of the components identified from analyses are consistent with those discussed in the literature: career self-efficacy (beliefs

in one's skills, attitudes and abilities related to careers), career information needs (level of career information needed), vocational identity (stable goals, low negative affect and high decisiveness), and career decisional status (level of career indecision, comfort and immediate importance of making career decisions).

The author provides a succinct discussion of the literature related to a fifth, new component -- career-related emotional maturity. This fifth factor suggests an additional dimension of emotional intelligence and positive coping to be considered among strategies for effective career choice. The approaches used by the authors contribute helpful measures of emotional intelligence related to positive career decision making. Includes 68 references.

### **Technology in Advising**

**Tzeng, J. (2011). Perceived values and prospective users' acceptance of prospective technology: The case of a career eportfolio system. Computers & Education, 56(1), 157-165. doi: 10.1177/1069072710374494.**

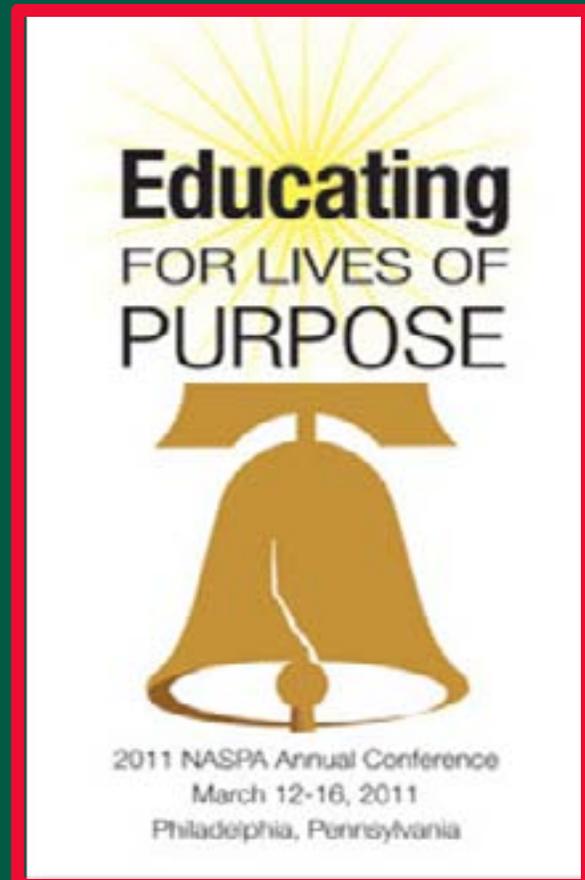
Tzeng examines the intentions to use career eportfolio systems among undergraduate and graduate students at four universities in Taiwan. The author provides a substantive discussion of the study's conceptual framework of perceived value, and the 364 web responses are analyzed through descriptive statistics, exploratory factor modeling and structural equation modeling (SEM).

Several measures of perceived value are interpreted: perceived epistemic value, or valuing new ways to document student work, guide students through reflective learning ("scaffold"), and showcase professional competencies; perceived functional value; perceived contextual influence, or perceived organizational support for the eportfolio

system; and student attitudes that eportfolio systems are effective for professional development and advancement.

SEM results showed that student intentions to learn and use an eportfolio system were positively influenced by their perceived epistemic values and by their attitudes that the systems , explaining 82% of the variance in intentions. These findings may be particularly useful to Career Services professionals in assessing effective technology and in striving to communicate how implemented technology allows best ways for students to promote their skills and knowledge. Includes 62 references.

*Marguerite Bonous-Hammarth is Researcher in Residence at the University of California, Irvine, and Chair of the SAPAA KC Communications Committee.*



***Join colleagues and friends at the following events!***

***December 8***

“Conduct in the Classroom,” Region I, at Middlesex Community College Meetinghouse, noon-2 p.m., 294 Concord Road, in Billerica, Massachusetts. For registration, e-mail name, title and institution to: Region Representative Rebecca Newell at [newellr@middlesex.mass.edu](mailto:newellr@middlesex.mass.edu).

***December 15 - Deadline for Promising Practices Nominations!***

Nominate a great program or initiative for the recognition it deserves and share the wealth of best practices with NASPA colleagues! SAPAA KC asks you to nominate programs and services that contribute to collaboration or integration of student and academic affairs in a college or university setting.

Please submit nominations in WORD or similar word processing software file format with the components described below to Laurie Hulcher ([lhulcher@umuc.edu](mailto:lhulcher@umuc.edu)) **by December 15, 2010**.

Please include the following components in all nominations:

Program Name, Institution Name, Contact information of nominator (Name, Title, email and full mailing address), Program Description (including program mission and goals, impact on students and/or institution, and program sustainability, if applicable), and Description of the Nature of the Working Relationship between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs (including history involved to develop this working relationship, examples of how individuals have worked together, future of the working relationship and lessons learned from these interactions).

Award recipient programs will be highlighted in the Awards Booklet at the NASPA Annual Conference in March 2011 and listed on the SAPAA website (<http://www.naspa.org/kc/sapaa/promisingpractices.cfm>).

The Promising Practices Award is sponsored by the Student Affairs Partnering With Academic Affairs (SAPAA) Knowledge Community (KC).

***...AND DON'T FORGET...***

***January 14*** - Early Bird Registration Deadline; ***February 15*** - Regular Registration Deadline  
“Educating for Lives of Purpose,” 2011 NASPA Annual Conference, March 12-16, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Don't miss the great speakers, workshops, community gatherings and other activities!

Synergy Editors: Alexis Andres, University of Virginia, and Nancy Singer, University of Arizona  
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