

News Release

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Lissa Stapleton receives National Award from NASPA

Assistant Professor given 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. Lissa D. Stapleton, assistant professor of higher education at the University of Southern Mississippi, is the winner of the 2015 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. Stapleton was honored for her dissertation titled, “The Unexpected Talented Tenth: Black d/Deaf Student Thriving Within the Margins.”

As a Residential Community Director at California State University Northridge (CSUN), Stapleton worked specifically with Deaf and hard of hearing students. Having learned American Sign Language as an undergraduate, she was able to have direct communication with her Deaf students. This connection allowed her a deeper understanding of the challenges, successes, and equity issues Deaf students, faculty and staff encountered on a daily basis. She came face-to-face with her own hearing privilege and audistic behavior, and her passion and scholarly curiosity began to grow as she worked among and within the CSUN Deaf community.

Tony Cawthon, alumni distinguished professor at Clemson University and Chair of the Dissertation of the Year Committee, says the dissertation was “excellent literature review to illustrate the issue; it had sound and innovative methodology and presentation of results and implications were very powerful and useful for practitioners. It was one of the best dissertations I have ever read - thorough and comprehensive, yet very useful.”

“This study adds to the literature on d/Deaf students in higher education,” says Tamara Bertrand Jones, assistant professor at Florida State University and on the Dissertation of the Year Committee. “The chronology of Black d/Deaf education in the US was a major contribution and a highlight of the dissertation for me as a reader.”

Stapleton, a first generation college student, graduated from Wright State University with a bachelors in social work and a minor in African and African-American studies. She earned a masters from the University of Dayton and Ph.D. from Iowa State University.

In addition to her scholarly curiosity, working for Semester at Sea and serving as a Deaf Education teacher’s aide in Jamaica and Ghana further ignited Stapleton’s interest in Deaf Students’ of Color educational experiences. Currently at the University of Southern Mississippi, Stapleton teaches in the Higher Education Student Affairs program. Her research continues to interrogate issues of environment, equity, and access for Deaf students, faculty and staff with a particular interest in the intersections of race, gender and sexual orientation.

Stapleton and the other National Award winners will be honored in March at the 2015 NASPA Annual Conference in New Orleans, La.

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