

News Release

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Ryan Miller receives National Award from NASPA *Administrator 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. Ryan A. Miller, director for inclusion and equity at The University of Texas at Austin, is the winner of the 2016 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. Miller was honored for his dissertation titled, “Intersections of Disability, Gender, and Sexuality in Higher Education: Exploring Students’ Social Identities and Campus Experiences.”

Miller’s conclusion of this research is that, “rhetoric and research on disability in higher education is often framed around questions of access, while work on LGBTQ identities often focuses, at least minimally, on safety. While access and safety are necessary, institutions of higher education should aspire to more. A multifaceted model of inclusion and support is needed that moves higher education beyond access (Webb, 2014) and beyond safety. Rather than asking that individuals change to adapt to oppressive structures, such a view calls for reimagining and changing *institutions*, a project that seems daunting, if not overwhelming. This will require efforts to revamp curriculum, student services, faculty and staff training, public relations, and more. It will also require recognition of the ways in which the culture, climate, and curriculum of an institution can be disabling and create needless barriers for students.”

One judge commented that, “this was an excellent dissertation that covered an important topic on two marginalized populations. The dissertation presents the material in a strong way and has a clear methods section. I think what I appreciated the most was the author’s cautious approach to not speaking for the participants, but letting the participants’ words speak.”

In his role as director for inclusion and equity, Miller leads initiatives in the areas of equal employment opportunity, affirmative action, compliance, and campus climate at UT-Austin. He is an accomplished administrator, researcher and instructor, with professional experience at three universities spanning the areas of admissions, federal TRiO programs, institutional research, intergroup dialogue, LGBTQ affairs, and student development. A first-generation college graduate, Miller received his Ph.D. in educational administration at UT-Austin, his master’s degree at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and bachelor’s degree in journalism with honors at UT-Austin.

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