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This I Believe: My Philosophy on Diversity

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My philosophy on diversity is inspired, in part, by Patty Perillo, the President of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) in her speech at the Missouri College Personal Association annual conference in the Fall of 2008. She challenged the audience to write "This I believe statements" that articulated the values, beliefs, or purpose that they hold themselves to. Through this discussion, I hope to articulate my philosophy on diversity and how I have applied this philosophy in my experience thus far.

This I believe, that all people of worthy of dignity, respect, reverence, and affection. Our student population in higher education is rich in diversity. This means only one thing: we must focus on the human agenda. The human agenda focuses on what it means to be human in an ever changing society. As an advocate for students, I must advocate for all students. I must recognize the student as an individual with a unique background and unique traits.

This I believe, that I must serve as an advocate for students through intentional and purposeful work. I must be mindful of my actions – considering the direct and indirect consequences. I must be aware of the impact that I have on the students I serve, my peers, and my institution.

This I believe, that I must empower others. By connecting student to resources and supporting them through challenges, I can empower students to seek their own solutions. I must educate myself and others to increase awareness of issues related to diversity and social justice.

As a mentor a mentor in my institution's Mentorship Program, I mentor first generation, minority females in their transition to higher education. I work with my students to connect them to resources both on and off campus. I must personalize my interactions and recognize the students that I serve as individuals. By intentionally tailoring my interactions with my mentees

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and focusing on each student's specific needs, I can provide meaningful resources and opportunities to each student. I meet individually with each student and frequently follow up with them regarding concerns they may be having or challenges they may be facing. As an advocate for my mentees, I must not only be a resource and connect them to resources; I must empower them to seek out solutions and resources for themselves.

Each spring, my institution hosts a Beyond Words program through the campus Diversity Office and Office of Community Engagement. This is an interactive program that allows participants the opportunity to experience a variety of issues as related to the selected theme. In the Spring of 2008, I served on the Beyond Words committee and actively involved myself in the planning, coordination, and implementation of the program. This year I have volunteered to serve in several capacities to assist the 2009 Beyond Words committee. Promoting awareness of current issues and working to educate the campus community is essential to my role as an advocate for students. Promoting awareness and educating the community is a daily task, with a daily commitment to diversity and the students that I serve.

I challenge myself to seek out opportunities to educate myself and others about diversity. Through a summer internship at Arizona State University, I was able to attend a Women's Professional Development conference. I also attended the Digging Deeper drive-in conference hosted by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Both of these conferences gave me tools to incorporate into my professional toolbox. I believe that one must seek out opportunities to learn and must seek out constant self development and education. I am personally driven to share my experiences and the tools that I gained with my staff, peers, and institution in order to better serve the students that we serve.

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Over the past three semesters as a graduate student hall director, I have had the pleasure of interacting with a variety of students on-campus and in my halls. In my first year, I oversaw an international student residence hall, an all female residence hall, and an upper-class residence hall. In my current position, I am the hall director to upper-class and first-year honors students. Each population offers a rich diversity and unique challenges. Diversity is complex and each student is different. To develop a positive and inclusive community in the residence halls, I must work with my staff to understand the students that live on their floors, in the hall, and attend the campus. Through staff development opportunities, I challenge my staff to consider the messages they send through passive and active programming.

This I believe, that I must be an advocate for students; that I must empower others; that I must be intentional in my actions; and that I must focus on the human agenda. My philosophy on diversity requires constant education and opportunities to educate others. I must challenge myself to learn more and discover new resources. I must challenge myself to connect students to the resources that they need and I must work to create an inclusive and positive community for students in my halls and on-campus. This I believe, that through intentional and purposeful work we are instruments of change – we can make a difference.