

Strengths Narrative (LO 2, 4, 5, 7, 10; Artifacts B, C, D, E, J)

The theme to best sum up my strengths cultivated in the SDA program is service. Service resonates with me both in my personal and professional philosophies. In Artifact B1 and artifact B2 (personal and professional mission statement), I intentionally integrated a foundation of service to inform all of my work and interactions with others. I identified three unique areas in my strength of service: critical resistance, community and mattering, and adaptation.

Critical Resistance (LO 4, 10; Artifacts B, E)

bell hooks (2003) in *Teaching Community* states, “Serving students well is an act of critical resistance.” (p. 90). After reading her book, my definition of what it means to serve students well drastically changed. As a part of Learning Outcome 10, establishing and enhancing professional identity, I have spent time writing and reflecting on my personal and professional mission statement. As I already mentioned service is a cornerstone of both missions, although redefined after my experiences in SDA and Capstone. A key part of my professional identity is advocating for students who are traditionally marginalized by the institution. I ground myself with a Community Cultural Wealth framework and look for strengths in my students I can value and help foster (Yosso, 2005). Many of these strengths are not considered desirable by the dominant culture of an institution and part of my service of resistance is working to change the culture through programming or at a policy level.

One new innovative process I was familiarized with is service learning. In my elective class (MBA 510), I was required to do a service learning project with a critical mass from the class. My experience with service learning at that point in my journey was relatively negative – I would do service but there was little engagement with the community as a whole. To further explore the Jesuit commitment to learning in the community (Artifact E), I strived to seek out an

opportunity and balance for service *and* learning. With a small group from the class, we decided to serve at the Ballard Food Bank. Beyond service I was able to learn from community members as the resistance this food bank exhibited towards traditional food charities. By providing clients a normalized shopping experience (e.g. a grocery store and a shopping cart), folks felt empowered by something as simple as picking out their own food. From this experience, I want to incorporate service learning into my work with students and provide programs to help students resist dominant systems in the institution.

Community (LO 2, 4, 5; Artifacts D)

Service to students also requires building community and giving students a sense that they matter and their work matters. I see social justice and holistic communities at the center of the Jesuit tradition (Learning Outcome 5) from my time at Seattle University. As I moved to work in a non-Jesuit context, I had a challenge at bringing these ideas to a secular environment. Brazzell & Reisser (1999) identified creating inclusive and supportive communities as a best practice in student affairs. Furthermore, Schlossberg (1989) in her theory regarding mattering and marginality states how the concept of mattering can be used to fully involve students in learning. She lays out different paradigms of mattering and marginality and concludes we can use these paradigms to engage students.

When I worked at Cornell University in New Student Programs I had a challenge of adapting a traditional service to a new population: Transfer students. When I first arrived I worked diligently to understand that students I was serving and their unique needs (Learning Outcome 2). One need unfolded to be a lack of support for transfer students of color. After grounding myself with theory and best practice, I decided to create an event for students of color to get connected to communities of support during orientation (Artifact D). By reaching out to a

traditionally marginalized population and forming community with them, I established an environment where they mattered from the first day they stepped on Cornell's campus. As I continue to grow professionally, I understand the importance of community as I serve students.

Adaptation (LO 4, 5, 7; Artifacts C, J)

Adaptation brings my strength of service full circle and informs my professional philosophy to meet students where they are at. The only way I am going to know if I'm serving my students well is to ask. I take Learning Outcome 7 (utilizing assessment, evaluation, technology, and research to improve practice) to heart and that is why I chose to complete the MA track in the SDA program. My project focused on the effectiveness of the educational alcohol sanctions at Seattle University for first time offenders and whether or not we were approaching violations from a Jesuit lens (Artifact C). A critical piece of my research was looking at how identity (race and gender) impacted educational sanctions. Consistent with the literature, the results indicate a facilitator with shared identities of the students would be most effective (See Carey & DeMartini, 2010 or LaBrie et al., 2011).

Once a need is shown through assessment, research, or evaluation, the proper change needs to be made to a program or an office model. One of the most important Learn Outcomes is number 5: Adapting student services to specific environments and cultures. Through my work in Wellness and Health Promotion, I have seen many programs on sexual assault focus on what survivors could have done to prevent a sexual assault or on tertiary prevention after the assault occurred. On our campus, I identified a need to adapt a primary prevention program aimed at eradicating sexual assault by engaging men as pro-social bystanders and proposed a new program called Wingmen (Artifact J; Banyard, Moynihan, & Crossman, 2009). By evaluating the

campus climate and culture and then adapting or creating new programs is the only way I can provide high quality programs that serve students well (Blimling & Whit, 1999).

References

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